



The following minutes were taken at the regular meeting of the Mayor and the Board of Aldermen at 6pm on December 17, 2024, at the Town Hall in Abita Springs, Louisiana. Mayor Curtis called the meeting to order.

PUBLIC HEARING: Mayor Curtis opened the discussion of Instrument 2024-007, An Ordinance to Establish the Town of Abita Springs, Operating Budget of Revenue and Expenditures for the Fiscal Year Beginning January 1, 2025, and Ending December 31, 2025. Comments from attendees focused on the need for further discussion of specific projects included in the proposed budget.

MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS: Mayor Curtis announced that bids from two CPA firms had been forwarded to the Board for review and discussion. The Mayor provided an update on the status of the Abita Meadows court case and invited Attorney Andrew Wilson, representing the Town in the defense, to address the issues currently before the court. Mr. Wilson responded to questions and explained that the Town is working to cooperate with the developers while ensuring compliance with all state and local regulations. He also outlined the path forward in the case.

ROLL CALL: Mr. Boudreaux, Ms. Contois, Mr. Saussy and Mr. Templet were present. Mr. Patterson was absent. Ms. Contois moved to accept the November 19, 2024, meeting minutes, and Mr. Boudreaux seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS: Ms. Contois presented a resolution requesting assistance from the Louisiana Legislative Auditor's Office Regarding Best Practices for Compliance with The Louisiana Budget Act (R.S. 39:1301-1315), Open Meeting Laws (R.S. 42:11 – R.S. 42:28), and the Lawrason Act (R.S. 33:321 – 463) for the Town of Abita Springs. With the Board's support, it was decided that the resolution would be presented for a vote in January 2025.

Mayor Curtis opened the discussion of the Louisiana Legislative Auditor's Report and findings. He emphasized that the Legislative Auditor's report reflected that the investigation into the theft of town funds was conducted on the behest of the Town Administration and the Auditor's report corroborated the findings of the Town's own internal audit. Mayor Curtis expressed his gratitude for the Auditor's diligent work, which allowed the 22nd Judicial District Attorney's Office to proceed with charges against the two employees implicated in the theft. Mr. Templet commented on the sophistication of the theft, highlighting the report's details regarding the falsification and alteration of documents by the perpetrators.

OLD BUSINESS: Mayor Curtis reopened discussion of the Instrument 2024-007, An Ordinance to Establish the Town of Abita Springs, Operating Budget of Revenue and Expenditures for the Fiscal Year Beginning January 1, 2025, and Ending December 31, 2025. Mr. Saussy moved to defer Instrument 2024-007 to an undetermined future date. Mr. Boudreaux seconded the motion.

The motion to defer was based on concerns that the Board was not yet prepared to approve the budget and required additional information. Among the reasons offered by Mr. Saussy were the following: 1.) the importance of the hiring of an independent accounting firm 2.) confirmation through a scheduled LLA training that proper procedures are followed 3.) final year-end figures were not yet available 4.) a concern for being over (2024) budget in numerous categories. Mr. Templet disagreed, stating that he was comfortable with the budget as presented and believed it was the Board's responsibility to pass a budget before the end of the year, noting that if amendments were necessary, they could be passed at a future meeting. The vote to defer was as follows: Yeas: 3, Alderman Boudreaux, Contois and Saussy, Nays: 1, Alderman Templet, Abstain: 0, ABSENT: 1, Alderman Patterson. The motion to defer passed.

OPEN/ADJOURNMENT: Several residents expressed their concerns regarding the Lonesome Development case and requested that the Town Engineer attend a future meeting to provide additional details on the sewer infrastructure deficiencies and proposed improvements. Town Clerk Janet Dufrene outlined actions the Town has taken to address the legal issues with Lonesome Development and the Town's plans for future sewer system upgrades.

Keep Abita Beautiful provided updates on the plantings within the traffic circle. A resident requested updates from the Town Marshal's Department at future meetings.

Mr. Saussy moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Ms. Contois. All were in favor.

MEETING ADJOURNED

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED THIS 17TH DAY OF DECEMBER, 2024.

Janet Dufrene, Town Clerk

Honorable Daniel J. Curtis, Mayor