

TOWN OF MANY

March 25, 2021

Regular Session

The regular meeting of Tuesday, March 16, 2021 was postponed until Thursday, March 25th, 2021 due to illness in City Hall.

The Mayor and Aldermen of the Town of Many met in regular session, Thursday, March 25, 2021, at 5:15 p.m. at Town Hall. Present at Town Hall were Mayor Ken Freeman, Mayor Pro-Tem James Kennedy and Council Members Gay Corley, Anita Darwin, Mary Brocato and Bobbie Jackson. Also present were Town Clerk Amie Brown, Chief of Police Cheryl Wooley, Operations Manager Mark Oxley, Street Supervisor Jeremy Wilkerson, Water Superintendent Roger Dew, Grant Writer Suzanne Williams and Payroll Clerk/Mayor's Assistant Phyllis Jeansonne.

Mayor Ken Freeman called the meeting to order. Prayer was offered by Alderwoman Darwin, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance led by Mayor Freeman.

Minutes: Minutes for February 23, 2021 regular session was approved as written and presented with a motion by Brocato; seconded by Kennedy. Vote unanimous.

Amend Agenda: Mayor Freeman asked to add as #22, Approval to transfer funds out of the Town Vehicle Savings Account to the General Fund. Mayor Freeman asked to add as #23, To lower the monthly transfer amount to the Town Vehicle Savings accounts from \$2,000.00 monthly to \$250.00 monthly. Alderman Kennedy asked to add as #24, 955 Sycamore Street. Passed with a motion by Corley; seconded by Jackson. Vote Unanimous.

Open to Public Comments relating to items on agenda: None

Guest(s): Robert Hable, Mayor-Elect, and Cherry Williams, Alderwoman-Elect District D; Mayor Freeman congratulated both on their wins and stated that if there was anything he or the council could do to make their transition smoother to let them know. Mayor Freeman stated they would be invited to attend a rough draft budget meeting and if there is anything they would like to add or take out they can do so at that time.

Old Business:

- 1. Add Old Sabine High School to Many's Cultural District:** Mayor Freeman explained that we received a letter from the Louisiana Trust and Historic Preservation saying that if the Old Sabine High School was part of our Cultural District it would be easier to obtain grants. Alderwoman Brocato stated that we would have to make an application to the cultural district office in Lieutenant Governor Billy Nungesser's office and the application could only be made between May and September and they would send the paperwork. Mayor Freeman asked would there be any financial obligation to which Alderwoman Corley stated no. Mayor Freeman asked for a motion. Alderwoman Corley made a motion to table it for the new administration to look at it. Alderwoman Brocato asked Alderwoman Corley why, to which Alderwoman Corley stated because the application would have to be sent in. Alderwoman Brocato replied that we would be making the motion that we would want to add the high school and it would be the whole area all the way to the high school and the motion would be to agree to have it all added. Mayor Freeman asked would this whole part of town have to be added and Alderwoman Brocato said yes. Mayor Freeman asked Alderwoman Brocato could we just have a road going to the high school included into the cultural district so that we do not have all the residences in this area included in the cultural district and Alderwoman Brocato said she would ask. Tabled until next month with a motion by Corley and seconded by Darwin. Vote unanimous. Alderwoman Corley added that we could have a public forum for discussion with everybody in that area to see what their views are so we nor the new administration does not have any conflict, plus an application has to be made so we need to do more study and she does not think we are ready to vote on this yet.

New Business:

- 1. Introduce Ordinance #1 of 2021 – Council Meeting Time 5:00 PM:** Mayor Freeman explained that we had changed it to 5:15 PM because of Alderwoman Darwin's employment and she is no longer employed with that employer and asked her would it be okay to change the time to 5:00 PM to which she stated yes. Mayor Freeman also asked Mayor-Elect Hable and Alderwoman-Elect Williams if they had a preference to which Mayor-Elect Hable stated the earlier the better. Passed with a motion by Darwin; seconded by Jackson. Vote Unanimous.

- 2. Aldermen pay - Must attend council meetings:** Mayor Freeman explained that several Aldermen asked for this to be put on the agenda and asked Alderman Kennedy what exactly he wanted to do to which Alderman Kennedy stated that he did not ask for it that the Mayor asked for it. Mayor Freeman stated that he did not. Alderman Kennedy stated that the mayor asked him and Mrs. Jackson about it and he just told him okay but he is not going to be put on the spot like that, that the situation should have been taken care of a year ago, and they will not do the mayors job for him and that the mayor wanted them to do it to irritate "her". Mayor Freeman explained to Alderman Kennedy that they discussed it and Alderman Kennedy stated that it was a shame that out of twelve meetings "she" had not attended five. Alderman Kennedy asked Mayor Freeman why he has not done anything about it to which Mayor Freeman stated that it is legal and she does not have to come. Alderman Kennedy stated it is not his job either. Mayor Freeman told Alderman Kennedy that he has to vote on it and Alderman Kennedy said no, and that he will not fall into a trap and is not a fool. Alderwoman Corley stated that legally nothing can be done because "she" is an elected official and if they do any restrictions it needs to be voted on by the new administration. Alderwoman Corley went on to say that "she" does do her job and they all keep in touch with "her", that yes "she" has missed meetings but there has been COVID and to keep the town out of a bind to not even touch it. Mayor Freeman asked how other towns handle it like Florien to which Alderwoman Corley said she would find out from Florien. Mayor Freeman said it was his job to find out and he would get with the attorney and feels like he stepped out on a limb and it got sawed out from underneath him. Tabled until next month with a motion by Brocato and seconded by Jackson. Vote unanimous.
- 3. Allow Mayor to use different attorneys depending on the issue:** Mayor Freeman explained that certain things come up and when the town attorney was voted on last time they wanted to change attorneys because Billy was not getting work done fast enough but they agreed to let Mayor Freeman talk to Billy so he went to him and told him of their dissatisfaction and Billy told him he would make an effort but certain things are outside of his purview and when this happens the mayor will ask him if he is comfortable with having the mayor go to someone else and he will give the mayor the name of an attorney who specializes in that particular issue. Mayor Freeman went on to say that because they voted on Billy as the town attorney, he needs the councils vote to say that if there is something that Billy agrees he cannot do or is outside of his specialty we can take it to another attorney. Alderwoman Corley asked if there is an issue like that why can't it be brought to the council's attention by a phone call to which Mayor Freeman said he would be more than happy to do that but still needs the council's approval and they could make the motion that if they have an issue and it is outside what they feel Billy can do, would they be agreeable to hiring said attorney to handle the issue for the people of Many and if they say yes, he would have the authority to hire another attorney to which Alderwoman Corley stated that would work. Passed with a motion by Corley and seconded by Jackson. Vote unanimous. Alderwoman Darwin said she would feel better if it was something that Billy himself says it is something he cannot handle to which Mayor Freeman stated they would be locking themselves in and it would be better to just leave it like it is after they have agreed and Mayor Freeman said he would notify Billy like always.
- 4. Company vehicles being taken home at night:** No discussion was made
- 5. Authorization to close bank checking account - Audit Escrow #48957066 - BOM Bank - \$20,158.97 to be transferred to the General Fund checking account as per CPA:** Mayor Freeman explained this account was set up during the Polly Snell case and now that the case has been settled the account needs to be closed. Passed with a motion by Darwin and seconded by Corley. Vote unanimous.

- 6. Search for new credit card company to receive payments - Over budget \$265.00 YTD for General Fund and over budget \$1,119.00 YTD for Utility Fund:** Mayor Freeman explained that we are not charging enough to our customers and are losing money. Mayor Freeman asked Town Clerk Amie Brown what amount needed to be charged to the customer to compensate for this loss and she said \$8.00. Mayor Freeman asked for the charge to be increased from \$3.00 to \$8.00 to the customer. Alderwoman Corley said no. Alderwoman Brocato said \$8.00 is a lot. Mayor Freeman said they would have to come in and pay in person then. Alderwoman Corley said she is just thinking about our citizens. Alderman Kennedy asked how many customers we have to which Operations Manager Mark Oxley said 1,452 then Alderman Kennedy stated at \$8.00 per person sounds like the mafia. Alderwoman Corley and Mayor Freeman stated this is only for the customers that pay with credit card. Alderwoman Corley asked Town Clerk Amie Brown about how many people a month pay with a credit card and she said around 100-115. Mayor Freeman stated that it is a convenience and we do not have to do it at all and we are losing money providing this convenience and to not lose money we would have to charge \$8.00. Town Clerk Amie Brown stated that another option is for the customer to pay online which charges a percentage instead of a flat fee. Mayor Freeman asked the council how they wanted to handle it and that it could be tabled since it seems like they are not ready to make a decision. Alderwoman Corley stated that she does not want to table it and would have to vote no for \$8.00. Mayor Freeman said he will have to take the loss out of someone's budget to which Alderwoman Brocato asked him was that a threat and he stated yes. Alderwoman Brocato told Mayor Freeman that it is a shame that he is implying that he will take it out of the cultural district fund budget if she does not vote for it to which he said he will have to figure out how to cover the cost. Alderwoman Brocato stated that we eat the loss and do something for our citizens and do not take it out of the cultural district of any other department that does not go along with it. Mayor Freeman said he did not say that he said he will have to find out how to fund it because he will not allow the citizens to lose money on something that can be easily fixed. Alderman Kennedy said we are supposed to help the people and have compassion and he could see \$1.00 more but not \$5.00 more. Motion to NOT increase the charge by Corley; seconded by Brocato. Passed unanimously.
- 7. Sabine Parish Trash Bash 3/27-4/24 – Get Off Your Fanny and Clean Up Many is Saturday, April 17th:** Suzanne Williams reported that she is organizing it and she has gotten trash bags, water from Homeland Security which was donated, advertised on social media and in the paper. We are encouraging churches, civic groups and school groups and ask them register with us. Mrs. Williams went on to say that arrangements are being made to have a dumpster located at the depot for one month. She will ride around with the guys and find the streets that are the worst so she will have choices when someone asks. Mayor Freeman went on to say that he is having a cost analysis done for merchants and let them know they might be able to get dumpsters cheaper. Alderwoman Corley asked Mrs. Williams do they still need to do a bag count like before to which Mrs. Williams said if everybody puts it in one place, they can just weigh it but things are less restricted this year due to COVID and because it is a month long.
- 8. Reports:** Council was presented with the **Profit & Loss Performance Budget** for February 2021 showing \$104,900 because the sales tax has been up all year and he thinks that is because of COVID, more people are shopping at home; the **Payables Log** for February 2021 with evidence of invoices paid; balanced & reconciled **Bank Statements** showing \$1,583,177.19 in checking accounts and \$330,270.03 in savings accounts for February 2021; **Overtime report** through February 2021; Verification of Federal & Louisiana **Taxes paid** for February 2021; and Verification of **Insurance paid** for February 2021. All reports were accepted as written and presented with a motion by Darwin and seconded by Jackson. Vote unanimous.
- 9. Chief's Report with update on warrants:** Chief of Police Cheryl Wooley provided a report to the Council on activity for the last 30 days for Many Police Department and a calendar of the officer's patrol schedule. Alderwoman Corley asked if they were still doing the collection on warrants to which Chief Wooley stated at last month's court, they gave the people an extra 30 days to pay to help them and once that 30 days is up and they still have not paid they will be turned over to collection. Mayor Freeman asked Alderwoman Corley if she still wanted the report and she said it was beneficial; Mayor Freeman asked Chief Wooley to ask Carla to please provide the report and Chief Wooley said okay. Chief Wooley stated that she is getting reports of more officers being seen out on the street;

Alderwoman Corley gave compliments that the times she has recently called they have been very courteous and helpful; Mayor Freeman stated he is very pleased that the public made a choice to hire her for four more years; Chief Wooley reported that Officer Eddington will be coming out of POST academy in May and he will also be their tech person, he scored 100% on the legal section, scored in the top three on the firearms section and he may end up being in the top two overall in the academy and they are very proud of him. Alderwoman Brocato mentioned to be sure he signed the contract that he will stay two years after completing academy to which Chief Wooley stated that he signed it before he left; she wishes Officer Neel would stay but he is determined to go elsewhere to make more money. Mayor Freeman asked Chief Wooley when he would be leaving and she said she told him she needed a final date by May. Mayor Freeman said we would go ahead and advertise so we can hire someone early; Alderwoman Corley asked that the hire packet be given to them in plenty of time to look over; Mayor Freeman asked the Chief to have the hire packet ready at least a week before voting. Mayor Freeman reported that the state has dropped the employer portion of retirement by 4% which is around \$10,000.00 and he will take that portion and put it into raises for the officers which he hopes will stop the officers from leaving. Chief Wooley went on to report that shift changes will be instituted so that a POST Supervisor will be on each shift; the situation with the juveniles has calmed down; the National Guard has a five-month program for juveniles and she handed out brochures.

a. Chief's Recommendation to move part-time patrol officer Ben Shaw to full-time patrol officer: Passed with a motion by Brocato and seconded by Jackson. Vote unanimous.

10. Sales Tax Report: Increase of 9.82% over January 2020: Report was given by Alderwoman Corley. She stated that the bill on the centralization was pre-filed yesterday; they will create an eight member board split evenly between the local and state representatives; they have taken away the ability to audit any business without physical presence in the state which she does not approve of so she will do some more research on it; the board has approved rules to streamline the process; if passes it will go to statewide election on November 8th; she and Nolan are very active and will start educating people on social media. Mayor Freeman asked for a motion to say we do not approve this. Motion by Corley; seconded by Brocato. Passed unanimously. Mayor Freeman asked for copies of the resolution to be sent to the Senator, Representative and other municipalities so they can do the same. Alderwoman Corley ended by saying that their CPA, Mr. Fremaux, gave up his position on the Sales & Use Tax Board so they posted an ad and they hired Folden out of Jonesboro.

11. Tourism Report: Alderwoman Jackson reported the overnight room sales and occupancy tax decreased 22% over last year; two lunkers caught on Toledo Bend; a new national scenic byway announced making there be 34 national scenic byways; Fort Jesup had their 200th meeting; grant received from Cane River for \$5,000.00 for Choctaw Apache history for the museum; a corn crib has been donated to the Zwolle museum by Conrad Cathey; new businesses open are El Patio at Toledo Town, Hilltop and Courtside Café in Zwolle, and the Swamp Frog Bar and Grill in Zwolle should be open later this month; Southern Living Magazine done an interview with Cypress Bend; and there are 17 upcoming events.

12. Cultural District Report: Alderwoman Brocato reported that they had a meeting on Tuesday night and was going to have an artist that was to present a new art project for the town but she was unable to come; Movies in Many will be starting again with restrictions of wearing masks and social distancing; the first movie being next Saturday night with the annual Easter party and meeting and taking pictures with the Easter bunny; copies of the Movies in Many and Music in Many schedules were handed out; Music in Many starts July 3rd with the God Bless America concert with Willie Stewart Family and Friends; a city-wide talent show is being worked on for November; Suzanne is looking into some grants for art and culture; Alderwoman Brocato ended by asking everyone in the room to come and support the movies and concerts.

- 13. Historical Committee Report:** Mayor Freeman stated they will be having a meeting tonight after the council meeting and he would have more to report next month.
- 14. Fire Board:** Alderman Kennedy stated it is doing well. Mayor Freeman asked for a copy of the budget to which Alderman Kennedy replied we would have to get it from David Davis. Mayor Freeman asked Alderman Kennedy does he get one to which Alderman Kennedy stated he gets one but we have to ask David Davis for it. Mayor Freeman stated it is public record. Alderwoman Brocato asked Alderman Kennedy if we needed to ask permission to which Alderman Kennedy replied she would have to talk to Mr. Davis if she wanted a copy. Mayor Freeman asked Town Clerk Amie Brown to write a letter asking for a copy of the budget monthly.
- 15. Airport:** Mayor Freeman stated that we are working towards getting the airport to where jet planes can land which we are hoping will happen in two years; he will try to get a meeting with the aviation people to get a time frame; he has been in negotiation with the police jury about the road from Highway 6 into the airport and they are willing to pay half of it and they wanted him to sign an Intergovernmental Agreement but he would not sign it because it did not have a dollar amount it; they are supposed to be working on a dollar amount and bring it back then he will bring it to the council; the existing road will have to be moved over to the East because the FAA requires so much space for the landing and we will get with them about that.
- 16. Zoning:** Zoning Administrator Amie Brown stated there was nothing to report.
- 17. Grant Report:** Grant Writer Suzanne Williams provided a report and stated that she has applied for \$11,077 in grants for the police department; found out today that the tower between Apollo and Middlecreek is owned by Louisiana State Patrol and we are trying to get permission to put a camera up there; she is waiting to hear back on the CWEF and LGAP grants; legislature meets in April on the Capital Outlay grant and we will know after that. Mayor Freeman stated that he spoke to Rodney Schamerhorn before the meeting and he reported that there may be more money put into water improvement projects and he will know more when the meeting is held and he will push to get it done. Mr. Williams went on to say that she signed off today on the last category Z with FEMA for an additional \$10,521.01 and that will make our total obligated amount of \$206,375.11 from FEMA; as soon as we have the closeout meeting it will take about three weeks to receive the check. Mayor Freeman asked Mrs. Williams if she had visited with Donnie Wooley to which she stated not lately and Mayor Freeman told her he is a good source. Mrs. Williams ended by saying that with the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 the Town of Many is slated to receive \$990,000 as our share of the Act but the Treasury has not yet given any stipulations of what it can and cannot be used for.
- 18. Street:** Street Supervisor Jeremy Wilkerson reported they have been mowing; patching potholes, picking up green waste, and transplanted trees from Veterans Park. Mayor Freeman reported that the five streets are being overlaid. Operations Manager Mark Oxley stated the overlays should be finished by next Tuesday or Wednesday.
- 19. Animal Control:** Street Supervisor Jeremy Wilkerson reported they caught 4 dogs and 3 cats. Alderman Kennedy stated there are a bunch of dogs between Caledonia and Robinson barking all day and night; he reported it to the last Supervisor twice and he went and talked to them but did not do anything about the dogs; the neighbors are being kept awake all day and night and they are mad and want the dogs out of the way. Alderwoman Brocato asked were the dogs running loose to which Alderman Kennedy stated they are tied up. Mayor Freeman told Street Supervisor Jeremy Wilkerson to go tomorrow and check it out.
- 20. Water:** Water Superintendent Roger Dew reported they have done a couple sewer and water taps, laid pipe today at USDA and will start working on faulty meters. Mayor Freeman reported that the 58 people that had broken water lines during the ice storm we cannot forgive the amount but we are giving them more time to pay.

- 21. Garbage:** Operations Manager Mark Oxley said they are doing good; we have received complaints about the lids but he took care of it. Alderwoman Brocato said she noticed that in her neighborhood it seems people are doing somewhat better about putting everything in the garbage cans. Mayor Freeman stated that the Chief is helping with that by writing tickets. Mayor Freeman also reported that we have applied for a grant for \$140,000 to buy every house a garbage can that meets the requirement but we do not know if he will get it yet. He went on to say there was chatter on Facebook about storm damage debris being picked up on the west side but not the east side and that we are racist so he rode around with the Operations Manager and they have picked up on the east side three times and only the west side once so we are not being racist. Alderwoman Brocato asked how long they will be here picking up to which Mayor Freeman stated they will finish up this Friday and now they are picking up on Highway 6. Alderwoman Corley asked was the pile picked up on Meadow Lane and she was told yes by the Operations Manager. Mayor Freeman reminded everyone we have two trucks, a new one and a backup and we also lowered the garbage fee by \$6.00.
- 22. Amendment-Town Vehicle Savings Account - \$112,089.37 – Approval to transfer funds out of this account into the General Fund:** Mayor Freeman stated that we have no cars and equipment in this account and that other savings accounts have been opened in other departments since we opened this one. Passed with a motion by Darwin and seconded by Brocato. Vote unanimous.
- 23. Amendment-Town Vehicle Savings Account – Lower the monthly transfer amount from \$2,000 to \$250:** For office equipment. Passed with a motion by Brocato and seconded by Jackson. Vote unanimous.
- 24. Amendment-955 Sycamore Street:** Alderman Kennedy asked for a closed session to which Mayor Freeman told him you cannot have a closed session unless it is to discuss personnel issues or a lawsuit. Alderman Kennedy stated that on 955 Sycamore Street we only heard one side and there are always two sides to every story and you must get both sides and that the young lady that put the trailer house on Sycamore Street the problem came up with Mr. Crittenden. Alderman Kennedy stated she didn't know the law when she put the trailer there and when she was burning something Mr. Crittenden stopped by and told her she was burning trash and there are cane bushes in between them, there was a house there at one time and the lady that lived there was named Opal Lynch and after she died her daughter took it over and her daughter let this other young lady have the property, she is a hard worker and put the trailer there for her and her child and before that she was living with her mother and about 9-10 others in the same house, and he has learned in life to have compassion for people. Alderman Kennedy went on to say that if you have money, whatever the rich says goes and that is what has been going on at city hall for years; Mr. Crittenden went to the mayor and the mayor went along with him; the mayor picked Mr. Crittenden for the zoning board and the council had no authority to which Mayor Freeman replied that is his job. Alderman Kennedy went on to say that the mayor had her put in jail and it cost her \$2,000 to get out and the mayor tried to have her arrested again but the Chief would not do it due to double jeopardy; the property is big enough for the trailer; he told the council they would be dead wrong to go along with this and it is time to make a change. Alderman Kennedy made a motion to override the zoning board and allow the young lady to move in the trailer. Alderwoman Brocato asked if this was the trailer in the corner of Sycamore and Alabama to which Mayor Freeman stated yes in the curve. Mayor Freeman added that they are also running an illegal mechanic shop over there. Mayor Freeman reminded the council that she moved the trailer in without getting permission then she went in and got an application, it went to the zoning board, the zoning board measured the property and got the description, she was not alone but accompanied by Mrs. Pat Thomas, the zoning board made a recommendation that she was in violation of our zoning law. Mayor Freeman reminded them that they took an oath to uphold the zoning laws and the laws of our community, we appoint the commission and the council votes on the board. The council voted unanimously to accept the zoning board's recommendation to deny because she was in violation of the zoning law and to help her out, we gave her six months to move it; two years later it is still there, somebody is living in it with no lights but they are fixing cars which is in violation because this is not a

business district. Alderman Kennedy stated that we need to vote on it to which Mayor Freeman said it has already been voted on. Alderman Kennedy stated that the mayor even had her put in jail to which Mayor Freeman replied that she violated the ordinance and he took an oath to uphold the law. Alderman Kennedy went on to say that we should give her money back and let her get in that trailer and he would like to make the motion tonight. Alderwoman Corley asked did she every go before the zoning board to which Mayor Freeman said yes and the zoning board gave the council a recommendation. Alderman Kennedy stated the council has last say-so and if they want to overrule it they can. Alderwoman Brocato asked had any been overruled before to which Alderman Kennedy said yes, many times and Mayor Freeman said no not many times only once. Alderwoman Brocato stated that they do not need to be doing mechanic work as a business at that address. Alderman Kennedy made a motion to allow the young lady to move in and to give her her money back; seconded by Jackson. Passed unanimously.

Next scheduled Regular Council Meeting is on April 20, 2021 at 5:15 p.m.

Motion to adjourn meeting at 7:03 P.M. was made by Brocato and seconded by Jackson. Vote unanimous.

KENNETH A. FREEMAN, MAYOR

AMIE BROWN, TOWN CLERK