

TOWN OF MANY

May 18, 2021

Regular Session

The Mayor and Aldermen of the Town of Many met in regular session, Tuesday, May 18, 2021, at 5:00 p.m. at Town Hall. Present were Mayor Ken Freeman, Mayor Pro-Tem James Kennedy and Council Members Gay Corley, Anita Darwin, and Bobbie Jackson. Council Member Mary Brocato joined at 5:15 p.m. Also present were Town Clerk Amie Brown, Chief of Police Cheryl Wooley, Street Supervisor Jeremy Wilkerson, Wastewater Plant Supervisor Joshua Darden, Mayor's Assistant Phyllis Jeansonne and Grant Writer Suzanne Williams.

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 April 20, 2021 regular session was approved as written and presented with a motion by Jackson; seconded by Darwin. Vote unanimous.

Amend Agenda: None

Open to Public Comments relating to items on agenda: None

Guest(s): None

Old Business:

- 1.** None

New Business:

- 1. Introduce Ordinance #2 of 2021 – Compensation of Municipal Clerk:** Mayor Freeman stated that he is asking for the Clerk's compensation be increased from \$22.00 per hour to \$23.00 per hour. Passed with a motion by Kennedy; seconded by Jackson. Vote unanimous.
- 2. Introduce Ordinance #3 of 2021 – Amend Budget Changes for FY 2020-2021:** Passed with a motion by Corley; seconded by Kennedy. Vote unanimous.
- 3. Introduce Ordinance #4 of 2021 – Annual Budget for FY 2021-2022:** Mayor Freeman stated that we had two working lunches to go over the new budget and we were \$400,000 in the red due to the aging water and sewer system and would have had to increase water fees by 25% but due to the COVID relief fund of \$990,000 in which we will be receiving half of this year and half next year caused the budget to balance so we will not have to raise water rates for the next two years; according to the engineers it would cost around 14 million dollars and that he went with Mayor-Elect Hable to Donnie Wooley's office yesterday and talked to him about options and Donnie informed them there is a possible bill coming down called the American Labor bill which will have billions of dollars in it that we may be successful in getting money; Donnie did a quick water study and said we have more than enough money to pay the note plus we do not owe anything and as a result the bond rating is very high which means we would get a low interest rate and the interest rates right now are the lowest they have ever been and probably the lowest they will ever be. Mayor asked for a motion to have Suzanne and Robert talk to the engineers about the water issue projects. Passed with a motion by Jackson; seconded by Darwin. Vote unanimous. Passed with a motion by Darwin; seconded by Jackson. Vote unanimous.

Mary Brocato joined the meeting at this time (5:15 pm).

- 4. Review and Award Bid: Runway 12-30 Rehabilitation South End:** Williams Equipment submitted the lowest bid of \$663,836.87. Passed with a motion to accept the lowest bid by Kennedy and seconded by Jackson. Vote unanimous.
- 5. Alcohol permit for Brookshire Bros.:** A report submitted by the Many Police Dept. stated that this would be in violation of our town ordinance as it is within the 300-yard distance of Calvary Baptist Church. Motion to DENY the application by Corley; seconded by Darwin. Passed unanimously.
- 6. Change dumpster service from Waste Connections to R&J Disposal:** A cost analysis was presented to the council showing a savings of \$4,309 per year with R&J Disposal. Alderwoman Corley asked if R&J was from Nacogdoches to which Mayor Freeman stated that they have a contract with the parish landfill. Alderwoman Brocato asked if there is an increase each year to which Mayor Freeman stated this price is for one year. Alderman Kennedy asked if this was for once a week or twice a week pickup and Clerk Amie Brown

told him it was twice a week pickup as was Waste Connections. Motion to change by Corley; seconded by Kennedy. Passed unanimously.

- 7. Smoke Testing:** Mayor Freeman reported that LRWA came in and done a smoke test free of charge in town and identified all the sewer lines that were leaking, to include the towns lines, but the majority are on private property; the landowners sewer line. Mayor Freeman asked Wastewater Plant Supervisor Josh Darden what the next steps are to which Josh replied the next step is to send out notifications to the public asking customers to repair within 60 days and if they do not comply, we will look at disconnecting water service as an unfortunate means to make it happen. Mayor Freeman asked since it is so essential to the operation, and causes wear and tear on our equipment, can we go on their property and repair it then charge them on their taxes like we do with cleaning properties to which Josh stated that our ordinance says we cannot go on private property. Mayor Freeman stated the he knows that is what it says but he wants to get it fixed, if the customer should ignore it, because it will end up costing us a lot of money to repair our equipment plus we could run the risk of being out of compliance and be fined. Mayor Freeman asked Josh if he could find out if we could do this and report back and Josh stated that he will find out. Alderwoman Corley asked if the notifications would be sent by letter to which Mayor Freeman said yes, registered mail. Alderwoman Corley asked that we also post on Facebook several times and run ads on the radio, and suggested that the 60 days be increased to 90 days, if possible, to give everybody plenty of time to rework their budget to which Mayor Freeman asked Josh if that date is set by the state or health department or can we change it to which Josh said he can amend it in the letter. Mayor Freeman stated that he does not want to cause problems for the citizens but we do have a responsibility to save them money by keeping their plant operating properly. Alderwoman Corley stated that we should concentrate on the towns responsibility first and get that solved then if the customers do not do their part, then we should do it then look at adding the charge to their taxes but give them 90 days. Alderwoman Corley asked that the letter be written to where the customer will understand it and explain the possibility of what can happen. Josh stated that he would also need the help from the council to set the fine. Mayor Freeman asked out of 1,455 meters how many customers are affected to which Josh stated 162 sites and some of those are ours. Alderman Kennedy stated there is a manhole on Aldredge Circle that floods when it rains and there is also another one on Lincoln. Josh stated that we also need to do some right-of-way cleanup. Mayor Freeman stated that we also need the in-flow dishes and asked Josh how much they are to which Josh stated for around 60 dishes it would be \$3,000. Mayor Freeman asked for a motion to proceed with sending the letters and getting these lines fixed. Motion by Corley to send the letters out, Facebook be posted several times, ads run on the radio and give customers given 90 days to repair; seconded by Brocato. Passed unanimously.

7. Mobile Phone App for Police Dept. and City Hall:

- 8. Reports:** Council was presented with the **Profit & Loss Performance Budget** for April 2021 showing \$164,635 in the black for the year even after huge expenditures in the water and sewer department, but thanks to Suzanne we have received reimbursement monies for FEMA and COVID; the **Payables Log** for April 2021 with evidence of invoices paid; balanced & reconciled **Bank Statements** showing \$1,718,163.72 in checking accounts and \$340,660.88 in savings accounts for April 2021; **Overtime report** of \$109,785.77 from July 1, 2020 through April 30, 2021 which is a lot but we had the ice storm and two hurricanes which required a lot of overtime from water department, street department and police department and was approved by the Mayor before being taken to which Alderwoman Corley said she would like to take the time to say that she appreciates everybody on the staff; Verification of Federal & Louisiana **Taxes paid** for April 2021; and Verification of **Insurance paid** for April 2021. All reports were accepted as written and presented with a motion by Corley 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. Chief Wooley stated they are recommending a new hire, since Mr. Jimmy retired they did not replace his position as dispatcher but replaced with a phone tree which she thinks is working out well; the new hire is Jacob Bridges who has been working for the Sheriff's Office a while and will be moving into town and he approached us for a job and if hired he will be going to POST soon. Mayor Freeman stated that he wanted to compliment Officer Eddington for finishing the academy with the highest grade.

a. Chief's Recommendation to move full-time patrol officer Jacob Bridges at \$14.00 per to start employment on 5/19/21: Passed with a motion by Brocato and seconded by Corley. Vote unanimous.

2. Sales Tax Report: Increase of 24.18% over March 2020: Report was given by Alderwoman Corley.

3. Tourism Report:

Bobbie: We're getting a new director, Mrs. Linda is slowly stepping down, Chip Davis from S. Carolina

Mayor: Why did they go outside the state when there were numerous qualified people to apply here in Sabine Parish and Louisiana.

Gay: I guess it was the best qualified

Mayor: According to who?

Bobbie: Linda and some of the others that interviewed, I wasn't in on that, by his resume'

Mary: You know I wondered because I knew of some of the applicants who seemed to be extremely well qualified

Gay: About our parish?

Mary: Exactly

Gay: Well that's just like the chamber of commerce, it should have been publicized because there are people in the parish that are more qualified to take over the precedence that could do more and to know they gave it down for somebody

Mayor: Have you voted on it?

Mary: Yeah it's a done deal

Bobbie: Yes she's going to stay on a while to direct

Mary: She told me she would stay for eight months

Mayor: I would have liked for this committee to have voted that they stay in the state, did you report to us who they were going to be hiring?

Bobbie: No

Gay: I don't think she had the full list of who applied

Mayor: They didn't give y'all any information?

Bobbie: They did but... **Gay:** Not a full information packet

Mayor: It's unusual that we have to go out of state to find somebody who can sell our parish when there are a lot of people in the parish who know our people, who know what our assets are

Mary: And they're not even from the state of Louisiana

Mayor: And they're not even from the parish

Bobbie: We have an orientation scheduled for Chip Davis, that's his name.

Gay: Has he ever been around this parish very much do you know?

Mary: Has he ever been to Sabine Parish?

Bobbie: Yes, yes and of course Linda took him around.

4. Cultural District Report: Alderwoman Brocato reported that they are having a special movie this Saturday, Memorial Day, as part of our Memorial Day celebration to honor soldiers from Sabine Parish; Margaret Nixon from the VFW called and wanted to serve gumbo at this weekend's movie but they decided there was not enough time to get the word out so they will try for Veterans Day; will mention and recognize veterans who lost their lives from Sabine Parish; veterans will also receive free concessions; there was only 6 people at the Dora movie; COVID really done a number on the attendance so we will start giving door prizes and publicize as much as we can this Saturday to help increase attendance; in June there will not be a Juneteenth festival this year but we will be showing the movie Harriet and she has ordered some door prizes and Mary Perry is helping with

donations of door prizes; movies are scheduled all the way through December; music shows are scheduled through the end of the year also, including the Many High School band Christmas concert and Willie Stewart Family and Friends Christmas concert both scheduled for December.

- 5. Historical Committee Report:** Alderwoman Brocato reported that the Historical Committee is now merged with the Cultural District Committee and their main priority is the museum and have set a goal to open January of 2022 which she thinks is a reasonable goal. One exhibit is No Man's Land and are working with Rebecca Blankenbaker from the Cane River Heritage Center and Scott Debose; the second room is the train room with the history and influence of trains here in Sabine Parish showing villages that represent Many, Florien and Zwolle, places where the trains run through which is being worked on by Betty Miller and Gail Thomas; the third room will be changing exhibits and was once talked about being wedding gowns but only one wedding gown was offered so now they are going to work on the influence of the Choctaw Apache Tribe; Dorsey Brunson, the Author of Trail of Tears, is coming in from Mobile Thursday to meet at the Depot and measure the room; she is working with Dr. Robert Caldwell who is also a Choctaw Apache and a Professor at the University of Texas and he will be here Sunday to look at it; the next room is the store which has an old gas stove and Cherry Williams is working very hard on it and they have already located some items to go in the gift shop, for example, at least two documentaries and one feature film, The Wannabe's, which was filmed here, for sale; there is a documentary coming out in September financed by the tourist commission through LPB on No Man's Land and they have agreed to premier it at Many Community Center and that DVD will be on sale at the gift shop; also on sale will be the Battle of Pleasant Hill DVD that Scott DeBose's brother-in-law made; working with Suzanne to find a grant that will finance doing a documentary on the history of Sabine Parish and Many; also on sale in the gift shop will be books by Gene Wright's daughter Ms. Beasley, Russell Peace's books, Lauren Scott who is originally from Negreet and moved to Atlanta has novels, Dorsey Brunson's books, Trail of Tears and a cookbook; Dorsey Brunson is bringing a box of the books which are autographed and Lauren Moore has agreed to sell them at Nichols and will donate half of the price of the book (\$12.50) back to the museum; also looking at jams and jellies that are made here in Sabine Parish to sell.
- 6. Fire Board:** Alderman Kennedy stated there was no report. Mayor Freeman asked the council if they received a copy of the budget from the Fire Board.
- 7. Airport:** Mayor Freeman stated that we are getting closer to getting the airport done to where jet planes can land and that we just approved \$600,000 on repairs and things are moving along real well.
- 8. Zoning:** a.) **Amber Gentry – 665 Ponder St. – To place a small home (832 sf) – Recommendation to approve by Zoning Commission:** Motion to accept recommendation by Darwin; seconded by Corley. Vote unanimous.
b.) **Scott Viator – 765 Ponder St. – To build a home (2,100 sf) on the lot – Recommendation to approve by Zoning Commission:** Motion to accept recommendation by Brocato; seconded by Corley. Vote unanimous.
- 17. Grant Report:** Grant Writer Suzanne Williams provided a report and stated that we will have our LCLE grant money for the police department for camera kit and emergency first aid kits the first of July; working on two funding sources for license plate readers; still waiting on the \$10,521 to be paid by FEMA for administrative costs of doing hurricane claims; attended a webinar on what we can use the American Rescue Plan money for and will have another one next Wednesday that deals specifically with police but right now it looks like for a municipality our size the money can be used for water, sewer and broadband projects; scheduled a standing meeting time every week with Mary Brocato to review grants for cultural and historical districts; looked at some DOJ grants with the Chief of Police and one of them might possibly find a school resource officer for Many; some of the overtime expenditures got paid back from FEMA.
- 18. Street:** Street Supervisor Jeremy Wilkerson reported they have been digging ditches out, fixing culverts and trying to keep the grass cut.

19. Animal Control: Street Supervisor Jeremy Wilkerson reported they caught 5 cats and 1 dog and that the fire department assisted with a cat in a tree.

20. Water: Wastewater Plant Supervisor Joshua Darden reported they have been reading meters this week and working on pumps at the water plant.

21. Garbage: Alderwoman Corley asked if we have had any luck finding grants for garbage cans to which Grant Writer Suzanne Williams said no; Mayor Freeman stated that he signed a purchase order for a cart tipper to be used on our garbage truck to lift the cans and has also instructed the sanitation workers, and sent out letters, to not pick up any cans that do not have lids or are in violation of our ordinance because with all the rain the cans are too heavy to pick up; Alderwoman Corley stated that she has witnessed the cans getting destroyed and the lids not getting put back on the cans and wind blowing the cans out into the street and we should not penalize our citizens because they are spending money for the cans; Alderman Kennedy said his opinion is to add an extra dollar or two to the bill every month and it will pay for the cans in one year; Mayor Freeman asked Suzanne Williams if she has applied for a grant to which she said she has not applied but has investigated it.

Next scheduled Regular Council Meeting is on June 15, 2021 at 5:00 p.m.

Motion to adjourn meeting at 6:16 P.M. was made by Corley and seconded by Jackson. Vote unanimous.

KENNETH A. FREEMAN, MAYOR

AMIE BROWN, TOWN CLERK