

Town of Abita Springs

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**MAYOR
GREG LEMONS**

ALDERMEN
GINA KILPATRICK HARPER
(MAYOR PRO-TEM)

PATRICK BERRIGAN
DANIEL J. CURTIS
RYAN MURPHY
LESLIE BLITCH WELIVER

UTILITY MANAGER
DEBRA MACLEAN

UTILITY CLERK II
LINDA MEEKER

PLANNING & ZONING DIRECTOR
CINDY CHATELAIN

TOWN MARSHAL
MIKE SLEMMER

The following minutes were taken at the regular monthly meeting of the Mayor and the Board of Aldermen at 6pm on December 12, 2017 at the Town Hall in Abita Springs, Louisiana. Mayor Lemons called the meeting to order.

MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Mayor Lemons reported that Niki Mendow was selected as December's Employee of the Month. Ms. Mendow thanked the Mayor and her co-workers. Moving on to the next announcement, Mayor Lemons officially honored local resident Betty Cognevich. Ms. Cognevich who is moving to California, was presented a proclamation expressing the Town's deep gratitude for her contribution as a friend and volunteer. Ms. Cognevich said that it has been a joy to know and work with everyone and that she will return to visit. Mayor Lemons next recognized the Keep Abita Beautiful organization as the 2017 Volunteer Civic Organization of the Year. The Mayor recognized the organization for its efforts in the achieving the 2017 Cleanest City Award along with initiating the Adopt-A-Spot program and its ongoing beautification efforts throughout the year. Keep Abita Beautiful Chairman Adrienne Juttner thanked others including Keep Louisiana and Keep America Beautiful, the Abita Springs Garden Club, the Friends of the Park and the Mayor. She invited attendees to join and reported that the next scheduled project would be the beautification of the area around the little gazebo at the traffic circle. The Mayor wished everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year and closed the section by introducing Town employees.

ROLL CALL:

Council Members Berrigan, Curtis, Kilpatrick-Harper, Murphy and Blitch Welliver were present. Alderman Kilpatrick-Harper moved to accept the November 28, 2017 Town Council Meeting minutes, seconded by Alderman Berrigan. All were in favor.

REPORTS: STPSO: Lt. Williams presented his monthly account of statistics. The Lieutenant reported the thefts including a bicycle, a license plate and a purse from an unlocked vehicle. He added that there will be beefed up patrols with monitoring for DUI and traffic violations in the upcoming weeks. TOWN MARSHAL: The Marshal reported on one complaint related to a disturbance and one traffic detail. FIRE DISTRICT #8: Chief Glynn reported on monthly and year-to-date statistics. The Chief mentioned that the number of calls are almost identical to last year with 674 this year compared to 671. ENGINEERING: Jean Thibodeaux reported that the sidewalk project is in the permitting stage and that the Railroad Ave project is in the contract stage. Mayor Lemons reported that the first phase of the sewer rehabilitation program will commence with smoke testing and closed circuit tv of sewer lines followed by manhole inspections. This phase is expected to take approximately four to six weeks. The Harrison Avenue Extension Land Use Study is underway and the environmental impact phase of the research will follow.

Mayor Lemons reviewed the Town's practice of creating written reports to address maintenance, public works, and garbage collection activities and complaints.

OLD BUSINESS:

Mayor Lemons opened discussion of INSTRUMENT 2017-007 AN ORDINANCE ADOPTING AN OPERATING BUDGET OF REVENUE AND EXPENDITURES FOR THE YEAR BEGINNING JANUARY 1, 2018 AND ENDING DECEMBER 31, 2018 and asked for a motion to adopt. With no motion presented, the Mayor asked Counselor Edward Deano to explain how the Town would operate without an approved budget. Mr. Deano reported that the law requires adoption of a budget prior to the end of the fiscal year, adding that there is a provision to allow for the continued operation of the Town under the existing budget at 50% of the 2017 appropriations. Meeting attendees asked the Board to communicate the basis for their reluctance to move forward with the adoption of the proposed 2018 budget. A local resident also expressed concern that some of the estimated budget projections are unrealistic. Alderman Blich Welliver noted that the Board has questions regarding employee benefits and that it is their obligation to ensure they have accurate information prior to approving the budget. Alderman Kilpatrick-Harper emphasized her responsibility to be a good steward of the Town's tax dollars and assured attendees that thoughtful consideration of all the facts will be made prior to any changes. Alderman Murphy made the point that while the Board has been provided general budget information, some of that information has not been as detailed as what was recently provided. Alderman Murphy and Alderman Blich Welliver noted that several documents provided by the administration inaccurately described the employer/employee share of the cost of benefits. Alderman Curtis requested that financial reports be provided more timely to allow the Board to be better equipped to evaluate the budget. Alderman Berrigan admonished employees to be cognizant of their responsibility as Town employees weighed against their need to advocate for themselves. Mayor Lemons shared information regarding compensation and employee retention. The Mayor reported that employee salaries are below those of surrounding communities where we compete for employees, and that the benefits we offer help us to remain competitive in hiring good people. He added that over the past five years the Town has reduced the cost of benefits over 12%. He also commented on the administration's efforts to document and clarify the Town's policies and procedures and invited the Aldermen to meet with him to discuss their concerns and questions. Alderman Blich Welliver made a motion to defer action on the budget instrument to the next meeting of the Council, seconded by Alderman Kilpatrick-Harper. The vote was: Yeas:5, Alderman Berrigan, Curtis, Kilpatrick-Harper, Murphy, and Blich Welliver, Nays:0, Abstain:0, Absent:0.

NEW BUSINESS:

There was no new business to discuss.

OPEN/ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Local resident Stewart Eastman addressed the Board regarding the Town's Tree Ordinance and his desire to add a provision regarding the removal of invasive and noxious species in Abita Springs. Counselor Deano commended the Mayor and Board of Aldermen for their handling of the budgetary process. Alderman Kilpatrick-Harper announced upcoming events.

Alderman Murphy moved to adjourn the Town Council Meeting, seconded by Alderman Curtis.

MEETING ADJOURNED

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED THIS 12th DAY OF DECEMBER 2017.

Kathy Armand, Town Clerk

Honorable Greg Lemons, Mayor