



The following minutes were taken from the regular monthly meetings of the Public Committees on May 5, 2015. Mayor Pro Tem Kilpatrick-Harper called the meeting to order and Alderman Blitch Welliver led the pledge of allegiance.

**GOVERNMENTAL COMMITTEE:** Alderman Berrigan moved to open the Governmental Committee meeting seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Kilpatrick-Harper. Mayor Lemons requested that a discussion of the future playground handicap access path be added to the agenda. Alderman Berrigan agreed. Alderman Berrigan then moved to accept the April 2015 Governmental Committee meeting minutes, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Kilpatrick-Harper.

- Mayor Lemons began a discussion of the Abita Springs Farmer's Market by pointing out the benefits of a healthy market to downtown business, the cultural district, and to the residents of Abita Springs. He then went on to summarize points from a meeting with the Town's auditor, Jim Tonglet. The Mayor reported that Mr. Tonglet found no impropriety with Mike Norman working for the Town as a part-time supervisor of Town Hall maintenance, acting as coordinator of the market and as director of the Abita Grows Initiative. Mayor Lemons explained the Town Finance Clerk, Niki Mendow has complete oversight of Mr. Norman's Town related financial activities, including the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) transactions and the Wholesome Wave Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive grant. Local resident, Linda Hawkins requested more details related to the terms of grant. Ms. Hawkins pointed out that two internet sites published a press release, which stated that the grant was awarded to the Abita Grows Initiative. Mayor Lemons answered that the information in the release was inaccurate and that the FINI grant was awarded to the Town of Abita Springs Farmer's Market. The Mayor reiterated that Ms. Mendow will oversee compliance with the terms of the grant and all related financial aspects of its administration. Alderman Curtis directed attention to inaccuracies in the Wholesome Wave grant application, also noting that the provided application was incomplete. Alderman Curtis requested a complete application with attachments. Local resident, Mr. Jay Hawkins advised that he explored the USDA website in an effort to learn the criteria for SNAP vendor eligibility. Ms. Linda Hawkins added that her research revealed that Mr. Norman signed the USDA SNAP vendor application and she asked for a copy of the completed application. Discussion then ensued regarding the SNAP process and the accounting of FINI grant. Questioning revealed that the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) provides monthly benefits that help eligible low-income households buy food. Qualifying individuals provide their SNAP cards to the coordinator in exchange for tokens, which can be used to buy certain food items. The funds are deposited into the Town of Abita Springs Farmer's Market account and applicable transaction fees are deducted. The food vendors are paid with tokens and the market coordinator redeems the vendor's tokens at the end of the market day for cash. Ms. Mendow reconciles vendor fees, SNAP / EBT transactions, and bank card transaction fees monthly and handles accordingly. Full details regarding the Wholesome Wave FINI matching grant are not yet available. The FINI grant provides matching funds in an amount equal to the amount spent by a qualifying individual through the SNAP program but the match funds can only be used for fresh fruits and vegetables. Ms. Mendow will oversee administration of the grant and reconciliation will be monthly. It was also made clear that if Mr. Norman chooses to apply for future grants on behalf of the Abita Grows Initiative, the grant application will clearly reflect Abita Grows Initiative as the applicant and the Initiative will have full accountability and responsibility for the grant. Mr. Hawkins expressed concern over the use of public assets for private gain. Mayor Lemons instructed the council clerk to gather pertinent documents and then forward them to the aldermen. Mayor Pro Tem Kilpatrick Harper suggested that the topic be revisited at the next public committee meeting.

- Mayor Lemons advised the Aldermen that the Friends of the Park group plans to donate \$38,173.00 to provide funding for the proposed handicap access to the playground. The Mayor noted that in the near future a contract would be executed between the Town and the awarded contractor, Bliss Products & Services.

Mayor Pro Tem Kilpatrick-Harper moved to close the Governmental Committee meeting, seconded by Alderman Berrigan.

**INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE:** Alderman Murphy moved to open the Infrastructure Committee Meeting and accept the April 2015 Infrastructure Committee meeting minutes, seconded by Alderman Berrigan.

- Alderman Murphy asked if the Mayor would provide information regarding the Hickory St. Bridge. The Mayor addressed the topic saying that the Louisiana Department of Transportation took issue with the distance between the bollards. DOTD's position is that it must be clearly identified that the bridge, in its current condition, can accommodate pedestrian traffic only. The Mayor advised that bridge repairs are quite costly and a direction regarding its future has not yet been determined. Alderman Berrigan suggested improvements to the current signage are in order.

Alderman Murphy moved to close the Infrastructure Committee meeting, seconded by Alderman Berrigan.

**FINANCE COMMITTEE:** Alderman Blitch Welliver moved to open the Finance Committee Meeting and accept the April 2015 Finance Committee meeting minutes, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Kilpatrick-Harper.

- Alderman Blitch Welliver mentioned that monthly reporting will resume shortly with the conclusion of the audit. Mayor Lemons noted that this year will begin the enhanced audit process which will include additional expense to the community.

Alderman Blitch Welliver moved to close the Finance Committee meeting, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Kilpatrick-Harper.

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE:** Alderman Curtis moved to open the Economic Development Committee Meeting and to accept the April 2015 meeting minutes, seconded by Alderman Murphy.

- Alderman Curtis reported that the first draft of graphic design for the 4<sup>th</sup> of July celebration has been completed and the event planning is underway. Mayor Lemons noted that among other activities there will be a flag retirement ceremony. Alderman Curtis reminded everyone additional sponsors are welcome to participate.
- Mayor Lemons reported interest in the possible development of the old Gerald Lloyd property near the edge of Town. The working name of the interested developer is Abita Meadows. The Mayor also provided an update on the proposed recovery center at the Longbranch Annex building noting that the developers are interested in making additional investment in the property, which will be reviewed by the Historic Commission.

Alderman Curtis moved to close the Economic Development Committee meeting, seconded by Alderman Murphy.

Mayor Pro Tem Kilpatrick-Harper moved to close the meeting of the Public Committees, seconded by Alderman Blitch Welliver.

MEETING ADJOURNED

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED THIS 5th DAY OF MAY 2015.

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Kathy Armand, Town Clerk

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Greg Lemons, Mayor