

Minutes
Budget and Public Hearing/Meeting
Town of Iowa
115 N. Thomson, Iowa, LA
June 12, 2023 7:00 p.m.

A Public Hearing was called in compliance with all requirements as to notice and open meeting regulations.

Present: Council Members Julie Fontenot, Gerald Guidry, Joe Becnel, Vernessa Guillory, Daniel Hennigan, Mayor Neal Watkins; Chief of Police Keith Vincent; Town Clerk Cynthia Mallett; Town Attorney Eugene Bouquet; and about 12 citizens.

Mayor Watkins called the public hearing to order at 7:00p.m. He read the first item on the Public Hearing agenda and asked if anyone had any questions or comments. Council Member Julie Fontenot asked about Employee Benefits, Health Savings Account (HSA), that are being cut from the budget and asked that we compromise and maybe pay one-half of what we used to contribute to the HSA. Mayor Watkins responded that we are not taking away the HSA, and maybe later there will be something we could do, but in order to get the budget back on track, we will have to make this correction.

Council Member Daniel Hennigan asked about the \$200 thousand line item for Economic Development with SWLA (IMCAL). Mayor Watkins explained that this organization helps to make economic plans for municipalities. He said this amount is to govern the cost of making a plan for the Town of Iowa. He further explained that there is a plan to annex properties that would help to generate revenue so raises could be given.

A citizen, Ms. Johnson, voiced her concerns about the employee benefits and the cuts to these benefits. Mayor Watkins explained that this economic investment is the vehicle we can use to be able to retain our employees. He said if we don't make the investment in the town, we will not be able to retain the employees we have. He said that when the time comes that we can afford the raise, we will bring it to the Council for approval. Ms. Johnson had further comments and Mayor Watkins addressed her comments with answers about the finances of the town.

Council Member Vernessa Guillory said she wished that we could give the employees at least one-half of the contribution that we used to give. Mayor Watkins said he does too, but I think that it's something that's needed at this point. No other comments were made.

Mayor read the second item of the public hearing agenda. He asked if anyone had any comments or questions. Nobody made comments. Mayor Watkins explained that the width of the street is the same from north to south. He said that the grass has overgrown onto the street, and the mailboxes need to be moved 6 inches from the edge of the street. Mayor Watkins asked Chief Vincent for his opinion. Chief Vincent said he thinks we should go back to a two-way street. Mr. Landry asked why it is being changed. Council Member Daniel Hennigan explained that a petition was signed to make it a two-way street. Mayor closed the hearing at 7:35 pm

Mayor Watkins called the meeting to order at 7:35 pm.

Present: Mayor Douglas Neal Watkins; Council Members: Gerald Guidry, Daniel Hennigan, Joe Becnel, Vernessa Guillory, and Julie Fontenot; Town Clerk Cynthia Mallett; Town Attorney Eugene Bouquet; Police Chief Keith Vincent; and about 12 citizens.

The invocation was given by Council Member Joe Becnel; followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

It was **moved by** Daniel Hennigan, **seconded by** Vernessa Guillory to adopt agenda. The motion passed unanimously.

It was **moved by** Daniel Hennigan, **seconded by** Julie Fontenot to approve minutes as presented for Special Meeting, May 22, 2023, with an additional statement to be added on page three, paragraph two; The scope of ball field complex project has quadrupled to an estimated 2.5 million dollars for Phase II. The motion passed unanimously.

Mayor Watkins read the first item of the regular meeting agenda. It was **moved by** Daniel Hennigan, **seconded by** Joe Becnel to adopt Ordinance 2023-01, An Ordinance to Amend Section 47 of the Town of Iowa Municipal Code of Ordinances. The vote was as follows:

YEAS: Daniel Hennigan, Joe Becnel, Vernessa Guillory, and Gerald Guidry

NAYS: None

ABSENT: None

ABSTAIN: Julie Fontenot

The motion passed.

ORDINANCE 2023-01
**AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND SECTION 47 OF THE TOWN OF IOWA
MUNICIPAL CODE OF ORDINANCES**

WHEREAS, The Town of Iowa has been petitioned to make N. Kinney Street a Two-Way Street, heading south to David Street intersection. and;

WHEREAS it is the responsibility of the Mayor and Council Members to maintain and provide safety to citizens of the Town of Iowa, and;

WHEREAS, it is in the best interest of the Town of Iowa, for safety and traffic control issues, to establish a two-way street from the intersection of Scott and N. Kinney Streets heading in the southern direction to the intersection of David and N. Kinney Streets.

THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED by the Mayor and the Iowa Town Council of the Town of Iowa, Louisiana, that Section 47 of the Code of Ordinances, Town of Iowa, is hereby amended to remove N. Kinney Street as a one-way street; and;

FURTHERMORE, BE IT ORDAINED by the Mayor and the Iowa Town Council of the Town of Iowa, Louisiana, upon this section of N. Kinney Street as stated and described vehicular traffic shall move two ways.

The above and foregoing addition to the Code of Ordinances, Town of Iowa, Louisiana, has been read and adopted and is only intended as an addition to said Ordinances and the remaining Ordinances and the past enacted Ordinances are still in full force and effect.

Said Ordinance having been introduced on May 8, 2023, the title having been read and appropriate public advertisement completed.

The above ordinance was adopted at a duly convened meeting on motion of Daniel Hennigan, seconded by Joe Becnel upon a vote taken as follows:

YEAS: Daniel Hennigan, Joe Becnel, Vernessa Guillory, and Gerald Guidry

NAYS: None

ABSENT: None

ABSTAIN: Julie Fontenot

WHEREUPON, the presiding officer declared the above Ordinance duly adopted on the 12th day of June, 2023.

DOUGLAS N. WATKINS
MAYOR

I certify that the above ordinance was presented to the Mayor by me on the 13th day of June, 2023.

CYNTHIA MALLETT, TOWN CLERK

I, acknowledge receipt of the above ordinance from the Town Clerk on this 13th day of June, 2023.

DOUGLAS N. WATKINS
MAYOR

I, hereby approve the above ordinance on this 13th day of June, 2023.

DOUGLAS N. WATKINS
MAYOR

I certify that the above ordinance was received by me from the Mayor on this 13th day of June, 2023.

CYNTHIA MALLETT, TOWN CLERK

Mayor Watkins read the next item on the agenda. It was **moved by** Vernessa Guillory, **seconded by** Julie Fontenot to approve the following resolution. The motion passed unanimously.

**RESOLUTION COMMITTING TO PAY ADMINISTRATIVE AND LEGAL FEES FOR LCDBG
2023 CLEARANCE DEMOLITION PROGRAM**

WHEREAS the Town of Iowa, Calcasieu Parish desires to submit a Louisiana Community Development Block Grant ("LCDBG") FY 2023 Clearance Demolition Application for funding and,

WHEREAS the Town of Iowa strives wherever possible to improve living conditions for it's citizens by preventing slum and blight conditions by clearing and demolishing condemned properties and,

WHEREAS the Town is at present in need of outside grant funding to help make this improvement.

WHEREAS the Town of Iowa intends to use local funds for the purpose of applying for, receiving, and disbursing all CDBG funds and for the administration of contracts necessary for the implementation of the 2023 Clearance Demolition Program for administrative costs and any

other administrative costs for performing administrative duties incurred by the Town associated with the Application; and,

WHEREAS the Town intends to use local funds to pay for legal services to Eugene Bouquet in connection with an application for funding and any other costs incurred by the Town associated with the Application; and any other legal fees for the clearance and demolition of privately owned condemned homes or businesses.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE TOWN OF IOWA:

1. The Town will develop and submit the Application, and thereafter perform all administrative consulting duties following a grant award.
2. The Town will pay all associated attorney fees following a grant award and any other associated attorney fees incurred by the Town, following a grant award.
3. The Mayor is authorized to execute and submit the Application, as well as all related documents, to be on such other terms and conditions as he shall deem advisable, and to do any and all things necessary and proper to carry out this Resolution and to fulfill its objectives and purposes.

Passed, approved, and adopted this 12th day of June, 2023.

Douglas Neal Watkins, Mayor

Cynthia Mallett, Town Clerk

CERTIFICATE

I, Cynthia Mallett, Town Clerk for Town of Iowa, do hereby certify that the above and foregoing constitutes a true and correct copy of a Resolution passed, approved, and adopted on June , 2023.

Cynthia Mallett, Town Clerk

Mayor Watkins read the next item on the agenda. It was **moved by** Joe Becnel, **seconded by** Gerald Guidry to adopt Ordinance 2023-02, An Ordinance adopting an Operating Budget of Revenues and Expenditures for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2023, and ending June 30, 2024. The vote was as follows:

YEAS: Joe Becnel and Gerald Guidry

NAYS: Vernessa Guillory, Julie Fontenot, and Daniel Hennigan

ABSENT: None

ABSTAIN: None

The motion failed.

Mayor Watkins read the next item on the agenda. It was **moved by** Daniel Hennigan, **seconded by** Joe Becnel to approve hiring McElroy, Quirk, & Burch to audit the financial activities of the Town of Iowa

for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2022, and ending June 30, 2023, and to perform Agreed Upon Procedures Report. The motion passed unanimously.

Mayor Watkins read the next item on the agenda, Hearing from the owners of the following addresses:

- a. 306 Bowers Avenue, Ms. Zela Washington came forward and stated that she will start in the morning to find the funds to demolish the structure. Mayor Watkins informed her that the town was seeking a grant that may help to pay the cost of demolitions to properties and asked Cindy Mallett to explain. Cindy explained the scope of the grant project and the time line of applying and awarding of the grant. She explained that if funded, the cost of demolition would not be charged to the owner of the property. Ms. Washington repeated that she will start working on finding the money to demolish it.
- b. 403 Bowers Avenue, nobody was present.
- c. 225 W. 1st Street, nobody was present.
- d. 305 Railroad Avenue, nobody was present
- e. 504 W 1st Street, nobody was present
- f. 506 W 1st Street, nobody was present
- g. 904 Granger Street, nobody was present
- h. 414 S Sherman Street, nobody was present

Mr. Bouquet recommended the Council move to condemn. Council Member Daniel Hennigan asked about 414 Sherman Street. Cindy Mallett read the recommendation of the inspection report. It was **moved by** Daniel Hennigan, **seconded by** Julie Fontenot to condemn all above listed addresses. The motion passed unanimously.

Mayor Watkins read the next item on the agenda. He asked if there were any comments or concerns. One citizen asked if the town was getting this land. Someone else asked what it will be used for. Mayor explained that the growth is moving to the northeast and this land would be a central location for a new Emergency Response Center. The Mayor talked about the 5, 10, 15 year plan. Mr. Kenneth Landry said anytime you buy property you will make money. It was **moved by** Daniel Hennigan, **seconded by** Joe Becnel to authorize Mayor Watkins to execute purchase agreement for agreed upon purchase price.

Town Clerk Cindy Mallett gave the financial report.

Mr. Johnny Landry came forward and talked about the trailer that is not compliant with town regulations. It doesn't have a skirt around the trailer and is located next to him and is owned by Sammy Fontenot. Mayor told them he is aware of the trash on the side of the road at that location.

Mr. Eric Johnson came forward and invited everyone for the CPPJ Human Service meeting on June 20, 2023 at 5:30pm at the Community Center.

It was **moved by** Daniel Hennigan, **seconded by** Julie Fontenot to adjourn the meeting. The motion carried unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 8:21pm.

PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Mayor and Town Council of the Town of Iowa, State of Louisiana, acting as the governing authority of the Town of Iowa, State of Louisiana, will meet on June 26, 2023 at six thirty (6:30) p.m., at its regular meeting place, Iowa City Hall Meeting Room, 115 N. Thomson Avenue, Iowa, Louisiana at which time there will be a public hearing on the adoption of the below introduced ordinance:

Ordinance 2023-02

An Ordinance adopting an Operating Budget of Revenues and Expenditures for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2023, and ending June 30, 2024

All interested citizens will have the opportunity to give written or oral comments. Handicapped persons needing assistance or aid should contact City Hall, 337-582-3535 before the meeting. Published in Lake Charles American Press.

ATTEST:

Neal Watkins, Mayor

Cynthia Mallett, MMC