

**Minutes**  
**Town of Iowa**  
**115 N. Thomson, Iowa, LA**  
**March 13, 2023 7:00 p.m.**

Mayor and Town Council met in regular session this date in compliance with all requirements as to notice.

Mayor Watkins called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

Present: Mayor Neal Watkins; Council Members: Daniel Hennigan, Gerald Guidry, Vernessa Guillory, Joe Becnel, and Julie Fontenot; Town Clerk Cynthia Mallett; Town Attorney Eugene Bouquet; and about 7 citizens.

Invocation was given by Pastor Brandon Oliver of the Iowa First Baptist Church; followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mayor Watkins announced that there were a couple of items that needed to be added to the agenda: 1. Discuss future plans of Emergency Response Center 2. Motion to approve Resolution 2023-07, A Resolution setting the Town of Iowa Monthly Garbage Rate.

It was **moved by** Daniel Hennigan, **seconded by** Vernessa Guillory to add to the agenda: 1. Discuss future plans of Emergency Response Center 2. Motion to approve Resolution 2023-07, A Resolution setting the Town of Iowa Monthly Garbage Rate. The motion passed unanimously.

It was **moved by** Daniel Hennigan, **seconded by** Joe Becnel to adopt amended agenda. The motion passed unanimously.

It was **moved by** Joe Becnel, **seconded by** Daniel Hennigan to approve minutes as presented for Regular Meeting February 13, 2023. The motion passed unanimously.

Mayor Watkins introduced guest, Mark Judson, candidate for Calcasieu Parish Family Court Judge. Mr. Judson came forward and thanked the Mayor and Council for having him. He announced he was running for the vacant seat of Family Court Judge in the October 14, 2023 election. He gave a report of his background and his experience in family court. He explained the areas and precincts his office represents. In conclusion, he thanked them for having him.

Mayor Watkins read the item of Old Business and opened the discussion of increase of utility rates. He asked that they review the draft resolution and asked if there was something that we needed to look at to amend. Council Member Daniel Hennigan said he thought this was in the same ballpark as he was thinking. Julie Fontenot asked about the elderly and what help they can get. Town Clerk explained that some citizens already receive assistance from the town through the process granted a couple of years ago by the Council; also the ladies in the collection office was handing out the list of other agencies that can assist them. Mayor Watkins explained the proposed new rates and the proposed cost for special services. He talked about the commercial and social organizations having a lesser rate if their consumption was less than 1000 gallons. Mr. Dwayne Marshall asked the Council to give the residents a lesser rate if their consumption was less than 1000 gallons. The Mayor and Council agreed to change the resolution including residential. Town Clerk asked if that was the only change they wished to make. They agreed no other changes necessary.

New Business: Mayor Watkins read the following statement:

I would like to read this document that I have prepared so that it can be entered into record in its entirety. I am reading this as I do not wish to stray from the pertinent information that I wish to convey.

It hasn't been that long ago that the council and myself in this very room swore a pledge and it reads – I do solemnly swear that I will support the constitution and laws of the United States and the

constitution and laws of this state and impartially discharge and perform all the duties incumbent on me according to the best of my ability and understanding, so help me God.

There are a couple of words that stand out in this very solemn oath, the first is "impartially"- I believe that the best place to start is with the root word partial. To be "partial to" or "partial toward" someone or something is to be somewhat biased or prejudiced, which means that a person who is partial really only sees part of the whole picture. To be impartial is the opposite. So to hopefully make it a bit clearer. To be Impartial stresses an absence of favor or prejudice. I harken back to the days of high school civics when we learned about "lady justice". The blindfold depicted on the statues, and paintings are symbolic of impartiality, the ideal that justice should be applied without regard to wealth, power, or other status.

The second is a phrase "to the best of my ability and understanding, so help me God". This phrase indicates action. The word understanding in the phrase indicates that we individually have to seek the understanding required to be impartial. So it is incumbent for each of us duly elected officials to be objective and to stress a tendency to view events or persons as apart from oneself and one's own interest or feelings.

Impartiality in and of itself asserts that conflicting interests exist and to remain objective means that facts are the only items considered for fairness. Feelings, personal gain, social agendas, politics and personal grandstanding should be left outside of this chamber. It is my conviction that this town deserves the very best that we as elected officials can deliver to them.

One thing that I know is that Facts don't care about my feelings, if I pull up to a gas pump and only have 10 dollars to put in, and I feel like I can put 20 dollars in, the fact is only 10 dollars will be pumped. So, no matter what our version of reality is does not make it a fact. This is why I personally ask that townspeople hold me to this high standard of impartiality as I commit everyday of my service to one simple statement. My actions and decisions are strictly about the town of Iowa, its people and the future. Public sentiment is everything. With public sentiment, nothing can fail; without it nothing can succeed, that is a quote from Abraham Lincoln.

Now with that pre-amble out of the way I would like to turn my attention to some facts. Fact # 1: The town has received phone calls from folks outside of this state inquiring about our area related to business. We as a town have little to no regulations (ordinances) that prevent an industrial complex from taking up residence in our area. Not sure anyone would be happy with a smog producing industrial facility in town. Of concern to me is the reality at the moment that we have folks operating "businesses" within what I would consider residential areas.

Fact # 2: None of us are going to be able to stop growth in this area and specifically in our town. The only thing that we can do is try and control the growth as we plan for the future. And this is the very reason we have to be impartial. To give more credence to this fact of growth, no more than a mile from our town limits, property has been purchased and a very large business will be built. I have been in many meetings in my short tenure, and the information about growth to our specific area is staggering.

Fact # 3: The area of growth from all indicators is along the I-10 corridor both north and south. As the council has agreed that a new police station (Emergency Response Center) be built and land purchased for such a project, I would be failing my duties as Mayor not to consider all options regarding the potential growth in relation to the proposed construction of the Emergency Response Center.

Numerous conversations have been had with Chief Vincent and through these discussions a plan has been put forth and preliminary discussions have been initiated to seek viability of the plan. The findings are quiet encouraging, but on a limited time frame for action. Specifically, an inquiry has been made as to a 30 acre tract of land that would be more central to the growth and provide the best response times related to future growth. This 30 acre tract would require the council to approve a resolution to seek an appraisal of the land. The land owner has indicated that once the price for the land is paid that they will make a cash donation to the town, essentially resulting in the town acquiring the property for approximately half the value. This offer is time sensitive as indicated previously as more people outside our state are inquiring about these properties. The property that we currently purchased can be sold

and has been inquired about, thus allowing us to use those funds to help offset the cost of the property. In addition, because we are seeking an Emergency Response Center there is less burden on the tax payers funds from the town of Iowa as a majority of this will be through grants.

As the council has already given Chief Vincent the okay to seek out the architect, the location needs to be verified so that these drawing can be drafted. This company will be the ones submitting for the grants and funding could be approved as early as October 2023

Fact #4: The mall property as many of you know the town owns the land it sits on. As there is a small portion of the land without development to the west of the parking lot and building. It would be my request that we initiate a conversation that might lead to us "selling" the remaining lease years in order to allow this property more autonomy. This will give them the same ability as any other land/building owner in town. There are currently 64 years left on this "lease".

In conclusion, the town of Iowa stands at a cross road and if we choose to not take the path before us we are telling Calcasieu Parish, Jeff Davis Parish and the rest of our state that we are not interested in being more than we are and wish to remain in a state of flux waiting for other municipalities to infringe on our town and eventually take us over in years to come. Or we as a town can embrace this opportunity that we have to dictate a controlled growth that does not take away our identity, our heritage, nor our history.

Mayor Watkins read item #1 from the amended agenda. Discuss future plans of Emergency Response Center. He asked if anyone had any questions. He recognized Chief Vincent. Chief Vincent came forward and talked about the effort for the last five years in working toward the Emergency Response Center. He informed the Council that he met with a representative of Myers and Associates and was told it was a good possibility that the cost would be funded by grants. He said the location is better than previously planned, and asked the Council to support it.

It was **moved by** Daniel Hennigan **seconded by** Joe Becnel to amend agenda to add: Motion to authorize the order of appraisal for the proposed purchase of property for the building of an Emergency Response Center. Motion carried unanimously.

It was **moved by** Daniel Hennigan **seconded by** Joe Becnel to authorize the order of appraisal for the proposed purchase of property for the building of an Emergency Response Center. Motion carried unanimously. Mayor Watkins asked if anyone had any questions.

Mayor Watkins read the next item on the agenda. He asked if anyone had any questions. Council Member Daniel Hennigan asked if the page given to them with the strike through was the only thing changing. Mayor Watkins said yes. Daniel Hennigan asked if it was because too many people were taking advantage of it? Mayor Watkins said it was being abused. It was **moved by** Daniel Hennigan, **seconded by** Vernessa Guillory to approve Resolution 2023-05.

## RESOLUTION 2023-05

A RESOLUTION REGARDING PERSONNEL POLICIES AND BENEFITS FOR TOWN OF IOWA EMPLOYEES AND SUPERSEDES ANY AND ALL OTHER POLICY EDITION, MEMORANDA, OR OTHER TOWN OF IOWA POLICIES WHETHER WRITTEN OR ORAL

WHEREAS, the Town of Iowa has a need to revise the present Personnel Policies and Procedures adopted December 12, 2022; and

WHEREAS, the revised Personnel Policy will help prevent misunderstanding and problems, and to ensure that all employees know what is expected of them; and

WHEREAS, the Personnel Policy has been prepared as a guide and reference for

employees. Nothing in this Policy creates an express or implied contract or promise concerning the Town of Iowa's policies or practices, including policies or practices it will implement in the future.

The Town of Iowa retains the right to establish, change, and abolish these policies, practices, rules and regulations at will and as it sees fit; and

WHEREAS, nothing in the Personnel Policy is intended to violate the law. Any provision violating the law shall be deemed automatically reformed to be consistent with applicable law. Also, should any provision in this Policy be found to be unenforceable, invalid, or violate of law, such finding does not invalidate the entire Town of Iowa Personnel Policy but only that particular provision.

NOW, THEREFORE, IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED by the Iowa Town Council, Iowa, Louisiana as follows:

The Mayor and Town Clerk are hereby authorized and directed to execute said personnel policies, a copy of which is attached hereto and by this reference made part hereof.

PASSED AND APPROVED this 13<sup>th</sup> day of March 2023.

---

Douglas N. Watkins, Mayor

ATTEST:

---

Cynthia Mallett, MMC

Mayor Watkins read the next item of the agenda and explained that this resolution is to allow the town to open a checking account replacing the account that was hacked. It was **moved by Joe Becnel, seconded by Julie Fontenot** to approve Resolution 2023-06, Town of Iowa authorized signers on a governmental account. The motion carried unanimously.

**RESOLUTION 2023-06**  
**TOWN OF IOWA**  
**AUTHORIZED SIGNERS**  
**ON A GOVERNMENTAL ACCOUNTS**

The Bank  
114 N Thomson Avenue  
Iowa, LA 70647

Re: Account Number(s): 2146587

Dear Banking Official:

Please be informed that the following persons have signing authority on the above-referenced account effective immediately:

Douglas N. Watkins, Joe Becnel, Daniel Hennigan, Vernessa Guillory, Gerald Guidry, and Julie Fontenot

Passed at a regular meeting of the Mayor and Council Members of the Town of Iowa held on March 13, 2023.

Attest:

---

Cynthia Mallett, MMC  
Iowa Town Clerk

Mayor Watkins read item 4 of the agenda. It was **moved by** Daniel Hennigan, **seconded by** Joe Becnel to approve Resolution 2023-07. The motion passed unanimously.

**RESOLUTION 2023-07**  
A RESOLUTION SETTING THE TOWN OF IOWA  
MONTHLY GARBAGE RATE

- WHEREAS,** The Town of Iowa was notified on December 1, 2022 by Waste Management, Inc., the town's contracted garbage collector, they were increasing the rates they are charging effective January 1, 2023; and
- WHEREAS,** The Town of Iowa contracted with an additional company for the collection and disposal of bulk garbage December 31, 2021; and
- WHEREAS,** The Town of Iowa needs to increase monthly garbage rates.
- THEREFORE,** The Town of Iowa now sets the established monthly garbage fee at \$24.00 which is an increase of five dollars and no cents (\$5.00), effective immediately.

**BE IT RESOLVED,** by the Mayor and Town Council Members for the Town of Iowa, Louisiana, in regular session hereby set the Town's Garbage Rate this 13<sup>th</sup> day of March, 2023,

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: None

ABSTAIN: None

ATTEST:

---

Cynthia Mallett, Municipal Clerk

Mayor Watkins read item 5 of the agenda. He explained that currently the town has four part-time firemen which consists of one Fire Chief and one Assistant Fire Chief. And then two firefighters. He said we are missing some of our fire calls. He talked about the growth of Iowa and the need to have a full time Fire Chief. There was discussion of the wage rate starting about \$40,000.00 annually. It was also discussed that they would receive State Supplemental Pay. Mr. Dwayne Marshall said the town needs a full time EMS. The Joint Services Agreement between the Town of Iowa and Fire District was discussed. Mr. Bouquet explained some things to think about concerning Civil Service and how it could affect the town.

Mayor Watkins read item 6 of the agenda. It was **moved by** Daniel Hennigan, **seconded by** Julie Fontenot to approve Cooperative Endeavor Agreement between the Calcasieu Parish Police Jury and the Town of Iowa to assist in providing a Summer Feeding Program. The motion passed unanimously.

Town Clerk presented the financial report for the month of February. Mayor asked if there were any questions on the financial reports. No body had any comments or questions.

Mr. Dwayne Marshal asked the Council about approving trailers to be moved into town and how he was told he couldn't do it. The Mayor and Council explained the process. Also, there was discussions about the process of condemnations.

Council Member Vernessa Guillory asked about streetlights on the main street. She said it was dark in certain areas and would like to have one installed. Council Member Gerald Guidry asked about the streetlight at the corner of Ruby and Thomson and if we could have the light replaced. Mayor Watkins said he would check on this tomorrow.

Council Member Daniel Hennigan asked that when it is budget time that the council be involved to help craft it. The Mayor said that he was handing out reports to the departments for them to work on and that we will go back and forth with it.

With no further business it was **moved by** Joe Becnel, **seconded by** Daniel Hennigan to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 8:14 pm.

ATTEST:

---

Neal Watkins, Mayor

---

Cynthia Mallett, MMC