

**Minutes**  
**Public Hearing Meeting**  
**Town of Iowa**  
**115 N. Thomson**  
**June 10, 2024**  
**Iowa, La**  
**7:00 p.m.**

Mayor Douglas Watkins called a public hearing to order at 7:00 p.m. Present was Mayor Watkins; Council Members Joe Becnel, Julie Fontenot, Daniel Hennigan, Gerald Guidry, and Vernessa Guillory; Town Attorney Eugene Bouquet; Elsie Lane; Chief of Police Keith Vincent.

Mayor read the title of Ordinance No. 2024-09, An Ordinance authorizing the name of E 1<sup>st</sup> Street, Located in the Town of Iowa, Louisiana to be Amended and changed to Foreman Street and otherwise with respect thereto. Mayor Watkins asked if there were any questions or comments. None were made.

Public Hearing was closed at 7:01 pm.

**Minutes**  
**Regular Meeting**  
**115 N. Thomson, Iowa, LA 70647**  
**City Hall Meeting Room**  
**June 10, 2024 7:01 p.m.**

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

Present: Mayor Douglas Watkins; Council Members: Joe Becnel, Gerald Guidry, Daniel Hennigan, Julie Fontenot, and Vernessa Guillory; Elsie Lane; Town Attorney Eugene Bouquet; Chief of Police Keith Vincent.

Mayor Watkins established a quorum was present.

Invocation by Council Member Joe Becnel, followed by Pledge.

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** Vernessa Guillory to approve minutes of Special Meeting June 3, 2024. The motion passed unanimously.

Mayor Watkins read items one and two under Old Business of the agenda:

1. Introduction of Ordinance 2024-08, An Ordinance Adopting an Operating Budget of Revenues and Expenditures for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2024, and ending June 30, 2025
2. Motion to approve Resolution 2024-13, A resolution for Reallocation of Percentages For Town of Iowa's Sales Taxes

Mayor Watkins read item one under New Business of the agenda; Joshua Macer to discuss Arts Grant for the Town of Iowa. Mr. Macer came forward and informed the Mayor and Council that he is a grant writer and board member of three local non-profits. He explained that July 1, 2024 is the due date to submit the

application for the Louisiana Project Grant sponsored by the Arts and Humanities Council. He volunteered to write the application for this grant free of charge. He said the main goal of the grant is to feature local artists and DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion). He gave examples of projects the grant could be used for and the amount of grant funding available. There were discussions about possible projects for the application. He said he would provide the Council with the completed grant application before submittal. Mr. Bouquet said that it would be appropriate to accept the offer and authorize the submittal of the application. It was **moved by Julie Fontenot, seconded by Daniel Hennigan** to accept the offer from Mr. Macer to write the grant. The motion passed unanimously.

Mayor Watkins read the next item on the agenda. Ms. Catherine Trahan came forward and introduced herself. She stated that she wished to correct the description of the agenda item from Catherin Trahan to ask questions regarding Pro Quarters VS. Town of Iowa Lawsuit to Catherin Trahan to ask questions regarding Pro Quarters, LLC VS. Town of Iowa and Neal Watkins in his capacity as Mayor of the Town of Iowa. She gave information on documents that she acquired about the donation of the land where the Iowa Mall is located and the lease agreement that was transferred to Pro-Quarters, LLC. She explained her understanding of the documents. She talked about the wording of the lawsuit and she asked why is the town at this point and what we are going to do about it. Mayor Watkins recognized that the attorney representing Pro Quarters, LLC was present. Mayor Watkins introduced Mr. Mark Owens, representative for the Town of Iowa for this lawsuit. Mr. Owens answered Ms. Catherine's questions. He explained the steps he and the town took to resolve the issue before it came to Pro Quarters filing this lawsuit. Mr. Macer asked about the economic impact study that Pro Quarters prepared. Mr. Owens said that the town also had an economic impact study prepared. He said that there are some things he can't discuss because of the litigation. He gave some of the town's adverse positions on the agreement with Pro Quarters, LLC. There were questions asked of Mr. Owens and he answered them. At one point there was disruption in the meeting and Mayor Watkins instructed the public that if you do not have a specific question related to the subject matter please refrain and ask it at a later time.

Mayor Watkins read item three of the agenda; Motion and Adoption of the millage rate(s), Resolution 2024-14. It was **moved by Daniel Hennigan, seconded by Vernessa Guillory** to approve Resolution 2024-14. The motion passed unanimously.

#### RESOLUTION 2024-14

BE IT RESOLVED, that the following millage(s) are hereby levied on the 2024 tax roll on all property subject to taxation by Town of Iowa:

#### MILLAGE

General Alimony

5.590 mills

(Tax for: e.g. General Alimony, Library, Maintenance)

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the proper administrative officials of the Parish of Calcasieu, State of Louisiana, be and they are hereby empowered, authorized, and directed to spread said taxes, as hereinabove set forth, upon the assessment roll of said Parish for the year 2024, and to make the collection of the taxes imposed for and on behalf of the taxing authority, according to law, and that the taxes herein levied shall become a permanent lien and privilege on all property subject to taxation as herein set forth, and collection thereof shall be enforceable in the manner provided by law.

The foregoing resolution was read in full, the roll was called on the adoption thereof, and the resolution was adopted by the following votes:

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

NAYS: None

ABSTAINED: None

ABSENT: None

CERTIFICATE

I hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and exact copy of the resolution adopted at the board meeting held on June 10, 2024, at which meeting a quorum was present and voting.

Iowa, Louisiana, this 20<sup>st</sup> day of June, 2024.

(City, Town, Village)

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(Signature of authorized person of the taxing district)

Mayor Watkins read the fourth item on the agenda. He recommended the item be tabled because the paperwork to approve hiring McElroy, Quirk, & Burch to audit the financial activities had not been delivered in time for this meeting. It was **moved** by Daniel Hennigan, **seconded** by Joe Becnel to table item four; Motion and Approving of hiring McElroy, Quirk, & Burch to audit the financial activities of the Town of Iowa for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2023, and ending June 30, 2024 and to perform Agreed upon procedures Report. The motion passed unanimously.

Mayor Watkins read the fifth item on the agenda. It was **moved** by Julie Fontenot, **seconded** by Daniel Hennigan to adopt Ordinance 2024-09. The motion passed unanimously.

**ORDINANCE 2024-09**

**An Ordinance authorizing the name of E 1st Street, Located in the Town of Iowa, Louisiana to be Amended and Changed to Foreman Street and otherwise with respect thereto.**

**BE IT ORDAINED** BY THE IOWA TOWN COUNCIL of Iowa, Louisiana, in regular session convened, that:

SECTION 1: The Mayor and Town Council of the Town of Iowa, Louisiana do hereby change and amend the name of that certain street known as E 1<sup>st</sup> Street, as shown on that certain plat recorded in the records of the Calcasieu Parish, Louisiana to Foreman Street, effective September 1, 2024.

SECTION 2: The Town Clerk of the Town of Iowa, Louisiana is hereby directed to file a copy of this Ordinance with the Calcasieu Parish Clerk of Court, and a report of the adoption of the ordinance shall be filed with the Calcasieu Parish Registrar of Voters, as required by law.

THIS ORDINANCE will become effective September 1, 2024. Said ordinance having been introduced on May 20, 2024, publication of proposed ordinance having been published, the title having been read with opportunity for discussion and the ordinance considered, on motion of Council Member Julie Fontenot and seconded by Council Member Daniel Hennigan, to adopt the ordinance, a record vote was taken and the following result was had:

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: None

ABSTAIN: None

**WHEREAUPON**, the presiding officer declared the above ordinance duly adopted on this 10<sup>th</sup> day of June, 2024.

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**DOUGLAS WATKINS, MAYOR**

Mayor Watkins apologized for not expanding on the Old business on the agenda He said that introduction of Ordinance 2024-08, An Ordinance Adopting an Operating Budget of Revenues and Expenditures for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2024, and ending June 30, 2025 was introduced. He asked if everyone got a copy of the budget message along with the budget. He said that he rearranged his budget message and made changes to the budget. He asked if anyone had any questions on that. Mr. Joshua Macer came forward with concerns that the town was not following the regulations of the Louisiana Budget Act. Mr. Macer gave suggestions and his reflections on the proposed budget. Mayor thanked him for his comments and said that he would look into and ask Ms. Cindy Mallett about the dates of publication of the Public Notices for the budget.

Ms. Valerie Johnson asked about clarification on the new proposed budget. She asked about the amount of funds that were cut from the police budget. Council Member Daniel Hennigan answered her question. She stated that she was concerned about police protection.

Chief Vincent came forward and asked for clarity on the proposed police budget. He asked if the proposed amount for the police budget is \$2,000,000.00 and that is what will be voted on. Mayor Watkins said that is the intent. He also asked about medical insurance for the employees. Mayor Watkins assured him that the Health Insurance Employee Group Policy would remain the same and the increase of the premium was included in the budget. Mayor Watkins asked if there were any more questions.

Ms. Leonard made comments in opposition of cutting the police budget.

Ms. Darlene Hesse came forward and stated concerns about cutting the police budget. She stated that the town would be growing with the new construction of apartments. She asked how the police could protect more people with less money. Mayor Watkins addressed her concerns and explained the price increases and decreases in revenue for the town.

With no further business to discuss, it was **moved by Daniel Hennigan, seconded by Joe Becnel**, to adjourn meeting. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned.

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Douglas N Watkins, Mayor

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Cynthia Mallett, MMC