

GENERAL MEETING
TOWN OF MAURICE MINUTES
Wednesday, May 15, 2024

The general meeting of the officials of the Town of Maurice was opened by Mayor Neil Arsement at 6:03 p.m.
at the Maurice Municipal Building, 405 Lastie Ave., Maurice, Louisiana

Mayor Arsement led the assembly in Prayer and Alderman Scott Trahan led the Pledge of Allegiance

Roll call of officers

Present: Mayor Neil Arsement; Alderwoman Megan Landry- Lalande; Alderman Troy Catalon; Alderman Jonathan Schlicher; Alderman Matthew Trahan; Alderman Scott Trahan

Absent: None

Also present: Joan Methvin; Nichole Bonin; Claire Meche; Shakyla Cormier; Nick Sonnier, Sellers & Associates; Richard Meche, Maintenance Supervisor; Chief Guy Nerren; Shaun Hearen, Abbeville Meridional; Hollie Broussard; Anthony Dupont; Kyle Stelly; Pat Ottinger; Wayne Theriot; Cooper O'Briant; Jeremy Hidalgo; Kathryn Arsement

Motion: Schlicher/Landry-Lalande moved, seconded, and carried to enter into the Public Hearing. Yay- All Present

Public Hearing for the Purpose of:

An Ordinance to Extend and Enlarge the Limits and Boundaries of the Town of Maurice- Mayor Arsement advised the Public Hearing to consider the ordinance is postponed until the June 12, 2024 General Meeting

An Ordinance to Amend the Building Permit Ordinances to Increase and Add Building Permit Fees- Mayor Arsement advised the Public Hearing to consider the ordinance is postponed until the June 12, 2024 General Meeting

An Ordinance to Amend the Water Use Ordinance to Increase Water Rates- Legal Ricky Lafleur introduced an ordinance to amend the Water Use Ordinance to increase water rates. The proposed increase for the minimum gallons of water used for all utility customers would go to \$21. Arsement advised the Water System cost for treatment chemicals increase from \$7,513 in 2020 to the current \$50,323. This is causing a decrease in revenue in the Utility Fund. The last rate increase was done in 2020 and costs are much higher now. Arsement would also like to look at rates every year going forward. Catalon asked if any residents use over the minimum 2000 gallons of water and was advised the average is 6000 gallons. Arsement discussed the use of Sales Tax collections to pay the USDA loan note with Mike Roy. Sales tax collections can be used to pay the notes but USDA only recognizes the water rates as reliable income to pay back the debt owed. Arsement is concerned that if sales tax income is used to pay the note, the Town may be left with limited resources if any major maintenance costs come up. An upgrade to the wastewater plant in 5 years is currently being discussed and hopefully the Town will receive grant funds instead of borrowing more funds. Wayne Theriot advised USDA had to approve the last rate increase and thinks the Town should make sure another increase doesn't need to be authorized by USDA. Mayor Arsement and Nick Sonnier did not think USDA needed to approve an increase in rates since the Town is not applying for more funds. Catalon asked if a vote should be tabled. Legal Lafleur advised the Council should table the amendment to increase water rates when it is time for a vote and contact USDA to be sure they don't need to approve an increase. Arsement thanked Theriot for his comment. Scott Trahan asked about the last increase and Wayne Theriot advised there was a yearly increase done in 3 steps to minimize the impact on the citizens of Maurice and had to be approved by USDA. The last of the increase was done in 2020. Sonnier advised the purpose of the rate study was to determine what water rates needed to be at in order to have sufficient stable income to pay back the loan from USDA. No other comments were made.

Motion: Schlicher/Landry-Lalande moved, seconded, and carried to close the Public Hearing and enter the General Meeting. Yay- M. Trahan, S. Trahan, Landry-Lalande, Catalon, Schlicher; Nay- None

Approval General Meeting Minutes of April 17, 2024

Motion: Landry-Lalande/M. Trahan moved, seconded and carried to dispense with the reading and accept the minutes of the April 17, 2024 General Meeting as submitted. Yay-All Present

Public comment period on agenda items listed- Add 3-f. Petition for Annexation; Delete 2-a. and 2-b.

Schlicher asked why no Public Hearing was held for 2 proposed ordinances. He was advised a publication was missed for the Annexation Ordinance and Mayor Arsement is still sorting through ordinances pertaining to Permits and Fees.

Motion: Landry-Lalande/Catalon moved, seconded and carried to accept the agenda as amended. Yay- All Present

AAA Signs- Arsement introduced Kyle Stelly from AAA Signs and advised Council members after doing research, Stelly provided a timeline of discussion about the proposed Sterling sign and felt that AAA Signs was diligent in preparing ahead to present sign information to Council before current sign regulations were adopted. Arsement also advised, he learned that a deposit to preorder the sign was put down in December 2023 and was necessary for a sign of this size. Parts are preordered and take weeks to come in. Stelly thanked Arsement for reaching out to find common ground for both the Town and AAA Signs. Stelly presented Council members with a visual drawing of the Sterling Dealership showing the size of the lot area, sign placement, and the anticipated aesthetic of the area. Arsement felt the proposed sign specifications should be considered due to the lengthy process from ordering to the installation this type of sign and thought Stelly did the right thing for the business and the Town. Landry-Lalande and Scott Trahan thanked Stelly for providing the timeline and for providing the visual documents. Schlicher asked if stipulations discussed last month would be honored. Stelly asked a document be created and agreed upon by the Town and the owner. Schlicher wanted emergencies displayed. Arsement was concerned about the lighting. Stelly advised for the Town to create a document with stipulations and the lights automatically dim after dark. Discussion was held

Motion: Landry-Lalande/M. Trahan moved, seconded and carried to grant a variance to the Sterling Dealership to install the proposed sign.

Yay- S. Trahan, Landry-Lalande, Catalon, Schlicher, M. Trahan; Nay- None

J. Ricky Lafleur- advised Council members to table the Water Use Ordinance and hold another public hearing for the June General Meeting.

Motion: Landry-Lalande/Catalon moved, seconded and carried to table the Ordinance Amending the Water Use Ordinance and have a Public Hearing at the June 12, 2024 General Meeting at 6pm in the Meeting Room located at 405 Lastie Avenue, Maurice LA 70555. Yay- Landry-Lalande, Catalon, Schlicher, M. Trahan, S. Trahan; Nay- None

Lafleur advised Mayors Court had a robust crowd, the largest he'd ever seen. He thanked Chief Nerren and Maurice Officers for their help with crowd control.

Nick Sonnier will contact USDA to discuss raising water rates.

Nick Sonnier, Sellers & Associates- Maurice South WWTF Water Pollution Prevention Environmental Audit Report- Sonnier presented the audit report and went over the information contained in the report. He advised Council members the South Treatment Plant is in good shape. Discussion was held

Resolution Pertaining to the Municipal Water Pollution Prevention Environmental Audit Report for the South WWTF (January 2023-December 2023)-

Motion: Schlicher/Landry Lalande moved, seconded, and carried to adopt the Resolution Pertaining to the Municipal Water Pollution Prevention

Environmental Audit Report of the Town's South Wastewater Treatment Facility for January 2023-December 2023. Yay- Catalon, Schlicher,

M. Trahan, S. Trahan, Landry-Lalande; Nay- None

Maurice North WWTF Water Pollution Prevention Environmental Audit Report- Sonnier presented the audit report and went over the information

contained in the report. He advised Council members the North Treatment Plant is also in good shape. Discussion was held

Resolution Pertaining to the Municipal Water Pollution Prevention Environmental Audit Report for the North WWTF (January 2023-December 2023)-

Motion: Schlicher/Landry Lalande moved, seconded, and carried to adopt the Resolution Pertaining to the Municipal Water Pollution Prevention

Environmental Audit Report of the Town's North Wastewater Treatment Facility for January 2023-December 2023. Yay- Schlicher, M. Trahan,

S. Trahan, Landry-Lalande, Catalon; Nay- None

Hudson Yards Phase 2 Construction Improvements and Final Plat Approval- Sonnier presented the construction improvements and final plat for Hudson

Yards Phase 2 and recommended approval contingent upon the developer addressing comments made by Sellers & Associates. Catalon questioned the flow

of water and discharge of ponds. Underground piping for drainage is sufficient and another pond will be added in Phase 3. Discussion was held

Motion: Landry-Lalande/M. Trahan moved, seconded, and carried to approve the Construction Improvements and Final Plat for Hudson Yards Phase 2

contingent that comments from Sellers & Associates are addressed. Yay- M. Trahan, S. Trahan, Landry-Lalande, Catalon, Schlicher; Nay- None

Petition for Annexation- Sonnier presented a petition for annexation of LA 92 going West to LA Hwy 343 and including the new Charter School. A letter of

No Objection was received from DOTD for the Town to have a right-of-way not including the road. Maurice Police will not patrol the roadway and the state will

provide road and vegetation maintenance. Arsement received annexation requests from residents who live along LA 92 West. A petition with signatures of

those interested is needed. Most of the area is farmland but Arsement feels annexing would be good for the Town's growth. The Charter School has their own

water plant and Vermilion Water Works provides water to the residents at this time. Sonnier will work with Legal Lafleur to combine the 2 annexations to

present in the Public Hearing scheduled for the June 12, 2024 General Meeting. Discussion was held

Motion: Schlicher/Catalon moved, seconded, and carried accepting the Petition for Annexation of LA 92 going West to LA Hwy 343 Including the

Charter School. Yay- S. Trahan, Landry-Lalande, Catalon, Schlicher, M. Trahan; Nay- None

Chief Nerren- Street Closures: May 26th Opta St. and June 7th East Joseph St. - Nerren advised the department is closing Opta St. on May 26th for a Jeep

event at City Bar and closing East Joseph St. from 3pm-5pm on June 7th for a Chalk Walk put on by the Maurice Library.

Updates- the roadway from Picard Farms to Victoria Manor is now open and so far, the department hasn't gotten any complaints. Nerren and Arsement met

with the builders to discuss procedures. Pelican Point had a festival week. Arsement won the crawfish run and Nerren placed second in the crawfish eating

contest. The new unit was purchased. Equipment is being installed. The unit doesn't currently have hubcaps due to them being on backorder. The BBQ

Fundraiser has 668 dinners sold with 2 weeks left to sell. Dinners will be served on Father's Day, June 16th. M. Trahan advised the Fire Marshal inspected the

closed gas station and a dumpster was delivered. Nichole Bonin advised the business isn't open yet. Recent storms had power outages and fallen trees.

Richard Meche, Maintenance Supervisor- April 2024- 8,733,000 gallons of water produced; 8,121,572 gallons of water sold; 611,428 gallons of water

Unmetered; 7%. Meche ran the numbers several times and was excited about the low percentage of unmetered water.

Amend Budget to Relocate Sewer Line- Meche would like to relocate a sewer line at an estimated cost of \$6500. The line would redirect excess discharge

going through the Maurice Park's lift station to Schlumberger and send it directly to the Hudson Yards lift station where larger pumps have the capacity to

handle extra discharge. Smoke testing repair letters for cleanouts in Vincent Trace were sent to residents. Rain water draining into broken cleanouts caused

some sewer issues. The repairs and line relocation will help with sewer issues. Two sewer lift stations lost power during the recent storms but generators kept

things running. Additional smoke tests will be performed to check repaired lines. Discussion was held

Motion: Landry-Lalande/Catalon moved, seconded and carried to amend and increase the budget by \$6500 for the sewer line relocation. Yay- Landry-

Lalande, Catalon, Schlicher, M. Trahan, S. Trahan; Nay- None

Mayor Arsement- Water Meter Install Rate Increase- Arsement asked to introduce an ordinance for public hearing next month to amend the water meter

install rates. S & L Services is going up on their install rates and the cost to the Town is already over what the Town is collecting. LMA advised rewording the

install rate ordinance and consider implementing a percentage over cost to avoid amendments for future increases. LMA will assist with the rewording of the

ordinance to present next month. Discussion was held

Motion: Catalon/M. Trahan moved, seconded, and carried to set a Public Hearing to introduce an ordinance to Amend the Water Meter Install Rates. A

Public Hearing will take place at 6:00pm during the May 15, 2024 General Meeting located in the Meeting Room located at 405 Lastie Avenue,

Maurice LA 70555. Yay- Catalon, Schlicher, M. Trahan, S. Trahan, Landry-Lalande; Nay- None

Resolution Pertaining to the LED Readiness Program- Arsement advised the Louisiana Economic Development (LED) program is free and collects data about Maurice for businesses wanting to invest in the community. The program also finds grant opportunities. The resolution ensures the Town wants to participate and a master plan must be submitted outlining the Town's needs and wants. Arsement, Council members, business owners, and the public would provide input for the master plan submittal. Jeremy Hidalgo was present to answer questions about the program and the resolution which was not available for Council members to view. Hidalgo advised the resolution was provided by LED and is available to view on their website. He apologized for not having a paper copy. Landry-Lalande wanted to read the resolution prior to voting but thought the program would show the Town's strengths and weaknesses and give some priority to the community's needs. Schlicher agreed. Hidalgo advised he would send the resolution to Council members the next morning. Discussion was held

Motion: M. Trahan/S. Trahan moved, seconded, and carried to adopt a Resolution Pertaining to the LED Readiness Program. Yay- M. Trahan, S. Trahan, Landry-Lalande, Catalon; Nay- Schlicher

Sales Tax Update- March sales tax is \$118,759.34 which is up 8.8% from last year. Arsement asked residents continue supporting local businesses or shop online and thanked everyone for continuing to support the local community businesses.

Updates- Matthew Trahan called about fallen trees after the storm. Arsement, Nerren, and others began clean-up efforts immediately and the Town's maintenance crew assisted during work hours the following day. Arsement reminded Council members next month's General Meeting was scheduled for June 12, 2024 at 6pm due to a holiday.

Council Concerns: Landry-Lalande asked for an update on the Maurice Park improvements. Arsement advised the bathroom plans are waiting on the schematics for plumbing and electricity. Schlicher is going over the Park Master Plan. Several businesses would like to contribute and Arsement will approach them for help once the master plan is complete and approved. Playground equipment installation was delayed due to the weather. Landry-Lalande asked if a timeline for installation could be provided since school is letting out for summer. Arsement and Meche will work on a schedule to install playground equipment a little at a time for the Town's maintenance crew to assist in between summer maintenance demands. Catalon advised of streetlights needing repair on East Vincent. Nerren will have officers assess street lights in town during the next night shift. Catalon also asked if burnt or faulty street lights are being replaced with the new LED lights. Arsement advised yes and the charge per light approved by the Pubic Service Commissioner is much higher than the older street lights in Town. Arsement has been keeping track of duplicated light issues being reported to Entergy.

Citizen Concerns: None

Motion: Landry-Lalande/M. Trahan moved, seconded and carried to adjourn at 7:29 pm. Yay- All Present

Nichole G Bonin, Assistant Clerk

Neil Arsement, Mayor