

GENERAL MEETING  
TOWN OF MAURICE MINUTES  
Wednesday, August 21, 2024

The general meeting of the officials of the Town of Maurice was opened by Mayor Neil Arsement at 6:15 p.m.  
at the Maurice Municipal Building, 405 Lastie Ave., Maurice, Louisiana

**Mayor Arsement called the Public Hearing to Order at 6:00pm**

**Public Hearing for the Purpose of:**

**Consider Levying Additional or Increased Millage Rates without further voter approval or adopting the adjusted millage rates after reassessment and rolling forward to rates not to exceed the prior year's maximum by the following Resolutions:**

**a. Resolution Adopting the Adjusted Millage Rate of 2.22 Mills**

Arsement presented the resolution and explained the adjusted millage rate needs to be adopted because this is a reassessment year. If adopted the dollar amount collected would remain the same as the previous assessment year despite property value increases. No Council nor public comments were made.

**b. Resolution to Set Forth the Adjusted Millage Rate and Roll Forward to Millage Rate of 2.41 not exceeding the maximum authorized rate**

Arsement presented the resolution and explained the maximum millage rate to be considered if rolled forward was set at 2.41 mills. If Council members consider adopting the Resolution to roll forward, the Town would generate an additional \$5,241.22. No Council nor public comments were made.

**Motion:** M. Trahan/Landry-Lalande to Close the Public Hearing, Adjourn and Open the General Meeting. Yay- Catalon, Schlicher, M. Trahan, S. Trahan, Landry-Lalande; Nay- None; Abstained- None

**Mayor Arsement called the General Meeting to order at 6:15pm and led the assembly in Prayer and 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:** Nichole Bonin; Joan Methvin; Shakyla Cormier; Richard Meche, Maintenance Supervisor; Chief Guy Nerren; Fire Chief David Landry; Nick Sonnier, Sellers & Associates; Louis Trahan; Tradd Trahan; John Sonnier; Wayne Theriot; Tommie Landry; David Trahan; Sonya Dupre; Daniel Chapman

**Approval General Meeting Minutes of July 17, 2024**

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

**Public comment period on agenda items listed-** Arsement informed Council members and the public that no additional items would be added to the agenda however, discussion and a public comment period would be allowed prior to any action taken on each agenda item.

**Motion:** Schlicher/Landry-Lalande moved, seconded and carried to approve the agenda as presented. Yay- All Present

**Fire chief David Landry- Knox Box-** Landry presented prices from Knox Box based on size and type per the Council's previous request. 3 options are available for purchase. Landry advised 2 options were for commercial establishments and the 3<sup>rd</sup> option was for residential. He asked insurance companies in the area if installation would cause premiums to cost less and was advised there would not be a decrease. Arsement advised Council members Chief Landry was seeking a public hearing to consider an ordinance to amend the Building Code Ordinance to include a mandatory Knox Box for new commercial establishments. Previously established commercial establishments would be able to opt in if they would like to. Arsement asked if a specific Knox Box was recommended and Landry advised the type is determined by the business owner but the less expensive one is usually sufficient to hold enough keys. Landry advised his department would help determine the height and location of each box. Ricky Lafleur advised he reviewed the proposed ordinance and made necessary changes to verbiage. Lafleur also advised Knox is the only company available with these types of boxes to keep uniformity. Landry advised Knox only makes the box and key. They are not involved after installation in the event they ever go out of business. Lafleur will get with Kim Touchet, Scott Trahan, and Chief Landry to assist with the proposed ordinance if Council members decide to have a public hearing. Council members and residents asked who would have access to keys, who holds liability if the ordinance is considered, what penalties would apply for failure to comply, and if commercial establishments who remodel would be mandated to participate. Landry advised only assigned Fire Department members would have access to keys and keys have air tags which track where they are at all times, the department would hold liability and is insured by VFIS, commercial remodels would be mandated to comply if a permit is required. Lafleur advised occupancy certificates would be held for non-compliance and agreed that the Fire Department would be the main liable party if issues arise. Discussion was held

**Motion:** M. Trahan/Catalon moved, seconded and carried to set a Public Hearing for September 18, 2024 at 6pm in the Municipal Building located at 405 Lastie Ave, Maurice LA 70555 to Introduce an Ordinance Amending the Commercial Building Code Ordinance to include Mandatory Kox Boxes for New Commercial Construction.

**Kyle/Hollie AAA Signs- Sign Variance-** Arsement advised the signs were adjusted now meeting the Town's Sign Ordinance so a variance isn't required.

**J. Ricky Lafleur- Resolution to Purchase Property-** Lafleur presented a Resolution authorizing Mayor Arsement to negotiate and purchase property located in Maurice in the amount of \$175,000. The asking price of the property located West of Gulf Coast Bank is \$70,000 per acre and the Town is seeking to purchase 2.5 acres. The purchase value would be conditioned upon the property appraising at the asking price. Discussion was held

**Motion:** M. Trahan/S. Trahan moved, seconded and carried to approve a Resolution Authorizing Mayor Arsement to Negotiate and Purchase 2.5 acres of the Wynne Property located in Maurice in the amount of \$175,000. Yay- M. Trahan, S. Trahan, Landry-Lalande, Catalon, Schlicher; Nay-None

**Onebane Law Firm- Municipal Franchise Fee- Entergy-** Lafleur presented an engagement letter for services to be provided by Onebane Law Firm on behalf of the Town of Maurice for any legal services regarding the Municipal Franchise Fees from Entergy Louisiana, LLC. Legal Lafleur advised an oral resolution of approval would be needed for Mayor Arsement to sign and execute the engagement letter presented agreeing to terms and fees. Catalon asked if legal fees would be absorbed by the law firm if Entergy is not found liable and if it was likely the lawsuit would have a positive outcome for the Town. Lafleur advised fee absorption had not yet been determined and likely the Town would have a positive outcome. Landry-Lalande asked where legal fees would be allocated and was advised the Town's General Fund would contain the line item. Lafleur and Mayor Arsement consulted with Onebane Law Firm on the legal process and steps for action. Discussion was held

**Motion:** M. Trahan/Landry-Lalande moved, seconded and carried Authorizing Mayor Arsement to Sign and Enter into the Engagement Contract with Onebane Law Firm regarding the Entergy Franchise Fees. Yay- S. Trahan, Landry-Lalande, Catalon, Schlicher, M. Trahan; Nay- None

**Nick Sonnier, Sellers & Associates- Cottage Cove Phase 2 Preliminary Plat Approval-** Sonnier presented the Preliminary Plat for Cottage Cove Phase 2. Catalon asked about a possible traffic study expressing concern about additional homes bringing in more traffic. Nick Sonnier advised adding a traffic study requirement in the Subdivision Manual should be considered if over a certain number of lots. Schlicher also wanted designated residential parking or wider streets to be considered during development as another possible addition. Discussion was held with no comments from the public

**Motion:** M. Trahan/Catalon moved, seconded, and carried to approve the Preliminary Plat for Cottage Cove Phase 2. Yay- Landry-Lalande, Catalon, Schlicher; M. Trahan; S. Trahan; Nay- None

Schlicher asked why a one way with parallel parking in Picard Farms was a bad idea. Sonnier advised the likelihood of a vehicle crash especially backing out of driveways would be high. Discussion was held

**Chief Nerren, Police Chief- Updates- Resolution to Donate Vehicle to Sterlington Police Department-** The vehicle being considered was the 2010 Chevy Impala. Nerren advised this was the second of the 2 units previously discussed. There was no public comment

**Motion:** Schlicher/M. Trahan moved, seconded, and carried to approve the Resolution to Donate the 2010 Chevy Impala to the Town of Sterlington. Yay- Catalon, Schlicher, M. Trahan, S. Trahan, Landry-Lalande; Nay- None

**Hiring of an Officer-** Chief Nerren asked Council members to consider the hiring of a reserve officer interested in joining the department. The reserve officer would not be paid. Nerren also asked Council members to consider the hiring of another full-time officer if an application for employment was received and advised the department was still working short-handed. Mayor Arsement asked questions on the recent internal policy implementation regarding the difference between community policing and traffic control. Nerren advised the policy changes affecting officer duties were a result of recent guidance through law enforcement training in trying to build confidence in community relations with local residents and business owners. Arsement heavily disagreed with Nerren's approach with the new policy implementation suggesting the Town's public safety would be negatively impacted. The Maurice Police Department operates in a deficit of about \$450,000 per budget year and Arsement encouraged continued support of the Maurice Police Department as long as public safety in the community was not compromised. Arsement was not in favor of hiring additional officers if community relations instead of public safety remained a key factor in the Maurice Police Department policy and operations. Scott Trahan asked if an officer assigned to community policing would still be able to make traffic stops. Nerren advised any officer on community patrol would still have authority to enforce laws as necessary especially if blatant law breaking occurred and felt community patrol was an important part of an officer's job duty. Nerren's idea according to him, was to have officers visiting neighborhoods and businesses to see how the department could better serve the community and if any problems were being experienced. Nerren advised officers taking calls and making arrests would not be working traffic at those times anyway. Arsement felt Nerren should visit the neighborhoods and businesses to check on issues they may be having and allow officers on duty to continue enforcing Town laws and general traffic laws as they have in the past for the sake of public safety. Schlicher felt the Town should not depend on citation revenue to secure funds for the General Fund budget but instead suggested the Town look at increasing tax revenue to satisfy the Town's public safety need. Landry-Lalande asked about expenses to the department for new hires and was advised the department pays for pre-employment expenses, uniforms, and workers comp. Expenses would come out of the Maurice Police Department budget. Further discussion was held. Council members did not take any action on the hiring of a reserve or full-time officer.

**Timeline for Ordering Police Vehicle-** Nerren advised it would take Mendoza Ford up to 6-months for the previously approved vehicle to come in if ordered now and asked Council members to approve for him to move forward with the purchase. Arsement advised he called other dealerships who also verified it could take up to 6-months for a new vehicle to come in and had an issue with the vehicle possibly coming in earlier than expected for budget purposes. Nerren advised Mendoza would hold the vehicle for 6-months if it came in early. Arsement was not in favor of ordering the new police unit informing Council members that the Town's Utility Department was down a vehicle that cannot be repaired at a reasonable cost. Discussion was held and no action was taken.

**Richard Meche, Maintenance Supervisor- Purchase of a New Vehicle-** Meche presented Council members with 3 quotes to consider for the purchase of a new utility truck. The State Contract is up in October 2024 so no additional vehicles will be ordered at this time from the dealership holding the current contract. Meche asked for approval to order the new utility truck as soon as possible since the last one that was available had already been sold. Mendoza Ford presented the lowest bid for a 2024 F-150 at \$36,671. Funds come out of Capital Improvements. Discussion was held. No public comments were made.

**Motion:** Landry-Lalande/M. Trahan moved, seconded, and carried to approve the purchase of a 2024 F-150 Truck for the Utility Department a cost of \$36,671. Yay- Schlicher, M. Trahan, S. Trahan, Landry-Lalande, Catalon; Nay- None

**Water Production/Loss Report-** July 2024- 8,530,000 gallons of water produced; 8,018,107 gallons of water sold; 511,893 gallons of water Unmetered; 6%.

**Updates-** Meche advised the Dodge 1500 had oil pressure issues and was in the shop for repair. When the truck was tested after the repair another issue was found. Additional repair costs had not been determined yet. The 2016 Jeep was also involved in an accident and needed repair but Meche had not scheduled the repair yet since the Dodge is not working. The maintenance crew is working with very limited vehicle access right now. Discussion was held.

**Mayor Arsement- Adopt Resolution Adopting the Adjusted Millage Rate of 2.22 Mills-** Mayor Arsement presented the resolution and asked Council members to consider a motion to adopt the adjusted millage rate of 2.22 Mills. There were no public comments made

**Motion:** Landry-Lalande/M. Trahan moved, seconded, and carried to Adopt the Resolution Adopting the Adjusted Millage Rate of 2.22 Mills.  
Yay- M. Trahan, S. Trahan, Landry-Lalande, Catalon, Schlicher; Nay- None; Abstained- None

**Adopt the Resolution to Set Forth the Adjusted Millage Rate and Roll Forward to Millage Rate of 2.41 not exceeding the maximum authorized rate-** Mayor Arsement presented the resolution and asked Council member to consider a motion to roll the millage forward and set the maximum rate of 2.41 mills. There were no public comments made.

**Motion:** Landry-Lalande/M. Trahan moved, seconded, and carried to Adopt the Resolution to Set Forth the Adjusted Millage Rate and Roll Forward to the Millage Rate of 2.41 not exceeding the maximum authorized rate. Yay- S. Trahan, Landry-Lalande, Catalon, Schlicher, M. Trahan; Nay- None Abstained- None

**Golf Cart Ordinance-** Arsement advised Alderman Schlicher was approached by multiple residents to discuss the possibility of having an Ordinance to allow the use of golf carts on public roadways within the Town. Schlicher advised he was working with Jeremy Hidalgo who obtained a copy of a regulatory ordinance adopted in Youngsville. Schlicher modified some of the verbiage in the sample ordinance and asked Council members to consider adjusting the fees set forth to compensate for yearly maintenance of signs, time spent enforcing, and reviewing of legal documents, and issuing permits to applicants. Lafleur reviewed the sample ordinance and expanded the liability language to protect the Town of Maurice. He also expanded the language regarding golf cart seating to not allow the doubling up of riders or overcrowding seat capacity for the protection of residents. Arsement advised Council members to review and give input to Schlicher on any additions or changes they would like to make prior to presenting at a public hearing and asked for consideration of a \$200 minimum permit fee. Lafleur advised Council members to consider clearly designating a department to check golf cart documents, capacity, and issuing the permit based upon compliance with state and local laws. Arsement also would like consideration of consequences stated and imposed for non-compliance. Nerren advised a few Police Chiefs from other municipalities were not in favor of residents riding golf carts on public roadways but felt the idea could be ok with proper regulations and enforcement guidelines in place. Council members expressed concerns and wanted to review the sample ordinance details further before setting a public hearing and considering for adoption. Lafleur will get ordinances from other communities allowing golf carts. Discussion was held

**Vermilion Parish Sheriff's Task Force Intergovernmental Agreement Withdrawal-** Arsement advised he had Lafleur compose a letter of withdrawal from the intergovernmental agreement between the Town of Maurice and the Task Force established on October 17, 2019. He also advised if Chief Nerren wanted to enter into another agreement at a later time, funds would be paid from the Maurice Police Department's budget. Discussion was held.

**Sales Tax Update-** June 2024 sales tax was \$124,715.87 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. Sales Tax collections help the Town pay for local improvements.

**Updates-** Arsement advised the November General Meeting has been moved to November 13, 2024 at 6pm due to him being out of Town. Arsement also advised all General Meeting agendas will be handled differently going forward. Agenda items will no longer be added at the General Meetings. Residents with concerns or items for discussion will not be accepted after the Friday by noon preceding the scheduled meeting. All documents necessary for discussion should also be submitted by the agenda deadline. If proper documentation is not submitted on time, Arsement will not allow the item to be placed on the General Meeting agenda for discussion. Public comment periods will be allowed prior to any action taken on all agenda items. Council and citizen concerns will no longer be agenda items at the end of the meetings. Going forward, the last things mentioned prior to adjournment of General Meetings will be Mayor and Council updates such as events or fundraisers going on within the community. No discussions will be held at that time. Arsement is trying to streamline agenda items and discussions since the meetings are at times lasting for multiple hours.

**Council Concerns:** Schlicher wanted clarification regarding the request to purchase a vehicle by Chief Nerren and asked if Council members even needed to approve the request if funds were already allocated and included in the Police Department's budget. Technically Nerren could order the vehicle without the approval of Council members but if Council members don't agree with the timing, Mayor Arsement can refuse to sign off on the purchase. Nerren advised he brought the item up out of regard for Council members thoughts on the purchase. Landry-Lalande was not in favor of removing Council concerns from the agenda items since sometimes things come up last minute but she did appreciate the agenda item cutoff date for the sake of having time to review documents and information regarding agenda items presented. Arsement advised in the event of emergency requests for added agenda items, residents should reach out to a Council member and request an amendment. Council members would then have the opportunity to present the item to be added on behalf of the requestor under comments section for agenda items. The posted agenda will only be amended by a unanimous vote of Council members. Schlicher asked for clarification on laws regarding tabling agenda items. Lafleur will get laws regarding tabling to present later for discussion. Arsement also advised that he researched motions and sub-motions made by Council members. If a second is made to a sub-motion, then the sub-motion stands in the place of the original motion. If there is no second on a sub-motion, then the original motion stands.

**Citizen Concerns:** John Sonnier asked about limit of people on golf carts and was advised each golf cart's seating allowance could be different.

**Motion:** Landry-Lalande/M. Trahan moved, seconded and carried to adjourn at 8:01pm. Yay- All Present

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Nichole G Bonin, Assistant Clerk

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Neil Arsement, Mayor