

GENERAL MEETING
TOWN OF MAURICE MINUTES
Wednesday, November 15, 2023

The general meeting of the officials of the Town of Maurice was opened by Mayor Neil Arsement at 6:01 p.m. at the Maurice Municipal Building, 405 Lastie Ave., Maurice, Louisiana

Mayor Arsement led the assembly in Prayer and Alderman Schlicher 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: Melanie Denais; Joan Methvin; Nichole Bonin; Claire Meche; Shakyra Brailey; Ricky Lafleur, Legal Advisor; Nick Sonnier, Sellers & Associates; Richard Meche, Maintenance Supervisor; Chief Guy Nerren; Wayne Theriot; Travis Bodin; Shaun Hearen, Abbeville Meridional; Cooper O'Briant; Hunter DeVillier; Brandi Williams; Chelsea Couvillion

Approval General Meeting Minutes of October 18, 2023

Motion: Schlicher/Landry-Lalande moved, seconded and carried to accept the October 18, 2023 General Meeting Minutes as presented and unread. Yay-All Present

Public comment period on agenda items listed: Add Item 8. A-1 Cost of Living Increase; Delete Item 1

Motion: Landry-Lalande/M. Trahan moved, seconded, and carried to add Item 8. A-1 Cost of living Increase to the Agenda. Yay- All Present

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

Mendoza Ford- Requesting Variance to the Fireworks Ordinance for their December 9th Fireworks Display- Hunter DeVillier requested a variance to the Town of Maurice Fireworks Ordinance on behalf of Mendoza Ford for their Christmas Fireworks Display to be held on Saturday, December 9, 2023. Concerns were discussed regarding the State of LA's recent burn bans. The Louisiana State Fire Marshal and Maurice Volunteer Fire Department's Chief David Landry will be working closely with Mendoza Ford in evaluating weather conditions closer to the time of the event. Discussion was held

Motion: M. Trahan/Schlicher moved, seconded and carried to grant Mendoza Ford a variance to Town of Maurice's Fireworks Ordinance.

Legal Lafleur suggested amending the motion to grant a variance subject to approval by Louisiana State Fire Marshal and Fire Chief David Landry

Motion: M. Trahan/Schlicher moved, seconded and carried to amend the previous motion granting Mendoza Ford a variance to Town of Maurice's Fireworks Ordinance subject to approval from Louisiana State Fire Marshal and Fire Chief David Landry. Yay- Catalon, Schlicher, M. Trahan, S. Trahan, Landry-Lalande; Nay- None

Travis Bodin- Victoria Manor, Speeding Issues-Speed Bumps- Nick Sonnier provided Federal Highway Administration requirements for adding speed control devices to public roadways. The information included regulations for different types of speed control devices. Sonnier recommended the Town consider placing speed cushions as a control measure since they are more friendly to emergency response and passenger vehicles. He also recommended the Town follow all Federal Highway Administration regulations for the type of speed control device chosen. Travis Bodin and other residents in Victoria Manor provided input to Council members on the importance for the installation of speed control devices and suggested possibly starting with placement where traffic funnels into the subdivision. Mr. Bodin offered to assist in collaborating with residents of the subdivision to help offset any costs the Town would incur in placing speed control devices in Victoria Manor. Wayne Theriot suggested placing speed warning tiles to get motorists attention as an alternative option. Nick Sonnier advised Council members if Federal Highway regulations are followed in installation of speed control devices, then possible liability issues should be minimal. Alderman Scott Trahan stated the data recorded by Maurice's speed trailer shows more of a volume problem than a speeding problem and suggested placing temporary barricades between Victoria Manor and Picard Farms until a more permanent resolution can be agreed upon by Council members. Alderman Schlicher disagreed with Alderman Scott Trahan's suggestion stating this would only be a band aid to the problem residents are experiencing. He also informed Council members that residents of Picard Farms Subdivision are requesting speed bumps. Alderman Catalon suggested Maurice Police Department enforce the area more to help curb speeding issues. Residents and Council members agreed that additional studies should be performed in the area to assist in coming to an agreeable resolution. Legal Lafleur suggested adding speed control devices be presented on a case-by-case basis with guidelines set by a Town of Maurice Resolution specific to each area considered. He also suggested this item be placed on the January 2024 agenda to give time for further data collection. Nick Sonnier was tasked with drawing up a policy outlining conditions and specifications for adding speed control devices, the type of device to be installed, and how the responsibility in offsetting the cost of installation would be handled. Chief Nerren will have officers patrol the area more and he and Richard Meche can place barricades if necessary for public safety until a resolution is reached. Discussion was held

Legal, J. Ricky Lafleur- advised Council members the owner of the property south of Daiquiri Divas is working on getting the property cleared. The contractor that was hired had equipment failure. Work will resume once the equipment has been repaired. Lafleur will report back next month on the issue. Lafleur advised he is working with Town Auditor Mike Roy and another litigation attorney to clarify information regarding a lawsuit involving LA Gun Range. He will report back with information obtained for the December 2023 General Meeting. He also advised Mayors Court is still going well. Discussion was held

Nick Sonnier, Sellers & Associates- Partition of Lot 1-C-1 to create Lots 1-C-1A and 1-C-1B- Nunu's and Lourdes- Mr. Sonnier presented and recommended approval of a simple Plat Partition of Lot 1-C-1 to divide the Nunu's location from the Lourdes Facility. Lenders of the new development are requiring separation of the two properties. Discussion was held

Motion: Catalon/Landry-Lalande moved, seconded and carried to accept the Plat Partition of Lot 1-C-1 to create Lots 1-C-1A and 1-C-1B for Nunu's and Lourdes. Yay- Schlicher, M. Trahan, S. Trahan, Landry-Lalande, Catalon; Nay- None

Nick Sonnier, Sellers & Associates- Picard Farms Phase 3 Construction Improvements Approval- Mr. Sonnier recommended the Council approve Picard Farms Phase 3 Construction Improvements as presented. The drainage is the only punch list item is left to complete. Discussion was held

Motion: Landry-Lalande/Schlicher moved, seconded and carried to approve Picard Farms Phase 3 Construction Improvements contingent upon the developer completing the final punch list item. Yay- M. Trahan, S. Trahan, Landry-Lalande, Catalon, Schlicher; Nay- None

Nick Sonnier, Sellers & Associates- Picard Farms Phase 3 Final Plat Approval- Mr. Sonnier presented the Final Plat for Picard Farms Phase 3 and recommended approval. Phase 3 Preliminary Plat was approved by the previous administration with set-back variances. The current Maurice Council had discussion about Phase 3 earlier this year. Discussion was held

Motion: Schlicher/M. Trahan moved, seconded and carried to approve the Final Plat for Picard Farms Phase 3. Yay- S. Trahan, Landry-Lalande, Catalon, Schlicher, M. Trahan; Nay- None

Chief Nerren- advised Council members the department is down 2 officers which included their most recent hire and is looking to hire replacement officers. Schlicher asked if Maurice Police has an agreement with Vermilion Sheriff to possibly contract part-time help from Vermilion Sheriff Officers. Nerren advised there is not currently an agreement of this type in place but advised he will check on possible part-time employment options with Vermilion Sheriff Officers. He discussed the details recorded by the speed trailer placed in Victoria Manor Subdivision and will check to see if there is a way to adjust the flashing lights.

Richard Meche, Maintenance Supervisor- October 2023- 8,471,000 gallons of water produced; 7,368,910 gallons of water sold; 1,102,090 gallons of water unmetered; 13%. Mr. Meche advised Council members that 2 major water leaks have been repaired. He also advised the maintenance crew has been filling in pot holes throughout Town and is waiting on coal mix to fill larger holes in Victoria Manor. Work is still going on at Maurice Park. Mr. Meche ran into a few issues but is working with Mayor Arsement to get the issues resolved. The rye seed for the park was picked up and someone has offered to spread the seed at no charge to the Town. Discussion was held

Mayor Neil Arsement- Resolution Requesting Financial Assistance from the State of LA under Fiscal Year 2023-2024 Local Government Assistance Program and Community Water Enrichment Fund Programs- Mayor Arsement presented for approval a Resolution Requesting Financial Assistance from the State of Louisiana LGAP and CWF programs for 2023-2024. He advised there is an estimated \$14,00 in available LGAP funding. Discussion was held

Motion: Landry-Lalande/Schlicher moved, seconded and carried to adopt a Resolution Requesting Financial Assistance from the State of Louisiana LGAP and CWF programs for fiscal year 2023-2024. Yay- S. Trahan, Landry-Lalande, Catalon, Schlicher, M. Trahan; Nay- None

Cost of Living Increase- Mayor Arsement asked Council members to consider a 2%-3% cost of living increase for Town employees. After reviewing the preliminary budget numbers, Arsement feels up to a 3% increase would be sustainable by the Town's finances but would like to consider changing the way raises are given in the future. He feels any raise received by Town of Maurice employees should be merit based by department and would like to see the cost-of-living raises done away with. Catalon expressed concerns with future employees having no expectation of performance if there is no ceiling on raises and suggested a certain dollar amount be set aside each year for raise consideration. M. Trahan doesn't feel like employee raises should be guaranteed. Landry-Lalande expressed concerns with sustaining raises if the Town ends up in a financial decline. Schlicher advised the cost-of-living raises are not guaranteed and controlled by Council members which gives the flexibility to grant the raise and set the amount given. Municipal Clerk Melanie Denais explained each employee does get an opportunity at a merit-based raise in the amount of 2% for their yearly performance evaluation. She also advised the cost-of-living raise is across the board for eligible employees which helps offset the effects of inflation and is not guaranteed. Arsement advised Council members he is working to get the General Fund balance at half a million dollars which is the recommended amount for a Town of Maurice's size and expressed excitement with the Town's current \$400,000 General fund balance. Discussion was held

Motion: Schlicher/Catalon moved, seconded and carried to approve a 3% cost of living raise to all eligible employees.

Landry-Lalande suggested part-time employees be considered in an amended motion.

Motion: Schlicher/Catalon moved, seconded and carried amending the previous motion approving a 3% cost of living raise to all eligible employees to include all eligible employees and part-time employees. Yay- Catalon, Schlicher, S. Trahan, Landry-Lalande; Nay- M. Trahan

Sales Tax Report- September 2023 sales tax is \$102,198.50 which is down 6.2% from last year. Arsement advised sales tax collections are still great despite the decrease. He also advised that local businesses and online sales are thriving and encouraged residents to shop local. Discussion was held

Updates- Arsement advised construction will begin on the bathroom facility at Maurice Park once the top soil work is complete. Old buildings along the Hwy 167 corridor that were in disrepair are being torn down. Town Officials and Employees are invited to a social at the Maurice Volunteer Fire Department immediately following the December 2023 General Meeting.

Council Concerns: None

Citizen Concerns: Guy Nerren thanked Council members for the cost-of-living raise. M. Trahan stated he is for raises but would like to see things done differently. Schlicher added he would like to have discussions prior to making decisions with raises going forward. Landry-Lalande agreed with Schlicher.

Motion: Schlicher/M. Trahan moved, seconded and carried to adjourn at 8:19pm. Yay- All; Nay- None