

GENERAL MEETING
TOWN OF MAURICE MINUTES
Wednesday, April 17, 2024

The general meeting of the officials of the Town of Maurice was opened by Mayor Neil Arsement at 6:00 p.m. at the Maurice Municipal Building, 405 Lastie Ave., Maurice, Louisiana

Mayor Arsement led the assembly in Prayer and Alderman Jonathan Schlicher led the Pledge of Allegiance

Roll call of officers

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

Absent: None

Also present: Melanie Denais; Joan Methvin; Nichole Bonin; Claire Meche; Shakyia Cormier; Nick Sonnier, Sellers & Associates; Richard Meche, Maintenance Supervisor; Chief Guy Nerren; Warren Rost; John Sonnier; Shaun Hearren, Abbeville Meridional; Anthony Dupont; Kyle Stelly; Wayne Theriot

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 Amend the Subdivision Ordinance's 22-10, 19-7A, 19-6B, 17-12, 06-5A, 79-9B, & Drainage Ordinance 17-6B

Legal Ricky Lafleur introduced an Ordinance to Amend the Subdivision Ordinance to update and amend certain items and language in the Comprehensive Manual. Nick Sonnier went through a list of amendments including review fee increases, preliminary plat approval time allowance, stormwater management model clarification, subsurface requirements, detention in floodways. Wayne Theriot asked if anything greater than 25-year stormwater could be implemented. Sonnier advised there is up to a 500-year but anything greater than 25-year is not feasible and would not provide balance between developers and the Town. The 25-year has been used in the surrounding areas as a standard. Mayor Arsement advised the Lafayette Parish Mayor is looking at spot dredging the portion of Vermilion River located in their parish. Soil banks are causing Coulee Isle De Cannes to flow backward. Arsement would like to see dredging of the Vermilion River in Vermilion Parish to improve the overall flow of water. Catalan asked about prohibiting floodway detention. The Town had issues with a development not obtaining a no-rise certificate for floodway detention. FEMA regulates floodways. Not allowing any detention within floodways in the Town would eliminate future issues. Warren Rost asked how many floodways are in the Town and was advised the information can be found on the FEMA flood maps. Arsement advised developers should research floodway locations prior to purchasing property for development. No further comments were made.

Motion: Schlicher/Catalon moved, seconded, and carried to close the Public Hearing and enter the General Meeting. Yay- All Present

Approval General Meeting Minutes of March 20, 2024

Motion: Landry-Lalande/M. Trahan moved, seconded and carried to dispense with the reading and accept the minutes of the March 20, 2024 General Meeting as submitted. Yay-All Present

Public comment period on agenda items listed- None

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

J. Ricky Lafleur- presented An Ordinance to Amend Subdivision Ordinance's 22-10, 19-7A, 19-6B, 17-12, 06-5A, 79-9B, & Drainage Ordinance 17-6B

Motion: Landry-Lalande/Catalon moved, seconded and carried to adopt an Ordinance Amending Subdivision Ordinance's 22-10, 19-7A, 19-6B, 17-12, 06-5A, 79-9B, & Drainage Ordinance 17-6B to Update Certain Items and Language in the Subdivision Comprehensive Manual. Yay- Catalan, Schlicher, M. Trahan, S. Trahan, Landry-Lalande; Nay- None

Mayor's Court Increased Fines and Court Costs- Mr. Lafleur presented information gathered from the State of Louisiana, and other Local Agencies regarding fines and court costs that can and cannot be legally adjusted. He also provided an Attorney General Opinion on the matter of adding administrative fees. Court costs can only be increased through legislation for the jurisdiction. Dedication of funds to specific department needs also has to be approved through legislation. The maximum fine amount for each violation of Town Ordinances is \$500 unless otherwise referenced by state law. Discussion was held Lafleur advised Mayors Court is going well with the help of Police and City Hall staff.

Nick Sonnier, Sellers & Associates- Introduce an Ordinance Extending and Enlarging the Limits and Boundaries of the Town of Maurice- Sonnier presented the Proposed Ordinance to Council members for consideration and stated a Public Hearing would need to be set for May 15, 2024 to discuss. Schlicher asked about a piece of property not included in the annexation detail and was advised owners do not want to be included. Warren Rost asked about the annexation location and why Soop Rd. is not included. Arsement suggested including Soop Rd. as a part of the annexation to perform road maintenance. Lafleur advised changes to the proposed ordinance can be made and discussed during the public hearing and Sonnier advised necessary steps to take with Vermilion Parish Police Jury in order to include Soop Rd. in the annexation consideration. Discussion was held

Motion: Schlicher/Catalon moved, seconded, and carried to set a Public Hearing to Introduce an Ordinance Extending and Enlarging the Limits and Boundaries of the Town of Maurice. The Public Hearing will take place at 6:00pm during the May 15, 2024 General Meeting located at the Town of Maurice Meeting Room, 405 Lastie Avenue, Maurice LA 70555. Yay- Schlicher, S. Trahan, Landry-Lalande, Catalan; Abstained- M. Trahan

Sign Variance for Sterling Dealership- Kyle Stelly of AAA Signs and Anthony Dupont of JB Mouton presented a request for a variance to the proposed sign for the Sterling Dealership stating the sign would be similar to the one installed at the Mendoza Ford Dealership. Council members had several questions and expressed concerns regarding aesthetics, lighting, display, height, and the size of the proposed sign. Dupont assured Council members, Arthur LeBlanc, owner of the dealership, would be willing to sign documents to make adjustments to lighting as necessary in the event of complaints and LeBlanc would also allow the Town to utilize the message board in the event of emergencies and display important local events. Arsement asked if DOTD permitted the proposed sign and was advised DOTD only permits billboards. The Sterling sign is considered an on-premise sign, not a billboard. All lighting can be adjusted to ensure the sign is not too bright or distracting to residents and motorists. Dupont advised the sign had been discussed with Mayor Arsement for months stating "the digital sign is not new." He also stated "we've been working on this and advising the community that this was coming." They were there to discuss that. Scott Trahan wanted to see the comparison between the proposed Sterling sign and the Mendoza sign especially in regards to dimension and height to make an informed decision. Extensive discussion was held

Motion: Schlicher/M. Trahan moved, seconded, and failed to grant a variance for the proposed Sterling Dealership sign contingent upon no objection from DOTD and Arthur LeBlanc signing an agreement regulating the sign's brightness and allowing the Town to display messages. Yay- M. Trahan, Schlicher; Nay- S. Trahan, Landry-Lalande, Catalan

Chief Nerren Purchase of a Vehicle- Nerren presented vehicle State Contract pricing and vehicle specifications to Council members. Mayor Arsement advised, the Police Department budget would need to be amended to include the vehicle's estimated dollar amount of \$56,000 in order to proceed with the purchase of the new vehicle. Discussion was held

Motion: Landry-Lalande/S. Trahan moved, seconded and carried to Amend the 2023-2024 Operating Budget to add \$56,000 for Maurice Police Department to purchase a new vehicle. Yay- S. Trahan, Landry-Lalande, Catalan, Schlicher, M. Trahan; Nay- None

Zoning in Park- Chief Nerren advised he would like to zone a space in the Maurice Park for dogs to alleviate the issue of animal waste on the park grounds, especially near the playground areas. Residents are supposed to clean up after their pets according to the posted Maurice Park rules but Chief Nerren noticed prior to the Family Fun Day event, there was several areas of animal defecation on the park grounds that had to be cleaned up prior to the event taking place. According to Legal Lafleur, Town Ordinance 17-7 also regulates and sets fines for residents not picking up waste left by their pets on public property. Council members suggested providing stations with waste disposal bags so residents wanting to bring their pets to the park can have access to a disposal option. Discussion will be held at a future meeting.

Council members asked about the alligator issue near Vincent Trace. Captain John Sonnier advised an agent from Wildlife & Fisheries stated he was unable to locate the gator and it was not cost effective for him to return to the area after 4 days of trying to locate it. Sonnier advised a tag can be obtained from the Lafayette Wildlife & Fisheries office if someone local would like to pursue the gator. Discussion was held

Richard Meche, Maintenance Supervisor- March 2024- 7,620,000 gallons of water produced; 6,811,945 gallons of water sold; 808,055 gallons of water Unmetered or 10% which Meche advised was a good number. Curbs along Hwy 167 are being repainted. Smoke testing performed in Vincent Trace showed about 29 issues, mostly due to broken cleanouts or missing cleanout caps. Residents are responsible for correcting their cleanout problem. Letters will be sent to notify those affected once smoke testing reports are received by Louisiana Rural Water. Town water services will be disrupted for residents who don't make repairs. Playground equipment reassembly will soon begin at Maurice Park. Arsement thanked Meche and his crew for the maintenance work around Town.

Mayor Arsement- Building Permits- Arsement asked to introduce an ordinance for public hearing next month to adjust and add fees associated with building Permits to reflect more current fees. Arsement suggested Richard Meche be trained to provide grade and piping detail for culvert permits. Discussion was held

Motion: Landry-Lalande/M. Trahan moved, seconded, and carried to set a Public Hearing to introduce an ordinance to adjust and add building permit fees. A Public Hearing will take place at 6:00pm during the May 15, 2024 General Meeting located at the Town of Maurice Meeting Room, 405 Lastie Avenue, Maurice LA 70555. Yay- All Present

Water Rates- Arsement asked to introduce an ordinance to amend the minimum water rate and potentially set a yearly increase percentage to offset the rising costs of treatment chemicals and system maintenance. Wayne Theriot advised USDA required the last increase when the Town upgraded the water system. Income generated to pay back the loan had to be a fixed rate. Theriot thought rates could be reassessed and possibly reduced. Arsement advised operating costs have risen too much reduction consideration. The proposed increase would raise residential minimum water rates from \$16 to \$21. Discussion was held

Motion: Catalan/M. Trahan moved, seconded, and carried to set a Public Hearing to introduce an ordinance to amend water rates. A Public Hearing will take place at 6:00pm during the May 15, 2024 General Meeting located at the Town of Maurice Meeting Room, 405 Lastie Avenue, Maurice LA 70555. Yay- Landry-Lalande, Catalan, Schlicher, M. Trahan, S. Trahan; Nay- None

Credit Card Policy & Procedure- was presented by Arsement for Council approval. Schlicher submitted for a Maurice .gov/.org website with no charge.

Motion: Landry-Lalande/Catalon moved, seconded, and carried to approve the Credit Card Policy & Procedure. Yay- Catalan, Schlicher, M. Trahan, S. Trahan, Landry-Lalande; Nay- None

Increase Rates for Mr. Lafleur's Legal Services- Legal service fees are increasing from \$75 to \$125/hr. Lafleur's fees have not increased since 2018.

Motion: Schlicher/Landry-Lalande moved, seconded, and carried to approve Ricky Lafleur's legal fees at \$125/hr. Yay- Schlicher, M. Trahan, S. Trahan, Landry-Lalande, Catalan; Nay- None

Sales Tax Update- January 2024 sales tax is \$105,324.35 which is up 26% from last year. Arsement asked residents continue supporting local businesses.

Updates- Arsement advised Landry-Lalande and Scott Trahan were appointed to a Planning & Advisory Committee for Maurice. Input from business owners and residents are welcome. A special ballot containing a Road Tax Renewal will be held on April 27, 2024 for voter consideration. The renewal only brings \$160,000 per year to the whole district. This is why the Vermilion Parish only performs patch work on roads. Discussion was held

Council Concerns: Schlicher requested a left turn traffic study at the Lafayette Street light. Arsement advised he will not request another study unless there is Council vote. DOTD has denied the request several times already and each request costs the Town money. Landry-Lalande asked about maintenance staff, blighted property, and trash at the gas station discussed last month. Meche has sufficient staff, Arsement is working on blighted property, and the owner of the gas station began trash clean-up. Nichole Bonin will get the owner's number to Mayor Arsement to discuss the business's intentions.

Citizen Concerns: None

Motion: Schlicher/Landry-Lalande moved, seconded and carried to adjourn at 8:08 pm. Yay- All Present