



Town of Mars Hill

MAYOR AND BOARD OF ALDERMEN

John L. Chandler
Mayor
Nicholas A. Honeycutt
Vice-Mayor
Robert W. Zink
Treasurer
Stuart L. Jolley
Clerk
Larry H. Davis
Secretary

MINUTES REGULAR MEETING Mars Hill Town Hall – Conference Room November 4, 2024 at 6:00 p.m.

The Town of Mars Hill Mayor and Board of Aldermen met in regular session on Monday, November 4, 2024, at 6:00 p.m. in the Mars Hill Town Hall.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mayor John Chandler; Aldermen Larry Davis, Nicholas Honeycutt, Stuart Jolley, and Robert W. (Bob) Zink

STAFF PRESENT: Nathan R. Bennett, Town Manager; Jamie Stokes, Town Attorney; and Chad Wilson, Police Chief

OTHERS PRESENT: Sebastian Dunn, Suzanne Dunn, and David Smith

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Mayor John Chandler. Mayor Chandler welcomed those in attendance.

Approval of the Agenda

Mayor Chandler asked the Board to review the proposed agenda for approval. Upon review of the agenda, Mayor Chandler called for a motion. **Alderman Nicholas Honeycutt made a motion to approve the agenda as presented.** Alderman Stuart Jolley seconded the motion. Upon a call for a vote on the motion by the Mayor, the agenda was unanimously approved. (Attachment A)

Approval of Minutes

Mayor Chandler asked the Board to review the minutes of the regular meeting held on October 7, 2024. There being no modifications to the minutes, **Alderman Jolley made a motion to approve the minutes of the October 7, 2024, regular meeting as presented by management.** Alderman Larry Davis seconded the motion. Upon a call for a vote on the motion by the Mayor, the minutes were unanimously approved.

Old Business

Mayor Chandler then moved to address old business.

Tropical Storm Helene - Update

Mayor Chandler recognized Town Manager Nathan Bennett to provide an update on the Town response to Tropical Storm Helene. Mr. Bennett advised the Board that the Town is still operating under the State of Emergency, however, all operations have returned to normal business. Mr. Bennett informed the Board that he has opened a FEMA Request for Public Assistance to address potential reimbursement for any storm-related damages and expenses related to the preparation, response, and recovery to Helene. Damage to Town owned properties is minimal, however, the Town has provided thousands of gallons of potable water to disaster recovery shelters, agencies, and private entities, as well as significant personnel costs associated with the event. While the

demand volume for potable water has drastically decreased as other public water systems come online, the Town is still providing water as needed. Mr. Bennett advised the Board that he has made arrangements to secure technical assistance from the Land of Sky Regional Council for assistance in navigating the FEMA and related administrative processes. When the extent of their involvement is known, an agreement will be provided to the Board for review. Currently, the Town is preparing to meet with FEMA and NC Emergency Management officials in the coming days to move forward with the public assistance process, and otherwise the Town is operating business as usual. The Board thanked Mr. Bennett for his report. Further, all Board members expressed their appreciation for the hard work and tireless efforts by all Town employees throughout this event. Alderman Honeycutt suggested the Town provide an employee appreciation meal as an opportunity to show the Boards gratitude. Mr. Bennett stated he will make arrangements for same and update the Board when that is arranged.

There was no other old business.

New Business

Mayor Chandler then moved to address new business. There was no new business to discuss at this time.

Town Manager Report – Nathan Bennett, Town Manager

General Update

Mayor Chandler then recognized Mr. Bennett to provide the Town Manager Report. Mr. Bennett provided the Board with a summary of activities and upcoming items of interest. Mr. Bennett advised that the Town-sponsored Halloween event last week was a great success. The event was well attended, and everyone had a good time. Mr. Bennett reminded the Board that the Christmas Parade is the next event on the calendar and that will be Saturday, December 7, 2024, at 6:00 p.m. Mr. Bennett then advised the Board that the NCDOT landscaping improvements project planned for the Exit 11 interchange and along NC 213 to the Main Street intersection has been awarded and construction is planned to begin next week. Mr. Bennett will keep the Board apprised of the progress on that long-awaited project. Mr. Bennett then advised the Board that Madison County opened bids on Friday, November 1, 2024, for the NC 213 water project to extend water service from Mars Hill to an emergency interconnection with the Town of Marshall. Bids were received from three or more firms and the amounts appear to fall within the expected project budget. McGill & Associates engineers are providing technical assistance to the County and town partners and will evaluate those bids and make recommendations to the County Board of Commissioners for their approval at an upcoming meeting. It is expected that an award will be made before the end of the year and construction to potentially begin as soon as February 2025. Mr. Bennett advised the Board he will keep them informed of the progress made on this project. Mr. Bennett then informed the Board that today, November 4, 2024, the Town received the property tax valuation assessment from the Madison County Tax Office pursuant to the mass property reappraisal process. Mr. Bennett advised the Board he has not yet fully analyzed the assessment, but it appears the proposed valuation is significantly higher than the estimate provided to the Town in June for budgeting purposes. Mr. Bennett stated that he will complete the analysis of the assessment with Town Tax Collector Stephanie Payne and will prepare a recommendation to amend the budget ordinance to potentially lower the ad valorem tax rate if deemed appropriate. He will bring that recommendation back to the Board at the December meeting, if not a special meeting in November. Mr. Bennett then provided an update on the FY 2024 audit process. He stated that the auditors work had been interrupted by Helene events, but the auditors informed him today that they were back on track and would be working to complete the audit very soon. Mr. Bennett also informed the Board of the resignation of a public works employee, and that the position would be posted soon to recruit an entry-level public works crew member. Mr. Bennett then provided information regarding ongoing capital projects and other items of interest to the Board.

Public Comment

Mayor Chandler then moved to public comment. Mayor Chandler recognized Mr. David Smith to provide public comment. Mr. Smith commented on a new home construction project adjacent to his residence on High Meadow Drive and questioned whether it complies with zoning requirements. Mr. Bennett advised Mr. Smith that he is aware of this project and advised him that it does comply with Town zoning requirements for that zoning district and a permit has been issued. Mr. Bennett advised that he would monitor this project and ensure continued compliance. Mr. Smith also stated that Bruce Road needs modifications for safety. Mayor Chandler, Alderman Zink, and others, agreed with Mr. Smith’s assessment of Bruce Road, but informed him that Bruce Road is a North Carolina Department of Transportation road and that the Town has many times informed DOT of Town safety concerns and made formal requests for DOT to make improvements. DOT has not done so; however, the Town will continue to advocate for action to make Bruce Road safer.

There were no other public comments.


Closed Session (Pursuant to N.C.G.S. 143-318.11)

There was no closed session.

Adjourn

There being no further business before the Board, Mayor Chandler called for a motion to adjourn. **Alderman Zink made a motion to adjourn.** Alderman Jolley seconded the motion. Upon a call for a vote on the motion by the Mayor, the motion to adjourn was unanimously approved.

Approved and authenticated this the 2nd day of December, 2024.


John L. Chandler, Mayor

ATTEST:


Nathan R. Bennett, Town Manager





ATTACHMENT A

Town of Mars Hill

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AGENDA

REGULAR MEETING

Mars Hill Town Hall Conference Room

November 4, 2024 at 6:00 p.m.

1. Call to Order – Mayor John L. Chandler
2. Approval of Agenda
3. Approval of Minutes: October 7, 2024 Regular Meeting
4. Old Business
 - a. **TROPICAL STORM HELENE - UPDATE**
5. New Business
6. Town Manager Report – Nathan Bennett, Town Manager
 - a. General Update
7. Public Comment

[Policy: Each speaker shall be limited to a maximum of three (3) minutes. The public comment period is not intended to require the Board of Aldermen or staff to answer any impromptu questions. The Board will not take action on an item presented during the public comment period. The Board may refer inquiries made during the public comment period to the Town Manager to address as appropriate. If necessary, the item may be placed on the agenda of a future meeting.]
8. Closed Session (*Pursuant to N.C.G.S. 143-318.11(a)(5)*)
9. Adjourn

Mars Hill Town Hall

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