

Minutes
Special Meeting
115 N. Thomson, Iowa, LA 70647
City Hall Meeting Room
July 16, 2024 7:00 p.m.

Mayor Watkins and Town Council met in regular session this date in compliance with all requirements as to notice.

Mayor Watkins called roll. Present: Mayor Douglas Watkins; Council Members: Joe Becnel, Gerald Guidry, Daniel Hennigan, Julie Fontenot, and Vernessa Guillory; Mayor Watkins established a quorum was present.

Others present was Town Clerk Cynthia Mallett; Town Attorney Eugene Bouquet; Chief of Police Keith Vincent and about 54 public individuals.

Invocation was said by Council Member Joe Becnel, followed by Pledge.

It was **moved by** Daniel Hennigan, **seconded by** Julie Fontenot to adopt agenda. The motion passed unanimously.

Mayor Watkins announced Mr. Mark Owens as first on the agenda. Mr. Owens came forward. He introduced himself and gave a brief explanation of the lease agreement with the Iowa VF Iowa Mall, the reason/s why Mayor Watkins wanted discussions with Pro Quarters, and Pro Quarters VS. Town of Iowa lawsuit. He explained the lawsuit. He said the first cause of action was a mandamus, it was because the Mayor would not put something on the agenda they requested. The Second cause of action was the town affected their lease. The third cause of action was declaratory judgement. He continued; the town filed an answer by filing a counter suit with an exception. He further explained, the Mandamus of the lawsuit was won by the Town and Mayor Watkins and was dismissed. Mr. Owens said mediation will be held for the subject of the lease. A citizen asked how long the lease was for. Mr. Owens said he thought it was for 99 years. Mr. fix asked about employees employed by the businesses in the building and if the employees bring revenue into town by purchases made in town. Mr. Owens answered his question with an explanation of their impact analysis and the town's study. People asked questions and made comments about the lease agreement, the kind of businesses in the building, what revenue is, or could be, generated from the lease agreement, and discussions made prior to the filing of the lawsuit. After discussions Mr. Owens requested the Mayor and Council to add presentation of Pro Quarters' and Town of Iowa's economic impact study to the Council on the October Agenda. It was **moved by** Daniel Hennigan, **seconded by** Julie Fontenot to add Pro Quarters' and the Town of Iowa's economic impact study to the October Agenda. The motion passed unanimously.

Mayor Watkins announced that a presentation by Mr. Rowland Seal, representative of Avexon will be given. Mr. Seal introduced himself as the MSP for the Town of Iowa. He talked about the policy, procedures, and infrastructure needed for the Town of Iowa. He reported on the present condition of the town's computer infrastructure, a plan of action to update the infrastructure, and a proposal for leasing new and updated equipment from Greenlake. He said security is the main reason to update the town's infrastructure. Mayor Watkins said that later Mr. Seal may be back with terms, costs, and conditions based on what is needed.

Mayor Watkins announced Ms. Rosiland Berry, representative of Calcasieu Council on Aging. Ms. Berry came forward and introduced herself. She presented a statement on behalf of Ms. Jackie Green. The statement gave information about state grants received for the building of a new senior citizen center. She announced that through the efforts of Mayor Watkins, a private donation of land located on Highway 90 west of the community center, was made for the building of a 3000 square foot senior center, and Mr. Lee

Mallet offered to construct the slab and metal exterior of the building as a donation. She asked that once constructed, the town would help with the grounds keeping of the center. She concluded with thanks to the board members and Ms. Collen Johnson for all she does.

Mayor Watkins announced the next item on the agenda, Mr. Alex Guillory, representative of Blue Wing Civil Engineering. Mr. Guillory came forward and introduced himself. He said that he will be talking about infrastructure of Water lines, sewer lines, streets, and drainage. He said that Mayor Watkins contacted him about six months ago to have them help us to develop a database of these assets. He presented a visual of what has been collected so far and explained the importance of this information when there is a disaster. He said that his firm came in at the beginning to help set it up, but it is the town workers that are collecting and putting it in the system. Mayor asked Mr. Guillory to report on the drainage grant recently applied for. Mr. Guillory said the grant applied for is from the Calcasieu Parish Road and Drainage Trust Fund. He explained that this grant will correct the drainage issue located on Shelby Drive. He said the project should impact about 50 home frontages. Ms. Tosh Leonard asked why they are starting in Ash Ridge. Mayor Watkins said they are starting in Ash Ridge because of the dangerous sink holes that developed. Mayor Watkins thanked Mr. Ales for coming.

Mayor Watkins read the next item on the agenda; Motion to amend ordinance 2024-12, An Ordinance amending Ordinance 2024-09, authorizing the name of E 1st Street located in the Town of Iowa, Louisiana to be Amended and Changed to Foreman Street, now hereby authorizing the name of Foreman Street to Foreman Brothers Street and otherwise with respect thereto. Council Member Daniel Hennigan explained the reason the Ordinance was being amended; there is a Foreman Road nearby and the Post Office said it would be less confusing if the town would change it. It was **moved by** Daniel Hennigan, **seconded by** Vernessa Guillory to amend ordinance 2024-12, An Ordinance amending Ordinance 2024-09, authorizing the name of E 1st Street located in the Town of Iowa, Louisiana to be Amended and Changed to Foreman Street, now hereby authorizing the name of Foreman Street to Foreman Brothers Street and otherwise with respect thereto. The motion passed unanimously.

Mayor Watkins read item six of the agenda; Discussion and consideration of granting variance of Chapter 5 Section 39, Facilities and location regulated and limited for Brent Stantz d/b/a The Buzz Daiquiris, LLC to be located at 110 S Thomson Avenue, Iowa, LA 70647. Mayor Watkins introduced Mr. Brent Stantz. Mr. Stantz came forward and explained his plans for a daiquiris shack to be located at 110 S Thomson Avenue. Council Member Vernessa Guillory asked what the hours of operation will be. Mr. Stantz said tentative plans are from 4 to 10. Council Member Joe Becnel asked about the distance from the church. Mr. Stantz said the distance from the church is about 320 feet and the distance from the school is over 500 feet. Several people, at one time, asked about the distance to the library. Mayor Watkins said that if they raise their hand, they will be called on. People were called on separately and spoke of their concerns and their wishes for and against the variance requested.

Mayor Watkins read item seven of the agenda. Mayor Watkins explained that this is in reference to the property being donated to the CCOA. It was **moved by** Daniel Hennigan, **seconded by** Julie Fontenot to introduce Ordinance 2024-13, An Ordinance Abandoning or Revoking the Dedication of Certain Undeveloped Street Findley Subdivision, Plat Book 4 Page 115 of Calcasieu Parish, Louisiana. The motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Tosh Leonard asked about the ordinance regulating grass cutting and who was taking care of this. She said she had called many times and wanted to know when this could be done. Mayor Watkins explained the issues the town is facing to complete these tasks. He told her we were short staffed and at times, when the crew goes to cut they are called out on water leaks and other emergencies. Council Member Vernessa Guillory wanted it known that she has reported the complaints brought to her as Council Member

concerning this matter. Mayor Watkins confirmed that she has brought these concerns to him and the administration.

With no further business to discuss, it was **moved by Daniel Hennigan, seconded by Joe Becnel**, to adjourn meeting. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 8:34 pm.

Douglas N Watkins, Mayor

Cynthia Mallett, MMC