



Regular Meeting Minutes

Thursday, February 17, 2022
7:00 P.M.

Members In Attendance:

Alderman Wilbert Reed Jr.

Alderman Simeon Profit

Alderman Leola Keys

Alderman Wysinger Cleveland

Absent: Alderman Janice Fleming

The Town of Richwood met for a Regular Meeting held February 17, 2022 at 7:00 p.m. at the Richwood Multi-Purpose Center, 2710 Martin Luther King Drive, Richwood, Louisiana to consider the following business:

- I. Meeting Called to Order by Mayor Gerald Brown at 7:04 p.m.**
- II. Prayer-** was offered by Mayor Gerald Brown
- III. Pledge of Allegiance** - recited in unison
- IV. Roll Call-** Mayor Gerald Brown called roll with the following results:
 - **The record shall reflect (4) Aldermen present and (1) Absent at roll call:**

Alderman Wilbert Reed Jr.
Alderman Leola Keys

Alderman Simeon Profit
Alderman Wysinger Cleveland

V. Adoption of Agenda:

Alderman Wilbert Reed Jr. motioned to add introduction of an ordinance added to the agenda, as Item # XIV, it was then seconded by Alderman Wysinger Cleveland to add the introduction of Ordinance 2022-02 to tonight's agenda as Item # XIV, before the adjournment

- *A vote was taken to add Ordinance 2022-02 to the agenda with the following results.*
- **The record shall reflect (3) Aldermen voted Yes to add Ordinance 2022-02 to tonight’s agenda and (1) Alderman voted to abstain.**

Alderman Wilbert Reed Jr. Yes	Alderman Simeon Profit	Abstain
Alderman Leola Keys Yes	Alderman Wysinger Cleveland	Yes

The Adoption of the Agenda:

It was moved by Alderman Wilbert Reed Jr. and seconded by Alderman Wysinger Cleveland to adopt tonight’s amended agenda.

- **The record shall reflect a vote was taken to adopt the amended agenda as follows: (3) Yes Votes and (1) Abstain Vote.**

Alderman Wilbert Reed Jr. Yes	Alderman Simeon Profit	Abstain
Alderman Leola Keys Yes	Alderman Wysinger Cleveland	Yes

VI. Adoption of January 20, 2022 Regular Meeting Minutes

Alderman Wilbert Reed Jr. – stated, he wanted included from the last meeting minutes a question he addressed a particular question of the Town’s Attorney....

- **For the Record: Alderman Wilbert Reed Jr. stated,**

“I asked the Town’s Attorney if he was aware that the Louisiana Municipal Association had recommended that the Town pay the judgement, and he said no. I would like that included in the minutes and at this time I would have to vote No.”

- **The record shall reflect a vote was taken to adopt the January 20, 2022 Regular Meeting Minutes with the following results. (3) Yes Votes and (1) No Vote to adopt the January 20, 2022 Regular Meeting Minutes as presented.**

Alderman Wilbert Reed Jr. No	Alderman Simeon Profit	Yes
Alderman Leola Keys Yes	Alderman Wysinger Cleveland	Yes

VII. Adoption of the Financial Reports:

Alderman Wilbert Reed Jr. – stated, he had a question on page 5, dated January 31, 2022.

I would like to see or get an invoice on Jay Schmill for the \$ 10,800.00.

Mayor Gerald Brown & the Fiscal Officer- advised Alderman Wilbert Reed Jr. the invoice was next to Alderman Reed on the right.

Alderman Leola Keys- stated, on page 2 for the same person, she would like to see the invoice for \$ 2,900.00 that's on page 2 on 1/12/22.

It was motioned by Alderman Wilbert Reed Jr. and seconded by Alderman Simeon Profit to table the financial report until those documents could be provided.

- **The record shall reflect the Financial Reports are tabled in lieu of the documentation requested by Mr. Reed, Mrs. Keys, and Mr. Cleveland be provided.**

VIII. Public Comments as they Relate to Tonight's Agenda:

Mr. Nathan Brown (Public Attendee)- stated, first of all I would like to take the time to congratulate Mayor Brown for receiving the award for Community Achievement for Outstanding Community Improvement on behalf of the Town of Richwood from the Louisiana Municipal Association on yesterday and Executive Director John Gallagher brought it to us personally; it is wonderful to be acknowledged by the LMA for our efforts. Congratulations to the Mayor and everyone involved in this.

It shows that whatever we do in this Town does not go unnoticed, good or bad, it is noticed. This time here shows me that we can continue to receive these kinds of rewards and acknowledgements for our town. . I am standing in for Mr. Amaker who could not be here tonight. What he has on here, he feels the creation of committees by the Alderpersons, would greatly benefit the community and its' citizens. Through community involvement and engagement, as well as meeting attendance, and voter participation. He says, the alderpersons should bring back the Beautification Committee and with working along with Public Works, recruit members of the community to help cleanup the community and make it more appealing to future business partners.

Mrs. Fleming and members of the Board, I feel there should be a community focus on education and computer literacy for all members of the community.

Mr. Profit and Mr. Reed, as being people with your own businesses, I feel both or one of you should have a committed focus on financial literacy and entrepreneurship.

Also understand certain members of the Board in the community have an issue with public safety, which can also be addressed with the creation of a committee such as Neighborhood-Watch with block captains and co-block captains and name and present the things of the street that the Mayor, Alderpersons, Police Enforcement may not have knowledge.

Previously it was talked about the Board needs to be created to provide assistance to moving forward and act as representatives at school board and police jury meetings providing feedback to the Mayor and members of the Aldermen Board when they are unable to attend these meetings themselves, and also be a part of the grant writing program. During the recall there were monies the Town could have received from the Police Jury, but because of the issue and due to lack of representation we were passed-up for those funds. There are some more monies through the Biden Infrastructure Bill that the Town can get but, we need to be there to claim it. The creation of these committees will help Richwood be more productive and efficient; also set ourselves up for more opportunities, because the more people we get involved the better chance we have to make positive change. I address the Board right now, those of you who have your own businesses, Mrs. Fleming is not here, Mrs. Keys, Mr. Wysinger is there anything you know of... any opportunities that we can bring something to this Town to create businesses, anything like that ... anything that you know of we can bring into this town ?

Alderman Wilbert Reed Jr. - stated, I would like to also congratulate the Mayor on his achievement. As far as businesses is concerned in the Town of Richwood, it would be good to see a barbershop in Richwood; since Mr. Profit is in that business, maybe he would consider putting one down here, I would be his first customer if he didn't use a razor.

As far a businesses is concerned, I have one, but it's not the kind... it's like a consulting (*inaudible*) it's not a lot I can do here. If there is anyone that want to go into any sort of business, they can see me, and I will advise them to the best of my ability for no fee.

The ladies and gentlemen that are not here tonight, Mr. Eptying has been asking the Town for assistance, there is RCDA, Richwood Community Development Association, here in Richwood, they too will help people starting businesses, maybe small business loans, things of that nature. I don't know if anyone is aware, you need to look into that. We have resources, we are capable of helping and willing to help.

Mayor Gerald Brown- stated, I thank Mr. Brown for giving the Town kudos and for giving me kudos, but it is really not me but the administrative staff, public works, the police department, it's really them that deserve the pat on the back not me.

IX. Mayor's Dialogue:

Mayor Gerald Brown- advised the forum there is a Drug take back box that will be installed here in the office. It is a take back box for opioid drugs and prescription drugs. In this country and parish there are folks that do not take all of the prescriptions and they wind up falling in the wrong hands. Through a partnership with the Health & Services they will install a box at no cost to us, and they will empty the box when necessary,.

We will have a ceremony here on March 2nd at 11:00 a.m. to dedicate the box and let people know it is here, you can come in and drop the prescription drugs in the box.

Also, Mrs. Helen Jackson who runs a nutritional and wellness center here in our buildings on Mondays thru Fridays, will be running a Senior Bootcamp on the 1st Tuesday of every month from 10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. She will be teaching balancing skills and other skills that seniors may find very needed, skills you can learn here and take back home and utilize.

This Saturday February 19th our annual Black History Parade will begin at 10:30 a.m., we lineup here beginning at 8:30 a.m. and parade at 10:30 a.m. We have several folks that have signed up to be in it, it is still not too late to sign up if you want to be in it. Unlike some other parades, we do not charge a fee, all we need to do is know that you want to be involved. We would love to see our citizens, board members, and anyone else who would like to be in it.

Earlier this month I sent an email to our Board members in regard to our annual budget as well as our American Rescue Plan budget. Generally March is when we start working on our Annual Budget, we know the issues we had with our budget last year, we would like to avoid those issues this year; if there are things you want to see, if there are things you want eliminated, if there are things you want to discuss and get more clarification on let's start doing that now so that in June we can get the budget in on time and not be in hot water with the Legislative Auditors Office.

The same thing goes for our American Rescue Plan money, we have to budget those funds as well. We received the first half of that, we deposited \$554, 000; we have to budget those funds as well.

I also sent you an email discussing final pull that the Treasury Department has issued; it detailed the different things we can do with these monies. I would love your participation on this, take a look at it; so as I roll something out to you, we can talk and discuss it and come up with the best solutions of what we can do with those monies to spread them around and help Richwood out the best way we can.

Mr. Brown mentioned this a little bit, I want to talk about it some too, the advisory committees. If you had a chance to look at the paper or go to the last Police Jury meeting, you'll notice they established an advisory committee to discuss the American Rescue Funds to see what citizens wanted to see in that package. I would like to see us do that too, not just with the American Rescue Plan, but in other areas, rather it be public safety or drainage or how we can assist with the schools in our area, I would like to see us do some similar things to that and perhaps establish some committees or advisory cores whatever you want to call them; of course I'd be glad to participate on those, I would like to see some Board Members participate, citizens participate, business leaders, and property owners and we can get together and put our heads together to really come up with some solutions for some of the issues that we have. I will be sending something out to you with just some suggestions in terms of committees that we might be able to establish, and I would like to hear from certainly our citizens, but also our Board Members thoughts on that and your willingness to participate.

Last thing I have is emails, I talked about sending you guys some emails. I send emails and text out quiet a bit, and I do that because I can make sure each one of you receive the exact same message from me at the same time. I hate to get into a situation where I am on the phone with five different people, and maybe five different people get a different message or I'm on the phone with someone for 5 minutes and maybe 45 minutes with someone else, and I don't talk with someone else at all; and someone feel like I'm playing favorites.

That's why I like to do emails and text messages because I know you have a way of getting it, you have a way of having it at exactly the same time. I'm saying that to see this, I sent a few emails out, but I am not getting a lot of response back on those; we pay for those emails for you to have an email address with the Town; if we are not going to use them we can get rid of those we can save that cost. I think they are a good tool because it is a good way I or a State Representative or anyone else in the state can send something to you. If you're not going to use them than let me know you're not going to use them.

X. Clifford Thomas Judgement Status Update:

Mr. Clifford Thomas -addressed the forum and said I visited the clerk of courts office on yesterday, you can see it is certified at 1:30 on the top of each page because I wanted to make sure you realized this was coming from the Clerk of Court's Office as an official reference to them, they certified each page they presented to me.

One of the concerns on last month was regarding whether the revised judgment included my original judgement as far as my revisal process; as you can see in the original documents I have provided you this evening, each page is certified by the Clerk of Court the initial judgement on April 29, 2011 the initial judgment was submitted to the Court as an exhibit, which it says in the motion to revise marked exhibit A, and the judge had his confirmation delivered unto him upon

signing that revised order. You can see that the initial judgment was a part, was not just the appeal on October 27th, but they included the initial judgment; that was one concern.

The second concern was who was responsible for filing into the record of the initial judgement, I think the Town Attorney at that time, made reference to that I could not file into public record the judgement from that initial judicial decision.

If you look Dana Benson, who is the Ouachita Parish Clerk of Court and you can see on the last page, where she refers to responsibility, she says, it is not the plaintiff's nor the defendant's responsibility to do any filings, all court filings received as judgements, public records go through the clerk of courts office, it is not the defendant and it is not the plaintiff who is responsible... you all serve notices, and court decisions, and court judgements and verdicts and things of that sort, (*inaudible*), court records and documents as concluded by the court; so the clerk's office is the only distributing, disseminating documents as concluded by the court.

This is the first of the two short pages you have in the back of your package in regard to the Ouachita Parish Clerk of Court and I just added the calculated information, you know we went through that last month, and we are now in a new month, so what is included in that is the judicial interest.

I am asking the Board again to consider approving, authorizing the Mayor to make payment on this judgement.

Mr. Clifford Thomas- asked if there were any questions?

Alderman Simeon Profit- stated, we will take it under advisement and get back with you.

Alderman Wilbert Reed Jr. - stated, I received correspondence last week from Foster Construction, and Foster is here tonight, I am asking he come forward.

Mayor Gerald Brown- reminded Alderman Wilbert Reed Jr. this was out of order.

Foster of Foster Construction – came forward stated, it has been brought to his attention that this matter is still being resistance, and he came to show his face. We did a job and have not been paid for the job.

Alderman Leola Keys- stated I was on that Board in 2011 and she wanted to say personally I do appreciate what you did for this Town, I was on the Board in 2011, with at that time then Mayor Steve Hunter, and I appreciate the fact that you came and brought into existence a building we needed so bad, and it would be my desire that the Board pay you your money.

Alderman Wysinger Cleveland- *stated he makes a motion that we go ahead and pay these judgements and move forward.*

Alderman Leola Keys- *stated, and I second it.*

Alderman Wilbert Reed Jr. – stated, as it has been stated with Clifford Thomas several times, this matter has come before this Board for over a year, and we are not attorneys we are not lawyers, but what we are trying to do is act in the best interests of the Town; sometimes the decisions we make are not as well received as others.

First of all we know this building is built, it is here, we use it; someone had to build it, and someone has to pay for it, that is obvious and until that has been resolved, we are going to have this issue. As far as Foster Construction is concerned the building has been built, we are using it, and what I understand it has not been fully paid for, but we still use it every day; that is common sense that the debt is owed it should be paid.

As far as Mr. Thomas is concerned, he has been to this Board several times and submitted legal information and us not being attorneys it is difficult for us to make a final decision, but we know there is a debt, and that debt must be dealt with and using logic when you have judgements there are certain things you can and cannot do. Also, in lieu of Louisiana Legislative Auditors have recommended that those judgements be paid. Now, it should be acceptable that this Board agrees with Louisiana Legislative Auditors; they did not go out and say, actually go out and do this, but we can say that we agree with Louisiana Legislative Auditors recommendations that this matter be dealt with timely, because it has been lingering, lingering, and lingering, and at some point and time if it is a debt it has to be paid. I overheard your conversation, but Mr. Foster contacted me with some concerns, and as an Alderman it is my obligation to hear his concerns, because it has something to do with the business of this Town, an as an Alderman it is my responsibility to at least hear what he has to say, you heard from him, not me, that is why I asked him to come to the meeting and voice his concerns; if it is unacceptable, then it is just unacceptable, I heard that too, but he still has the right in my opinion to voice his concerns; with that being said, so with that being said, I am not exactly sure the Board can vote to pay these, but I am sure it should be common sense that the Board go on record as approving the recommendation of the Louisiana Legislative Auditors who recommended that we pay the judgements.

Mayor Gerald Brown- may I ask a question, who at the Legislative Auditors Office recommended this? Because I spoke with someone last week and they told me that at no time did they ever say that they recommended that we needed to pay this; so I was trying to see who you spoke with so we can get to the bottom of the information that's being given out.

Alderman Wilbert Reed Jr. – stated, once I get that information, I will let you know. Here again is the problem, we don't know what or what not to do; and this is holding up other things the Town could be doing.

Alderman Leola Keys- stated, well I would like to say this, we have four Board Members here tonight, and we all know that we did approve I believe, if I am wrong I stand corrected, about

\$ 90,000 for the judgements to be paid; and this we truly owe, and we also owe Mr. Thomas. We Board members tasked the \$90,000 to pay our debts, and this here is a debt.

Mayor Gerald Brown- stated, the amount that was approved in the budget was to pay the judgement amount and did not factor in any judicial interest. I know Mr. Thomas is asking for several thousands of dollars in judicial interest, but the amount that was approved by the Board, in the budget was the amount in terms of the actual judgement themselves.

Alderman Leola Keys- stated, I am going to predict, we had problems with the budget last year, but if we are going to do Board business like this, we're going to have problems coming up with the next budget.

Mayor Gerald Brown- said, what I would suggest, as the Board stated last month we get an attorney general's opinion as it regards to Mr. Thomas, and as it regards to Mr. Foster that we go into mediation with him and his attorney in regard to your judgement, because we can't make an agreement with you, you are in litigation; we can't make an agreement with you here on the floor in terms of your judgement.

Mr. Foster/ Foster Construction- stated, well you got \$90,000, I don't know how much you owe him, I know what mine is.

Mayor Gerald Brown- stated, it is not earmarked for a particular certain area or person, again I think what is best is your attorney and our attorney discuss this matter. We can't make a resolution here on this floor like this.

Alderman Simeon Profit- stated, this is not on our agenda, we can't discuss this at this time, you will need to take this up with our lawyer, we must continue with our meeting. We have discussed this all we are going to discuss it.

Alderman Wilbert Reed Jr.- stated hold on Mr. Mayor, you got a motion...

Alderman Simeon Profit- replied, that is out of order.

Mayor Gerald Brown- stated, that issue is not on the agenda and is out of order.

Alderman Wilbert Reed Jr. – asked the Town's Attorney is this out of order?

Town's Attorney Jay Nolen- replied, yes, it sure is.

Alderman Leola Keys- asked Attorney Nolen what has he discovered from Baton Rouge?

Town's Attorney Jay Nolen- informed the Board he had spoken with the number 2 guy with the Louisiana Legislative Auditor, Mike Battle and I also talked to Mr. Tew. I was told that until we get the Attorney General's Opinion, anyone voting to pay it will be investigated for malfeasance in office, because it would be paying a debt not owed with public funds.

Mayor Gerald Brown- inquired of Alderman Wilbert Reed Jr., I got a question did you say you and Mr. Foster had some discussions, he sent some material to you ?

Alderman Wilbert Reed Jr. – stated, I got a letter.

Mayor Gerald Brown- inquired if anyone else get a letter? Did we get a letter from Foster?

Mayor Gerald Brown- asked had he reached out prior to that, or did he just send you a letter?

Alderman Wilbert Reed Jr. – indicated he did not recall.

Mayor Gerald Brown- stated, I'm just trying to see how the conversation got started, because no other Board members got a letter, and the office didn't get anything. I'm just trying to see how you guys got started. You don't recall?

Alderman Wilbert Reed Jr. – stated, I don't recall.

XI. Adoption of Resolution 2022-01: A Resolution to hire the University of Louisiana Monroe(ULM) Office of Sponsored Programs and Research (OSPR)

Mayor Gerald Brown- advised this group would assist us in grant writing, they would teach as many folks as employed by the Town of Richwood, as well as citizens, non-profits, or churches within the Town of Richwood, how to seek, procure, and write federal and state grants.

A little about this group in the last 6 months they've written grants \$ 122, 000 for the Department of Education, \$ 597,000 for a tele med project for their own pharmacy department, \$ 186,000 for senior citizen center in the northeast portion of Louisiana to do blood pressure testing and checks, \$ 352,000 to their Biology Department to do diabetes research, another \$ 350,000 to the state to do Alzheimer's research... they are experienced in this particular vein, Dr. Sutherlin has been here a couple of times to discuss in regards as to some of the things he can do for us.; as regards to training us where we wouldn't have to hire anyone we would be able to do this for ourselves.

*It was motioned by Alderman Simeon Profit motioned to adopt Resolution 2022-01 ...
No second received... the Resolution 2022-01 died for lack of second.*

**XII. Adoption of Resolution 2022-01 A resolution to re-hire
M5 Consulting Group LLC**

*It was motioned by Alderman Simeon Profit motioned to adopt Resolution 2022-02 ...
No second received... the Resolution 2022-01 died for lack of second.*

XIII. Introduction of Ordinance 2022-01 (An ordinance amending the Town of Richwood Code of Ordinance to provide for the enforcement of certain traffic violation by automated means and provides for civil penalties for certain traffic violations enforced by automated means.

Russell Sarpy/ Owner - explained to the forum this is an automated system that allows not only speeding citations to be automated, but also a number of other citations. These citations would be issued to the actual registered owner of the vehicle.

Mr. Sarpy - stated they are providing the equipment, providing the computer, we are providing you the software that allows the officer to automatically process the citations, and we are also providing you core management services, so they are able to go online and pay the tickets.

This has no cost to the Town, when the violation fees are collected then we keep 40% of the revenue and you keep 60% of the revenue. We would come and train the officers. however the officer would not come in harm's way... or affect the flow of traffic.

This is not a fixed pole system... this system would not be a 24 hours, this would be in use when the officer is there on the scene. Our system requires it must be human interaction to work.

There is no contract required, would have to sign an agreement, user has a period of 90 days to determine if they want to use the system . If you decide you don't want this you just contact us, and we pick up the equipment.

XIV. Ordinance 2022-02 (An ordinance amending the original ordinance of Chapter 1 of the Code of Ordinance for the Town of Richwood with respect to the Districting Plan for the Town of Richwood)

Alderman Wilbert Reed Jr. – stated it is pretty much self-explanatory , it is an ordinance to address redistricting. This is being done all over the state; and that is what this particular ordinance is asking to do.

Mayor Gerald Brown- stated, he is not certain, but he thinks we have do a 3 by 2 on this.

XV. Adjournment

Motioned by Alderman Wilbert Reed Jr. and seconded by Alderman Simeon Profit to adjourn @ 8:37 p.m.