

TOWN OF SIMMESPORT

MAYOR LESLIE DRAPER III

DISTRICT I
TED TURNER



DISTRICT II
KENNETH MARSH

DISTRICT III
MYRON K. BROWN

DISTRICT IV
SHERMAN BELL

ALDERMAN AT LARGE
JACOB COCO

June 5, 2019 Special Town Meeting Minutes

Minutes of a special meeting of the Mayor and Board of Aldermen of the Town of Simmesport held at the Simmesport Town Hall on Wednesday June 5, 2019, at 9:00 AM.

Presiding: Mayor Leslie Draper

Members Present: Ted Turner, Myron Brown, Kenneth Marsh, Sherman Bell, Jacob Coco Members

Absent:

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Draper and was opened with a prayer given by Alderman Myron Brown followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

A motion was made by Alderman Marsh and seconded by Alderman Brown to accept the agenda. All present voted as follows:

	FOR	AGAINST	ABSENT
Alderman Bell	X	_____	_____
Alderman Brown	X	_____	_____
Alderman Coco	X	_____	_____
Alderman Marsh	X	_____	_____
Alderman Turner	X	_____	_____

The motion was carried.

Jacob Waguespack of the accounting firm of Falk&Winkler, presented the proposed budget for the Town of Simmesport for FY 2019-2020. He explained that the Town has been facing declining revenues from sales tax and increasing costs from infrastructure problems. The proposed budget does carry a positive estimated balance for the end of FY 2019-2020, but Mr. Waguespack noted that he is always conservative and would like to see some fiscal tightening on spending to leave the Town in a comfortable fiscal position after the 19-20 FY. Mayor Draper also noted that because of the Town of Simmesport was so behind on its audits (with the 2016-2017 audit only recently completed) that the State of Louisiana has locked out the Town from receiving many revenue sources such as gambling proceeds and state grants. Mayor Draper further stated, and Mr. Waguespack confirmed, that once the Town gets off the non-compliance audit list (which should be some time after July when the 2017-2018 audit is complete and submitted), then Simmesport will retroactively receive all of those funds we have been locked out of.

However, Mr. Waguespack did recommend that there be some conscientious cuts and spending tightening to ensure that the Town would end up in a favorable financial position at the end of FY 19-20. Mr. Waguespack noted that he is not familiar with the operational aspects of the Town and left it to the Council and Mayor to figure out what cuts need to be made and where.

Mayor Draper then led the discussion with the Council for suggestions about how the town could generate revenue or save money. Alderman Turner asked about increasing utility rates on gas and water. Mr. Waguespack suggested that LGA do a rate study on our gas rates to determine how Simmesport compares to the rest of their customers. Mayor Draper also reminded the council that they had yet to decide what increase would be added to the water and sewer bills to finance the new wireless meters. A suggestion of a flat \$5 increase was suggested as this would completely finance the new meters and leave a small portion extra for the Town. Another cost saving measure was suggested by Alderman Marsh to remove any non-used vehicle from the Town's auto insurance plan.

Alderman Marsh also stated that he believed that town employees should not be taking vehicles home. Mayor Draper stated that in the maintenance department three employees take home town vehicles. Two of these employees are on call nights and weekends.

The issue of unexpected costs and fines left over from the previous administration was also brought up. Mayor Draper noted that the Town had been fined a number of times because the gas system had not maintained proper records from 2015 and 2016. This set off a cascade effect of not only having to pay the fines but hiring outside consultants to remedy the problems. Other unexpected expenses such as the recently-discovered \$77,000 owed to DOTD for moving a gas line in 2016, have wrecked havoc on the budget. The Mayor also added that he believes these surprise expenses are behind us now. Also costing the Town has been the hiring of an accounting firm to bring the town back into compliance with the state auditors. The Mayor and Mr. Waguespack confirmed that this process is winding down as more of Simmesport's personnel are trained in proper accounting procedures.

Mayor Draper also brought up the cost of paying the Fire Department's electric bill, internet/phone/cable bill, as well as giving them free utilities. The mayor stated that the cost of the electricity and the phone package is more than \$10,000 per year, depending on electric usage. Alderman Coco suggested that the Mayor speak with Fire Chief Smith about the possibility of the Fire Department assuming those two costs.

Mr. Waguespack suggested the Town pass the budget, as presented, after the public hearing on Monday, June 10, 2019, and that by no later than September of 2019 the Town amend the budget with all necessary cuts. The council agreed to this course of action.

Mayor Draper then went to each Alderman and asked for their input on cuts or possible revenue sources. The Mayor was emphatic that the meeting was the place to put forth suggestions and discuss them.

There being no further business, a motion was made by Alderman Coco and seconded by Alderman Marsh to adjourn. All present voted as follows:

	FOR	AGAINST	ABSENT
Alderman Bell	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
Alderman Brown	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
Alderman Coco	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
Alderman Marsh	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
Alderman Turner	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>

The motion was carried and the meeting adjourned.

Leslie Draper, III
Mayor

Dacia Adams
Clerk