The Lyerly Town Council met for their regular monthly meeting on Tuesday, October 9, 2018 at Lyerly Town Hall. Those in attendance were:

Jim Ferguson, Mayor

Gwen Fisher

Phil Brooks

Juanita Baker

Shirley Davis

October 9, 2018

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Ferguson at 7:00 pm.

***New Business:***

*Water Rates–* Mayor Ferguson said that the council had asked last meeting for the average water bill for just residential customers. Inside the city limits the average water bill is $34.00 and outside the city limits the average is $29.88, for just water. He told the council that he has broken down each year of the rate increase in the ordinance, which they all have a copy of. The first rate change will be starting on November 1st. There will be a $1 increase to the flat rate for everyone and 25¢ per thousand for everything over the minimum. The second rate will begin on January 1, 2020 which will be another 25¢. Phil Brooks asked if everyone thinks it will be better to raise it a quarter at a time. Juanita Baker said that she thinks that it should be raised all at once. Phil Brooks said that he also thinks we should go ahead and do it all now. Mayor Ferguson asked Shirley Davis and Gwen Fisher what they thought. Shirley Davis said that we have already raised fire dues and taxes. Mayor Ferguson said that we used the rollback on the taxes so it barley went up. Shirley Davis said that they still went up some so she thinks that we need to raise water rates yearly. Gwen Fisher asked if we did it all at once, how much it would increase the average bill. Mayor Ferguson said it would increase it roughly $8 per month. He said that is taking all of the customers, residential and commercial, adding them together and dividing by the number of customers. Some people don’t even use the minimum so they would only see an increase of $1. Gwen Fisher said that she thinks that $8 per month is quite reasonable. Shirley Davis asked if we went up the $8 would that be it with no more increases. Mayor Ferguson said that would be it. Shirley Davis said that she still thinks that it would be too hard on the people with fixed income. Gwen Fisher asked if Shirley thinks that they use a lot of water. Shirley Davis said that even if they are not, it will still go up $8. Everyone explained that it will only go up $1 and then 75¢ per thousand gallons over 1,500 gallons. Gwen Fisher said that if they are lavish water users then yes, it may go up $8. Shirley Davis said that if they water their garden and stuff like that, it will go up more. Mayor Ferguson said that for example, if they use 3,500 gallons, the increase would come out to $2.50. That would be in addition to their original bill. Shirley Davis said that she understands. It is not a flat $8, it’s a flat $1 and 75¢ per thousand and there will be no other increases. Gwen Fisher asked if we have someone with extra low income can we not work with them. Juanita Baker said that Sally works with them all of the time. Clerk Sally Kerce said that if they have a bad leak outside and they are on sewer, she will give them a credit up to twice a year. It has to be a leak outside. If it is a leaky toilet, it went into our sewer system so I have to charge them. Mayor Ferguson said that there are plenty of government programs in place to help people with that kind of thing. Shirley Davis said she would go along with the rate increase. Mayor Ferguson said that he wants to state one more time what we are going to do. He said that he is striking the top and middle rate schedule from the ordinance which would have been the increases for 2019 and 2020 and we will be using the one on the bottom which was the rates that would have taken effect after the final increase in 2021. He said that he will rewrite the ordinance to reflect that. Phil Brooks made a motion to increase water rates starting November 1, 2018. Juanita Baker seconded. All in favor.

*Write-Off’s –* Mayor Ferguson said that the next thing on the agenda is a resolution to allow a bookkeeping change. What it says is that the software that we use, Rural Billing, keeps delinquent water accounts among the active accounts. What we will do is fix the delinquent accounts so that they show a 0 balance however there will still be notes in the software that the people owe the money. So if the opportunity ever presents itself to collect, we will still have that information. And if they try to open another water account, it will flag them and say they still owe money. If an account is inactive and delinquent for six months, 180 days, this will allow Sally to 0 the account out. Phil Brooks made a motion to adopt the resolution to allow write-off every six months. Juanita Baker seconded. All in favor.

Shirley Davis asked if Mayor Ferguson had found out if we can hold a property owner responsible for a renter’s delinquent account. He said that he talked with the town attorney and the short answer is yes, we can as long as we have an ordinance stating that we are going to do that. We also found another municipality that has a paper that the landlord has to sign stating that they are responsible. Juanita Baker asked if that would make it where the renter can’t move in without having that paper signed by the landlord. Mayor Ferguson said that we will not turn on their water service until we receive that paper. Juanita Baker said that sounds great. Everyone also agreed.

Shirley Davis asked if he had found out anything about the trees at the park. Mayor Ferguson said that he hasn’t. Shirley Davis said that she thinks that we need to hold off until next year and see what our budget looks like. Phil Brooks said that we just need to make sure that there is no fall liability. Mayor Ferguson said that he knows a guy that he can call to get to come and look at the trees. He is like a tree doctor and he can tell us how to stop whatever is happening to the trees. Gwen Fisher asked for the company name. Mayor Ferguson said it is A to Z trees.

Shirley Davis said that she has thought of a problem with Halloween. We had said that we were going to put the people down each side of the entrance to give out candy but she asked how we would protect the kids from people pulling in and out. Juanita Baker said that we can put up some yellow tape and that could be the walkway. Sally Kerce said that if it is dry, you can put the cars giving out candy in the field. Gwen Fisher said that would be good. She said that we will also have a hay ride. Charles Tudor will be pulling the hay ride.

Mayor Ferguson added that the ladies are going to sell the wreaths that they made for Down Home Day to try to recoup some of the cost of Down Home Day.

Mayor Ferguson opened the floor to the public at 7:28pm.

Phil Brooks made the motion to adjourn. Juanita Baker seconded. All in favor.

Meeting was adjourned at 7:29 pm.

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Mayor Town Clerk