

The emergency meeting of April 4, 2022 was called to order by Mayor Ruth Nash at 7:00 p.m. Present were all council member. It was determined a quorum did exist.

This meeting was called to address urgent issues regarding the recently passed Ordinance for Special Events. The Ordinance was properly advertised and all readings were held as directed by law. The second reading and approval was signed on November 8, 2021.

Some of the fair operators were unaware of the effective date of the ordinance and unaware of the cost of the Permit. They were under the impression the new rules were to go into effect for the fall (October) fairs. Present were representatives of all three fairs as well as a local business owner.

First speaker on the agenda was Joe Nash, representing the Cotton Fair (formerly Cotton Pickin Fair). The main complaint was the lack of communication between the Town and the fair operators. They begin planning for the next fair as soon as the current one is concluding so they would find it extremely difficult to recoup the cost of the permit since the May fair has been planned, vendors notified of their fees, and in many cases, paid such fees.

Next speaker was Kris Price, Shady Days in Gay owner and operator. She echoed much the same complaints and information as presented by Joe Nash. Again, the inability to recoup costs associated with the new permit.

Next Speaker was Harrison Summerour, operator of Cotton Fair. He said that a true count of booths rented is impossible to determine at the 45 days prior to issuance of the permit, as instructed in the Ordinance, as the count is fluid, up until almost day of the fair. He also asked if non-profits would be counted, or would there be a discount for them.

Mayor Nash explained that the cost of the Permit is a fair owner/operator fee, not really a vendor fee. In an effort to not put the smaller fairs out of business, the council felt it would be more equitable to charge on the size of the fair, i.e. the number of vendors. To charge each fair the same fee for a permit would effectively put the small fairs out of business or to charge the bigger fair a smaller fee would not give the town the funds required to be able to pay for Meriwether County Deputies for security and traffic control. Also, the town has requested an Emergency Evacuation Plan be drawn up to insure safety in case of any catastrophic event. There will be a charge for this and possibly a fee for EMS presence.

Mayor Nash also said that perhaps a solution was to charge only half the proposed permit fee in order to save the Town from having to pay approximately \$3500.00

It seemed like the operators were not aware the town has been paying for the deputies. Mayor Nash explained that for the past few years, the town has had to pay for deputies in order to have the presence in town and since we have not been getting the license fees from the vendors, after a lost law suit. This was a reason for getting the Ordinance in place.

Mr. Summerour said he does not think the Town should be responsible for paying anything and that the Cotton Fair will step in and help pay those fees and asked the other operators if they would agree to also pay. The business owner said she would also help pay some since she also benefits from the presence of law enforcement and emergency personnel. The other two fair owners/operators also agreed to pay. Mr. Summerour asked if it would be possible to get a total of deputy payment, Evacuation Plan and amount for EMS, if there is one. They will then determine how much each fair should be responsible for.

Council member Blakeley made a motion to not collect the Permit Fee for the May events if the operators agree to cover the costs of emergency and public safety personnel and the evacuation plan. The motion was seconded by council member Keith and the vote in favor was unanimous.

Mayor Nash said she should have the total figure by the next regularly scheduled council meeting, which is April 11, 2022.

Discussion of future Permits and the Ordinance will be on the agenda for the next council meeting.

As there was no more business to discuss, council member Watts motioned to adjourn the meeting at 7:30 p.m., seconded by council member Askvig. The vote in favor was unanimous.

Ruth Nash- Mayor

Sharon Richmond - Clerk