

Town of North Wilkesboro

Commissioners Meeting

June 6th, 2023

5:30 pm

Held at the North Wilkesboro Board of Commissioners Board Room & on Zoom Meeting

ID 899 7217 3780; Passcode 019432

Recording access: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KBR_bXFUYX4&t=12s

Board of Commissioners Present: Otis Church, Bert Hall, Mayor Marc Hauser, Angela Day, Michael Parsons, and Andrew Palmer.

Staff present: Town Manager Holly Minton, Taylor Gann Community Development Director, Danny Johnson Town Attorney, Meredith Detsch Planning Director & Interim Town Clerk, Connie Bauguess Finance Director, Rob Thornburg Police Chief.

Audience included: Martha Nichols (PB), Charles Vaughn, Tom Caudill, John Roselli, Greta Ferguson, applicant Ron Simons and son Tyler Simons

Items I., II., and III. Call to Order, Invocation, and Pledge of Allegiance were conducted by Mayor Hauser. Hauser called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. and delivered the Invocation. Mayor Hauser then asked North Wilkesboro Chief Thornburg to lead in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mayor Hauser asked Manager Minton if there were any additions or deletions to the agenda and Manager Minton told the board none at this time. An updated agenda was distributed to the board at the beginning of the meeting dated 6/5/23.

Mayor Hauser asked the board for approval of the agenda as presented and **Commissioner Church moved to approve the agenda as presented. Commissioner Day seconded the motion and it passed unanimously, 5-0.**

VII. General Public Comment Period-

Mayor Hauser asked Manager Minton if there were any speakers tonight or anyone signed up and the first speaker signed up was Tom Caudill - Yadkin Valley Railroad Club and David Stackhouse the President is out of town. Historic society national railroad - open once a month and sometimes twice a month. 2015 official non-profit organization and art gallery moved out of the location and they took up residence for ten years. 2006 they established (800 Elizabeth Street). Neil Cashion had it as a service station and then it was a grill- name Black Cat Grill. 35 members of the club and conductor of Tweetsie - \$30.00 dues a year, \$20.00 to add spouse, students are \$10.00 and have an open house 2nd Saturday of the month. HO scale and in scale layouts-Thomas the Tank too for the younger students. Rotary Club, Corvette Club, Special Ed with Mountain View, Wilkesboro United Methodist Adults, Winston Salem southbound club. Boy Scouts are also taught merit badge training. Visitor center on Highway 421 has

brought people into the station from out of town. Facebook or internet is a great way to reach outside residents, even out of state. Open house in 2007-Concord and Kannapolis club came up and there was only 50% layout in the building. Open house dates, layout in the Wilkes Heritage Museum they maintain and promotion with the library including a display. This building is not in good shape, carpet had to be pulled up and was around \$10,000.00. They went to CFL lighting throughout the building and replaced the wooden door along the Elizabeth Street side at their own expense. New bathroom fixtures were installed by the staff of the Town and they provided the units. The Town mows the property but the clubs still do the maintenance as needed. The club is wanting to reserve the tenant space of the building and lease it for some years of the future. Many of the units would have to be torn down and rebuilt. The Mayor thanked him for his time.

Charles Vaughn was the next speaker signed up. Mr. Vaughn stated the 9 million dollar estimate for the fire and police station and would like to bring the idea back to the table. Encourage some form of combination to serve both Towns as we already go back and forth with the fires. Taylorsville and Newton have new fire stations and near Hickory and Lenoir that are smaller stations and nicely done. If the Fire and Police along with EMS could do a building for less than 5 million dollars. The architect bid the Town got was very high. The Mayor interrupted him to explain the town is seeking funding.

Mr. Vaughn transitioned to the water fees and wanted to build a house and a line extension was needed. This section of the fee schedule is open to a lot of interpretation and not concrete. The water line extension fee for labor over 60' - paid by the Town. There have been three different interpretations- Attorney has interpreted it post 60' and include labor and boring costs. He has an estimate for the waterline. Discussions will need to go forward with the attorney from now on. Ms. Minton noted that she received his signature to sign off on the estimate. Ms. Minton noted we could revise our fee schedule to be more robust with explaining the fees. Mr. Vaughn also noted the Town Code was antiquated and needed to continue with all in town residents. The Mayor asked him to wrap up and he wanted to note one more item in the fee schedule that was ambiguous. Taking that of note, Mr. Vaughn finished his comments and sat back in the audience.

VIII. Routine Business/Consent-

John Roselli was signed up to speak if needed on the road closure. Commissioner Parsons asked to pull item B out of the consent agenda and wanted to discuss it.

A.) Resolution accepting funding for the Yadkin River Raw Water Intake Project and designate representatives.

B.) Road Closures: Commissioner Parsons asked how fair it was for the Town to close the street. Commissioner Parsons asked who incurred the costs and Ms. Minton noted the Town would with all road closures. For road closures that the Town absorbs the costs for labor of putting barricades out and picking them up. Taylor Gann is working on a policy for the Commissioners to review for the street closure process. Commissioner Parsons wants the events to not burden our town resources, need ample access for emergency vehicles and wants fairness for all businesses in our downtown district. Mayor Hauser noted a precedence has been set and

until we have a policy this is the process. Ms. Minton noted they have hopes to set the parameters to ensure less ambiguity. Commissioner Parsons has no more issues with moving forward with the consent agenda. Commissioner Palmer would like the community to benefit from unique events and support them. Manager Minton noted that it is Ms. Gann's intent of the policy is to support the businesses. Commissioner Day noted safety is her concern and worried people will go through the barricades. New events need to continue to become regular to get people used to them. Manager Minton has noted we are exploring options for better barricades next fiscal year. Event signage was noted by Martha Nichols and they have started using them. Commissioner Church noted we need to do what's fair to the tax payers of North Wilkesboro. Commissioner Palmer wanted to personally thank Mr. Roselli. **Hall moved to approve the routine business agenda (items A & B) and Commissioner Church seconded the motion, the motion passed unanimously 5-0.**

IX. Manager's/Town Attorney's Report/Emerging Issues-

Town Manager's Report- Manager Minton noted JC Brown has accepted the position as Green Thumbers Supervisor and has been working with the manager to make a punch list for the coming year for the parks and so far, the notes are over two pages long and they are still inspecting the last two parks. Objectives for the next twelve months will be set. As a heads up, for Smoot Park in the last two weeks in June painting will occur on the small picnic shelters before the new fiscal year. The Aerial Fire Truck dedication is needing to be scheduled and staff wanted to ask if June 22nd would work for the Commissioners since that date had already been a meeting before it got moved. We could hold it at the Fire Department at 5:00 pm and have light refreshments. Manager Minton noted that stormwater quotes for 10th street will be sent to the board members for next meeting. There is a McGill meeting on Monday for the raw water intake and the Town received extension on the project start for February, 2024 with NCDEQ. The Mayor, Connie Bauguess, and Manager interviewed NC Lead Fellows last Friday. The Town Clerk position has been extended an offer and awaiting screenings. Tree wells on 9th street will be dug back out and proper drainage and install trees along the street. Commissioner Parsons asked about the root systems and the sidewalks, it was drainage that was the issue and also the trees we choose should be different. Plaques should be placed back with dedication of the trees and Memorial Bricks are in the vault and garage and find out how many we have and use them accordingly. Mayor asked to have it done by the June 29th. Commissioner Day noted there was a time when all trees were removed in downtown and told the story of what she experienced. Commissioner Palmer asked about using tree grates and staff will explore options. The first concert on the deck is June 17th and it is Alonzo Wesley and Wayne Graham. Staff is working with Wilkes Community College to help develop a landscaping plan for the pocket park on Main Street or B Street. Commissioner Palmer asked about Beautification Committee and they have met already once. Commissioner Palmer asked for a sign to promote our events in the downtown that is digital and our Zoning Ordinance does not allow it. Commissioner Parsons noted next fiscal year we would be cleaning up the sign ordinance and prioritize our zoning ordinance. A Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) to house all our ordinances in one document for developers to utilize. The board would like to give Director Detsch a priority list to start working on for clarification and include deregulation. "You are

beautiful sign” was requested to be brought back in our downtown at our Marketplace. Commissioner Church asked for the sign not to be put back up and Town Manager Minton will explore this option more.

X. Consideration of Old Business-

C.) FY 23-24 General Fund and Water Sewer Fund Budgets Public Hearing: Mayor opened the floor for the budget and called on Ms. Minton and Ms. Bauguess. Town Manager Minton noted a change was highlighted in the fee schedule for privilege license fees and noted fees for said licenses not noted. We have a balanced budget and the Town Manager’s recommended budget is \$7,727,824 for General Fund and \$3,038,805 for the Water/Sewer fund. The total recommended budget for FY23-24 totals \$10,766,629.

The budget levels are due partly to natural growth in the cost of municipal services but also to elective increases such as employee compensation adjustments, departmental restructuring, and service quality changes described below. The proposed budget is 19 percent less than the prior year's budget. Last year, we had American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds and incorporated several significant capital expenses into our operating budget. This year we are simply creating an operating budget with minor capital expenses, a cost-of-living adjustment, and service level increases in two divisions. I recommend maintaining the current millage rate of \$.52 per \$100 of valuation in the proposed general fund, no general fund taxes were increased.

A 5% cost of living adjustment (COLA) for all employees is included in the proposed budget. This includes the increase across both the general fund budget and the water/sewer fund. The total approximate cost of this COLA increase is \$178,198. The General Fund budget contains a handful of notable changes from last year that are intended to create improved performance, service quality, and provide needed planning for our future. Embedded in the governing body’s budget, you will find \$30,000 for a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) and \$5,000 to recommit to the pursuit of completing the vision set forth by the Outdoor Economy Plan. Also, in the governing board’s budget, you will find funding of \$24,000 to contract a federal lobbyist in partnership with Wilkes County and the Town of Wilkesboro. We intend to utilize this lobbyist to pursue the creation of the River District. We have also added a line item for the Wilkes Economic Development Corporation (EDC) of \$65,000, an increase in \$10,000 from last year, verses having it as a special appropriation and the board will need to vote on it separately. Town Manager Minton noted most recently the EDC secured on our behalf a \$50,000 grant to determine buildable area in our Industrial Park.

A restructuring of the Parks and Recreation Department and the Streets Department to create more accountability and allocate our human resources to reach landscaping, park, street, and sidewalk improvement goals. This restructuring will create three new positions across two departments and create a reoccurring cost of \$190,141. Moreover, you will find a recommendation to house the entire green thumb department under the Parks and Recreation Department. In the Parks and Recreation Department budget requests, an allocation of \$10,000 is included for a Parks Master Plan to set standards for our parks and improve the competitiveness of grant applications to state and federal funders. An allocation of \$20,000 for

the transition to LED lighting and replacing light poles at Memorial Park. A request has also been made to the County to help fund this project and provide \$25,000 toward these ends. In the community development budget, you will find an increase in the façade grant budget of \$25,000 (total line item \$40,000) and an increase in the budget for downtown events. Hopefully the Allstar Race will be brought back to the North Wilkesboro Speedway and we will hold similar events in conjunction with it as we saw this year.

The Water/Sewer fund has minimal changes. Fiscal Year 2020-2021, the Board agreed to commit to a 2% increase for all customers - residential, commercial, and industrial – on both their base and per 1000 rate for five years. This will be the fourth of the five increases. Since this is a consumption-based system, the effect of the change will vary for every user. Regarding Water Associations, an increase of 5.5% to \$2.50 per 1000. This increase is based on market indicators and consultation with neighboring water suppliers. This should maintain our competitive edge, but also increase revenue for future projects. We plan to purchase a vehicle for the Public Utilities Director. With the separation of the Public Utilities and Public Works Director positions, we are currently in need of one more vehicle. The budget for this vehicle is \$55,000 but have reviewed quotes for less. Other equipment purchases outside of routine plant equipment include two sewer jet cameras to replace our current antiquated camera system, a spare pump for pump station replacement, and a hoist system to improve safety measures used by employees. The total cost of these new equipment purchases is \$65,000. The previous camera system was nearly \$100,000 and they have become much more reasonable in price hence the ability to purchase two. We have incurred significant costs due to pumps being down and feel this is needed. Commissioner Palmer asked about the camera system and Town Manager Minton explained the cameras have come a long way and we can have one and a backup, Commissioner Church commented that was a smart decision.

For tonight's purpose we will hold a public hearing on the Town Manager's proposed FY23-24 General Fund and Water Sewer Fund budgets, contributions to Wilkes Economic Development Corporation including an increase of \$10,000 and community nonprofits. The Board of Commissioners must approve it by July 1st. Commissioner Parsons noted with all the additions this budget balances and the Board complimented Ms. Bauguess and Ms. Minton on a job well done. Mayor Hauser closed the public hearing and **Commissioner Parsons moved to approve the proposed Town Manager's proposed Fiscal Year 2023-2024 General Fund and Water Sewer Fund budgets, contributions to Wilkes Economic Development Corporation and community nonprofits; and approve Fiscal Year 2023-2024 Budgets with the exception of special appropriations. Commissioner Church seconded the motion and it passed unanimously 5-0.**

The Commissioners now to vote to approve the special appropriations as noted on the agenda. Approve individual nonprofit contributions budgeted:

- Wilkes Economic Development Corporation
- Wilkes ADAP
- Wilkes Art Gallery
- Wilkes Developmental Day School

- Wilkes County Crime Stoppers
- Yadkin River Greenway
- Wilkes County Library
- Wilkes Community College
- Wilkes Rescue Squad
- Wilkes Playmakers
- SAFE Spot Child Advocacy Center
- Wilkes Literacy
- Wilkes Youth Life Development

The Board has to recuse any Board members that sit on any of the boards seeking special appropriations. **Commissioners Parsons moved to recuse Bert Hall from the room for ADAP and WCC.**

Commissioner Day moved to approve \$5,000 for Wilkes Developmental Day School, Church seconded, the motion passed unanimously 4-0.

Commissioner Day moved to approve Wilkes Community College request for \$5,000 and Commissioner Church seconded, the motion passed unanimously 4-0.

Commissioner Church moved to bring Commissioner Hall back in and Commissioner Palmer seconded, the motion passed 4-0 unanimously and Commissioner Hall rejoined the board.

Commissioner Parsons moved to recuse Andrew Palmer from the room on Wilkes EDC item and Hall seconded, the motion passed unanimously 4-0. Commissioner Parsons moved to approve \$65,000 to the Wilkes Economic Development Corporation and Church seconded 4-0, the motion passed unanimously 4-0. Commissioner Church moved to bring Commissioner Palmer back in the room and Commissioner Hall seconded the motion, the motion passed unanimously 4-0.

Commissioner Day moved to approve Wilkes ADAP request for \$1,500 and Commissioner Church seconded, the motion passed unanimously 5-0.

Commissioner Day moved to approve Wilkes Art Gallery request for \$6,000 and Commissioner Parsons seconded, the motion passed unanimously 5-0.

Commissioner Day moved to approve Wilkes County Crime Stoppers request for \$500 and Commissioner Church seconded, the motion passed unanimously 5-0.

Commissioner Day moved to approve Yadkin River Greenway Council request for \$7,500 and Commissioner Church seconded, the motion passed unanimously 5-0.

Commissioner Day moved to approve Wilkes County Rescue Squad request for \$1,500 and Commissioner Church seconded, the motion passed unanimously 5-0.

Commissioner Day moved to approve Wilkes Playmakers request for \$5,000 and Commissioner Church seconded, the motion passed unanimously 5-0.

Commissioner Day moved to approve Safe Spot Child Advocacy Center request for \$5,000 and Commissioner Church seconded, the motion passed unanimously 5-0.

Commissioner Day moved to approve Wilkes Literacy request for \$2,000 and Commissioner Church seconded, the motion passed unanimously 5-0.

Commissioner Day moved to approve Wilkes Youth Life Development request for \$2,500 and Commissioner Church seconded, the motion passed unanimously 5-0.

XI. Consideration of New Business-

D.) Internet policy revision for staff introduction- Mayor Hauser called on Town Manager Minton to present item D. Town Manager Minton noted the policy has not been revised since 2002 and Crystal Keener who is our Payroll and felt it was important to update the policy. This is an introduction of the policy to the board which includes refined language and resources. Town assigned devices need to be good standards of the resources and new employees know what it expected of them. Town owned device for Town Business only. Internet use should not be used in chat rooms or news groups. Emails not associated with work should not be used on any town devices. This is boiler plate policies and borrowed from other communities that were updated recently. Town Manager Minton is looking for feedback only from the board tonight. Commissioner Parsons asked if this was a personnel policy and Manager Minton noted no, but would be distributed to the employees. Commissioner Parsons has asked for the email to be updated and Town Manager Minton said yes. We will also have a .gov for our website now and will be implementing it soon. Our IT Consultant was sent an email to prioritize the .gov and email platform. Commissioner Palmer wanted to officially complain about the current email platform we have. Mayor Hauser asked if emails will be ported over and we can continue forwarding it. We will have better safety with the new email system as well as sharing our calendars and make staff more efficient. Eventually our old email will go away. Commissioner Church asked how it would be distributed and we will as with personnel policies. No action is required from the board this evening, this is just an introduction.

E. Introduction and Call for a Public Hearing to Annex 1692 Sunset Drive

Meredith Detsch presented the annexation request for 1692 Sunset Drive. Ms. Detsch explained this is an unusual request but the Board and Town welcomes any growth of the Town's municipal limits. This property was originally annexed in 2009 by a church wishing to build on the site. In 2021 the property was de-annexed by the General Assembly. The property is currently within the Town's ETJ (Extraterritorial Jurisdiction) so our zoning ordinance, subdivision ordinance, and wireless communications ordinance regulate the property but there are no town services. The new property owners are in the audience tonight for the board to ask any questions or just welcome them. The new owners are requesting to come into town limits and seeking our services to build. Commissioner Church asked if there was a house there now and Ms. Detsch explained the structure on the property is a modular structure that was a shed built to North Carolina Residential Building Code Standards. The new owners are wishing to build a house and repurpose the structures that are currently on the property. Ms. Detsch noted she believed the house there now was about 900 square feet and the applicant Mr. Simons noted it was 560 square

feet. Commissioner Parsons asked the exact location and Mr. Simons explained the location. Ms. Detsch noted in the agenda packet there are several documents requiring the Commissioners approval tonight to move forward with the annexation including a Certificate of Sufficiency and resolution directing the Town Clerk to investigate the annexation and ensure we can get services to the property. Ms. Detsch explained she, the applicant and other staff have been speaking regularly to ensure water and sewer will be available to the property as it has been a barrier in the past, hence the de-annexation. Staff has made sure they can access utilities and the new property owner has secured access with the property owner across Sunset Drive to tie onto existing sewer. Commissioner Parsons noted that the sewer line was run through that area as well as water. Ms. Detsch noted on GIS that the sewer line and easement is on private property and they would need to cross private property lines to access the sewer. Our Town Code even allows a septic tank to be installed when that occurs as access cannot always be achieved which what was done on this property. A two-bedroom septic tank was permitted and installed on the property but it is challenging to enlarge it as the property does not have the best soils for percolation. Ms. Detsch showed the board and audience the location of the utilities and pointed out the challenges with sewer. Mayor Hauser asked Ms. Detsch what would be needed for tonight's vote and Ms. Detsch went through the agenda packet for the required documents certificate of sufficiency and resolution directing the clerk to advertise. **Commissioners Parsons moved to approve the Certificate of Sufficiency and Resolution 2023-11 directing the Clerk to investigate a petition received under GS 160A-31. Commissioner Hall seconded the motion and it passed unanimously, 5-0. Commissioner Parsons moved to approve Resolution 2023-12 fixing a date of public hearing on questions of annexation pursuant to GS 160A-31 to advertise the annexation request for 1692 Sunset Drive with the public hearing scheduled for June 29th. Commissioner Hall seconded the motion and it passed unanimously, 5-0.**

XII. Closed Session- *No closed session for this meeting.*

XIII. Adjourn- Mayor Hauser asked if there was anything else to discuss. Hearing none, Mayor Hauser asked Commissioner Church to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Church moved to adjourn the meeting and Commissioner Hall seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously 5-0 and the meeting adjourned at 6:52 pm.

Submitted respectively,

Meredith Detsch, Interim Town Clerk

Marc R. Hauser, Mayor

Approved: _____