

Town of North Wilkesboro Commissioners Meeting Minutes
June 29th, 2023
5:30 pm

Held at the North Wilkesboro Board of Commissioners Board Room & on Zoom Meeting
Meeting ID 845 9040 7692

<https://www.youtube.com/live/5O6s-qzD20c?feature=share>

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

Staff Present: Town Manager Holly Minton, Taylor Gann Community Development Director, Danny Johnson Town Attorney, Meredith Detsch Planning Director & Interim Town Clerk, Sarah Davis, Planner 1, Connie Bauguess Finance Director, Rob Thornburg Police Chief.

Audience included: Martha Nichols (PB), Donna Goforth, Chad Brown, Susan Bachmeier, Tammie Love, Barry Wald, Mike Wade, and Cheryl Bowman from Atrium Health, Ed Racie, Ron & Tyler Simons (applicant).

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

Mayor Pro-Tem Church asked Manager Minton if there were any additions or deletions to the agenda and Manager Minton told the board none at this time.

Mayor Pro-Tem Church asked for approval of the agenda as presented and **Commissioner Hall moved to approve the agenda as presented. Commissioner Day seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously 4-0.**

VI. Awards and Recognitions –

A. Presentation of Annual Operations - *Chad Brown, President, Atrium Health Wake Forest Baptist | Wilkes Medical Center*

Mr. Chad Brown with Atrium Health- 9 years. Susan Bachmeier, Tammie Love, Barry Wald, Mike Wade, Cheryl Bowman, with him tonight. Mr. Brown hasn't been before the board since 2019 and wanted to give a quick history of the healthcare industry. The name may have changed but their commitment to the community hasn't changed. Brief overview of the name evolution Third largest not for profit healthcare in the US. The area they serve in the region is large for access to care. All locations of primary care and specialty care were noted on a map shown to the board. Investment in our community, long term lease agreements and is a 145 million over the 30-year lease term. First five years included 31.6 million with infrastructure, service, hospital foundation. Investments and key metrics have grown over the past few years with their presence. The significant capital investments included maintenance, new equipment, new cancer clinic in 2020, IT systems, hematology and oncology. Graphs of the growth over the past few years were shown. Capacity and recruitment have been challenging but they have shown success and expand their beds in the hospital. State wide health rankings, #72 out of 100 counties and the health outcomes ranked in the lower middle range of counties in NC (countyhealthrankings.org).

Community health needs assessment and the hospital is intertwined into the assessment. They look at access, transportation, chronic disease state, obesity, other framework. Clinical update- 30 temp/contract RN at the hospital, challenge with recruitment, focus on mental health and peer support services in the Emergency Department. Community events have included many health screenings, flu shot clinics, festivals, etc. Safety and Quality- hospital have received many awards over the past three years including best hospital in rural setting. New growth in the markets with OBGYN and Cancer services as well as cardiology, orthopedics, mental health and substance use disorders. New recruitment strategies and new staff to our community requires strategy and new programs to be innovated in the market. While they have challenges, the support they get from the community has been wonderful. Direct to employer services overview is important to our organization and wants to give Cheryl an opportunity to speak about their programs. Best Health for Business is the program to make companies have services on site for their employees. She meets with companies and asks what their needs are and their employees are not getting any healthier. Bringing it on site makes it easier for their employees. Mental health and well-being as well as primary care on the site to employees. They can do trainings for the employees, EAP, crisis response line, critical response team, workplace injuries and promoting absenteeism and presenteeism. The on-site clinic can help keep employees on site and are offered at many companies. Biometric screenings, athletic trainer, flu shots or be on site in a clinic. Physicals for firefighters at Rhonda, Taylorsville, and work with Samaritan's Purse to have any clinics services provided. Missionaries are included and respite care too. Town of Wilkesboro has an RN health coach and nutrition specialty as well as yoga to stretch out before they got in the truck. The Town of Wilkesboro gave them a study showing the wellness program and the results from it. The MBA students showcased 2018-2019 there was a 31% reduction in sick days. In 2020 there was a 22% less sick time used during the height of Covid. There was also a 200,000 decrease in sick time and payout. The Commissioners thanked Chad and his team and keep up the good work.

- VII. General Public Comment Period** – Mayor Pro-Tem Church asked Manager Minton if there were any speakers tonight or anyone signed up and the first speaker signed up was Martha Nichols. Ms. Nichols had a complaint about the groundhogs throughout town. There are several of them living along D Street, Smoot Park, F & 6th Street, and Kensington. She requested the town to call animal control to trap them. Ms. Nichols also noted the homeless population in town was a problem and the local governments need to get together to find out options for them as apparently, they are being bused down to Wilkes to get services. The second speaker signed up was Jeff and Nancy Payne. They wanted to request a four way stop sign at Finley Street and Gordon Avenue. Staff noted there have been many complaints and would like the change to occur as it will save money about \$8,000 per street light per year. It will also save money for people idling. The Payne's were asking for a safer intersection at that location as there is a lot of foot traffic in that area. Commissioner Parsons noted item I will be discussing the item.

VIII. Routine Business/Consent –

- B. Street Closing for CDB Loop Market Place Meltdown – *Taylor Gann, Tourism Director*
- C. Street Closing for CDB Loop Latino Festival – *Taylor Gann, Tourism Director*
- D. Budget Amendments FY 22-23 were distributed to the board at the meeting. – *Connie Bauguess, Finance Director*

Commissioner Parsons moved to approve the consent agenda and Commissioner Hall seconded the motion, the motion passed unanimously 4-0.

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

Town Manager noted she had a short agenda of hot topics. Manager Minton noted she received a call from a citizen concern over groundhogs and foundation issue, she is investigating how to move forward with dealing with them. Homeless issues in town were also relayed to her about finding solutions. Smoot Park they are painting the picnic shelters and changing out the color. Hoping to be done by July 12th. Quotes on the stormwater repair and low bid was around \$64,000 and would be around the 900 block of 10th Street. David Poore completed that when he was with West Consulting and before he joined us here. Minton has consulted with NCDOT and curbing needs to be addressed on D Street. We have also redone the sidewalks along that area to try to mitigate the problem. Manager Minton asked for a head nod from the board if they agree. Commissioner Parsons asked if this was budgeted from and Minton said it would be from our Powell Bill money as a project ordinance. The Commissioners agreed and Minton said staff will start working on getting on the schedule with the contractor. Parking in our downtown has always been a challenge and growing as we secure more occupants and residents in our downtown. We have been asked to consult with professionals to do a parking study. Of the three firms reached out to, the cost would be around \$20,000-25,000 for a town our size. One of the key outcomes is signage improvements and we budgeted money for downtown signage. Minton polled the board and knows the signage is going to be an outcome of any study, we could take that money and utilize it for improvements. Directional signage will be needed for all lots including the lot behind Wilkes Tower. Commissioner Day noted they have talked about parking for years and a healthy town has parking problems. Towns that have broken windows and boarded up don't have parking issues. It's ok to walk in our downtown and will find accommodations for handicapped individuals. Commissioner Parsons noted the topography of our downtown is challenging and the perception of storefront parking is what people want. Keep an open dialogue with the merchants and find out what the needs are. Commissioner Day noted lighting and signage would be helpful. Commissioner Palmer has concerns over residential parking. We need parking for our residential tenants and look at diagonal parking for Main Street. Donna Goforth asked about a crosswalk in front of the movie theater and resurface Main Street. With the purchase of signage, we will explore other traffic calming items. Staff will continue to address parking and Chief Thornburg is also exploring options for our downtown even though the Commissioners do not want to study traffic right now. Commissioner Parsons wants tangible things done in our downtown. Commissioner Day noted there were studies done with one-way streets and parking issues. Taylor Gann is exploring options in our downtown. Next week is the site visit with our Engineers for the raw water intake project. Accuflow project will hopefully go to bid for construction and concerns with timeframe of construction of both projects. Commissioner Parson asked about the splashpad and wanted to make sure everything was working as it was turned off a few nights. Commissioner Palmer has been tracking the homeless population and noted what has been going on in the community and the greenway. Our greenways are an asset and don't want it to be unsafe for our residents. Manager Minton noted to address this we need multiple entities around the table to start having these conversations and explore training, health, substance abuse, and maybe the town can start the dialogue. As a financial commitment, one entity cannot solve this problem. Commissioner Palmer heard there was nearly 300 homeless kids in our school systems. Former Commissioner Joe Johnston and

Andrew Palmer walked in the woods in Finley Park and there were a ton of camps set up they went down and cleaned up.

X. Consideration of Old Business-

- E. Public Hearing on Annexation – Meredith Detsch, Planning Director presented this item to the board. Mayor Pro-Tem Church opened the floor for the public hearing. Ms. Detsch explained this property, 1692 Sunset Drive, Parcel ID 1405424 is seeking to be re-annexed into Town limits for services. At the last meeting the Board approved a resolution for the Town Clerk (Ms. Detsch) to investigate the annexation and advertise it. Ms. Detsch completed this and noted nothing had changed since the last meeting. This property was originally annexed in 2009 and de-annexed in 2021 by the general assembly. The new property owners would like to bring it back into Town limits as establishing well water and a septic tank is challenging. Ms. Detsch asked if the Commissioners had any questions, she could answer them or the applicants are available to as well. Hearing none, Mayor Pro-Tem Church declared the board out of a public hearing and would entertain a motion.

Commissioner Parsons moved to approve Parcel ID 1405424 at 1692 Sunset Drive to be annexed into the town limits, Commissioner Hall provided the seconded. The motion passed unanimously 4-0.

- F. Public Hearing on Indoor/Outdoor Recreation Times –Mayor Pro-Tem Church declared us into open session and called upon Ms. Detsch to present. Sarah Davis, Planner 1, presented this item to the board. This text amendment is for indoor service recreation uses to be open later. This text amendment was brought to staff’s attention by a group opening a professional billiards room. By changing this text, it would allow their business to remain open later as their business model is similar to Muzz’s and Anytime Fitness, indoor recreation. This proposed change to the Zoning Ordinance was brought to the board on May 24th and in the redlined document it shows to remove all supplemental standards for indoor recreation businesses. In the updated redlined text this is demonstrated with the changes in the supplemental standards and the table of uses. Staff left outdoor recreation with restricted hours as noise and light pollution occurs with those uses. Ms. Davis noted staff advertised the text amendment for two weeks and the Planning Board reviewed and approved the proposed changes. Commissioner Palmer asked if outdoor recreation can go only 6:00 am to 11:00 pm. Staff discussed and couldn’t think of any recreation uses that would need to go that late into the evening. Mayor Pro-Tem Church declared us out of a public hearing and would entertain a motion. Commissioner Parsons moved to approve the text amendment. Commissioner Parsons stated that the Town of North Wilkesboro’s Board of Commissioners deems the proposed amendments to the Zoning Ordinance, in regards to removing supplemental standard requirements for indoor recreation services, is consistent with the Town’s comprehensive plan, any small area plans or elements thereof and, does support the Comprehensive’s Plan goals and policies. Further the proposed amendments regarding removing supplemental standard requirements for indoor recreation areas is reasonable in the public’s interest. **The Board of Commissioners recommends to approve the amendments to the Zoning Ordinance. Commissioner Palmer seconded the motion and it passed unanimously 4-0.**

G. Internet Policy –

Manager Minton noted this policy was presented to the board at their last meeting and no changes have been made except the Police will not be subject to this policy. The point behind the policy is to protect the town and employees and will regulate the uses and the old policy was over twenty years old and not relevant to the modern age. No other amendments from the last time they looked at it except the exclusion of the Police Department. Manager Minton welcomes comments and questions. Minton collaborated on other town's policies and brought a simple policy before everyone. Commissioner Palmer asked about progress on email and she spoke with him this week and he told the manager he will prioritize this. Commissioner Parsons asked if this needed 30 days comment, operation policy instead and not part of the personnel policy. It is a grey area and not part of the personnel policy. **Commissioner Palmer moved to accept the policy and Commissioner Day seconded the motion. It passed unanimously 4-0.**

XI. **Consideration of New Business-**

H. Road Closure Policy/Event Policy – Taylor Gann, Community Development Director presented this item to the board. The policy is before them tonight as setting purposes and procedures moving forward including definitions for what is sponsored and what is endorsed by the Town for events downtown. Feedback is requested for these procedures in place. Commissioner Parsons asked about excluding the parks in the new policy. Ms. Gann noted in past events there was no requirements for event holders to come to the board and ask permission to close the roads. Manager Minton noted flow has been a problem with road closures for staff. We need an organization flow and it will be an advantage for our patrons of it as it will run smoother with these guidelines put into place. Commissioner Parsons noted he wants what is fair and cost effective to the Town with how we charge for events. He asked if a private entity burden some or all of the costs with the events and how does that impact our services? We want activity in our downtown as Commissioner Palmer noted to create excitement and make it fair for everyone. Manager Minton noted we need guardrails for functionality and we don't want numerous pages on how to close a street that is cumbersome for users. What staff heard from the Commissioners the last time we spoke on this is a wish for a simple policy to regulate the closures and general oversight. Commissioner Parsons thinks we are going in the right direction to provide to our residents and businesses in our downtown good opportunities. Commissioner Palmer wants less regulation so we continue to have a fun downtown. Commissioner Parsons noted Main Street is hard to close as it is a DOT road but our other roads would be easier to close. Manager Minton noted that Main Street can be closed, it just needs more notification. Staff asked the board to look through the updated policy and bring comments to staff during the next meeting.

I. Intersection Improvements FY 23-24 – Mayor Pro-Tem Church called on Meredith Detsch, Planning Director for the item. Director Detsch noted we have several projects we are working on and wanted to get some traction with this project as the Town has budgeted for it and also staff has been working on traffic issues throughout town. Director Detsch noted this intersection at Finley Avenue and Hinshaw Street is the only stop light we maintain in town. Staff has talked about decommissioning it and utilizing

stop signs at it as a cost saving for the town as well as ensuring more safe flowing traffic. Commissioner Hall came and spoke with staff recently about it as well as several complaints have been made about the intersection. Director Detsch is moving this item back up the list of projects and is seeking input from the Commissioners about the change in funding for this intersection and another one in town. Ms. Detsch showed the Commissioners a rough drawing sketch of the intersection with proposed stop lights and it was noted the ramp lane was still shown as active. Commissioner Parsons asked if there was a way to rework the intersection for removing the ramp and allowing trucks to make the turn. Ms. Detsch noted this intersection is the Town's responsibility and is an opportunity to make it what they would like to see there. Staff needs to dig into the specifications and bring something back to them much more elaborate than a sketch. Commissioner Parsons noted that this board wants to see something done and is open to change there. Ms. Detsch noted removing the stoplights at Finley will allow a slight influx in funds to do another intersection improvement project. Ms. Detsch spoke that there is now a greenway connector at the ABC store the Town owns off Wilkesboro Boulevard and has budgeted for wayfinding signage at this intersection. Director Detsch explained the approved wayfinding signage with NCDOT requires three items to be listed on the sign. We have the greenway as one, two parks as another and finally downtown across the street to direct traffic to. Director Detsch asked how we could make this intersection safe for all modes of traffic. Since it is a NCDOT intersection we need to work closely with them and ensure we are meeting their requirements. Director Detsch noted ADA ramp cuts, a cross walk and signage would all be needed but we will need more safety signs to alert drivers. Pictures of flashing pedestrian lit signs were shown and could be budgeted for with the cost savings of removing the Finely Avenue lights. The safest route is a HAWK intersection for pedestrians and is the most expensive option with estimates over \$165,000. Commissioner Palmer noted this project has been on his to do list since he ran for Commissioner. He asked about getting the greenway to downtown and to look for grant money to help pay for it as it's so expensive. Discussion of the roadway and how dangerous it is. Director Detsch showed a quick video of options for signalized crosswalks. Director Detsch noted we are going to have to educate our residents too of any devices we install as it will be new and may require awareness to be brought to it.

At 7:07 pm Commissioner Parson moved to go into closed session per GS 143-318.11(a)(4) -To discuss matters relating to the location or expansion of industries or other businesses in the area served by the public body, including agreement on a tentative list of economic development incentives that may be offered by the public body in negotiations, or to discuss matters relating to military installation closure or realignment. Any action approving the signing of an economic development contract or commitment, or the action authorizing the payment of economic development expenditures, shall be taken in an open session and, to conduct a closed session accord to GS 143-318.11(a)(5)- To establish, or to instruct the public body's staff or negotiating agents concerning the position to be taken by or on behalf of the public body in negotiating (i) the price and other material terms of a contract or proposed contract for the acquisition of real property by purchase, option, exchange, or lease; or (ii) the amount of compensation and other material terms of an employment contract or proposed employment contract. And, to conduct a closed session accord to GS 143-318.11(a)(6)- To consider the qualifications,

competence, performance, character, fitness, conditions of appointment, or conditions of initial employment of an individual public officer or employee or prospective public officer or employee; or to hear or investigate a complaint, charge, or grievance by or against an individual public officer or employee. General personnel policy issues may not be considered in a closed session. A public body may not consider the qualifications, competence, performance, character, fitness, appointment, or removal of a member of the public body or another body and may not consider or fill a vacancy among its own membership except in an open meeting. Final action making an appointment or discharge or removal by a public body having final authority for the appointment or discharge or removal shall be taken in an open meeting.

XII. Closed Session- *in accordance to 143-318.11. (a) (4) (5) (6)*
Minutes are separate and sealed.

XIII. Adjourn

At 7:46 pm the Board came out of closed session and Commissioner Parsons moved to accept the bid at Boston Avenue for \$88,777.00 and to advertise for 10 days. Commissioner Day seconded the motion, the motion passed 4-0 with three in favor and Hall abstaining. The next item the board would make a decision on was to not renew the lease agreement with Black Cat Station. Commissioner Parsons moved to not renew the lease and Commissioner Palmer seconded the motion. The motion passed 3-1, with three in favor and Hall not in favor. With no other business, Commissioner Parsons moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:50 pm and Hall seconding the motion. The motion to adjourn passed unanimously 4-0.

Submitted respectively,

Otis Church, Mayor Pro Tem

Meredith Detsch, Interim Town Clerk

Approved: _____