

**TOWN OF NORTH WILKESBORO
COMMISSIONERS MEETING**

Date: August 24th, 2023

5:30 p.m.

HELD AT THE NORTH WILKESBORO BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS BOARD ROOM

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87914389936?pwd=elh3bDZybmZSVWd2YTJuenpXNmtVUT09>

Meeting ID: 879 1438 9936

Passcode: 141514

And YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC7NdWfFjwMjbLuarfqHDemg>

THERE WERE PRESENT: Marc R. Hauser, Mayor
 Angela Day, Commissioner
 Andrew Palmer, Commissioner
 Michael Parsons, Commissioner
 Bert Hall, Commissioner
 Otis W. Church, Mayor Pro-tem
 Holly R. Minton, Town Manager

ALSO PRESENT: Daniel Johnson, Town Attorney
 Major Brad Mathis, NWPD
 Sarah Davis, Planner I
 Meredith H. Detsch, Planning Director
 J. Dylan Blankley, Town Clerk
 Taylor Gann, Downtown Coordinator
 David Webb, Public Works Director
 Curt Hayes, Building Inspector

CALL TO ORDER

I. II. III. Call to Order, Invocation, and Pledge of Allegiance –

Mayor Hauser called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. and delivered the Invocation.

Mayor Hauser then asked North Wilkesboro Police Major Brad Mathis to lead in the Pledge of Allegiance.

IV. Additions/Deletions to the Agenda -

Manager Minton requested to amend the agenda to include the swearing-in of a new town clerk.

V. Approval of Agenda -

Mayor Hauser called for a motion to approve the agenda as amended. **The motion to approve the agenda as amended was made by Commissioner Church and seconded by Commissioner Hall. Motion unanimously carries, 5-0.**

VI. Awards and Recognitions –

A.) Swearing in New Police Officer- *Rob Thornburg, Police Chief*
Mayor Hauser swore in Police Officer, Todd Burke.

A1.) Swearing in New Town Clerk- *Marc Hauser, Mayor*
Mayor Hauser swore in Town Clerk, Dylan Blankley.

VII. General Public Comment Period -

Mayor will acknowledge no more than five speakers. Speakers have five-minute limits.

There were two public speakers at this meeting.

1. Mark Simpson- Drug House- 101 North Riverside Drive in North Wilkesboro. Property owned by Mary Roberts. The drug house has been going on too long. Mr. Simpson stated he has witnessed stolen property, drug use leading to overdose, and prostitution on the property. He shared a story of an apparent overdose on the property with Police, Fire, and EMS on site. He also recalled that on 8/19/23 North Wilkesboro Police passed the residence 16 times. Mr. Simpson requests that the town declare the residence a public nuisance to end these actions and address the risk to the youth and community. He has witnessed needles and trash in the community.

Mayor Hauser responded that Mr. Simpson's complaint had been heard and recorded. He would visit the Police Chief regarding this matter on Monday 8/28. He offered for Mr. Simpson to join this discussion and he replied that he had previously met with former police chief Rankin. Mr. Simpson then told another story of 2 people screaming in his neighbor's yard and he has this on video. Two officers visited the property and no arrests were made. Mayor Hauser stated that Chief Thornburg was not in charge and he was not Mayor then, he also expressed empathy for Mr. Simpson's struggles. Commissioner Palmer apologized that Mr. Simpson had not been helped regarding this matter and had been in contact with others in the community. Commissioners Church and Hall also expressed sadness over this issue.

2. Scott Wilkinson- Drug House in the same community- 101 Northside Drive, North Wilkesboro. A resident of Wilkes County for 12 years. He lives across the street from Mr. Simpson. He has had confrontations with others at this property. He must check his yard for needles before letting his kids go outside. He has had property stolen and other property dumped in his yard. Without an arrest, nothing is happening in the area. He has cameras on his property and has lived here for five years. Mayor Hauser thanked Mr. Wilkinson for attending the meeting and got the contact information for both MR. Simpson and Mr. Wilkinson.

VIII. Routine Business/Consent - (action)

All consent items may be approved in one motion. Items requiring further discussion may be pulled and voted upon separately.

- B.) Approval of Regular Board meeting minutes- June 29th 2023- *Meredith Detsch, Interim Town Clerk*
- C.) Road Closure approval for Spooktacular October 28th – *Taylor Gann, Community Development Director*

The motion to approve the Routine Business/Consent items was made by Commissioner Church and the motion was seconded by Commissioner Hall. Motion unanimously carries, 5-0.

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

Town Manager Holly R. Minton & Town Attorney Daniel Johnson

Manager Minton's report included the following:

D.) Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) Contract

The Capital Improvement Plan with WithersRavenel is ready to move forward. The plans created in the past will be combined into one capital plan now. They created a hybrid plan for the town, in the past the town has paid for several plans and there is no need to redo this work, instead combining it into one plan. The water/sewer assessment from four years ago is still useful and we will integrate the raw water intake and the active flow project into that plan. The cost will come from the general fund due to the current work in the water/sewer fund. Manager Minton believes this is the right company for us to work with and wanted to re-address the scope of the work. This work was approved in the budget cycle but allowed the public to see the process.

E.) Scope of Work for River District

The river district is part of the Wilkes Outdoor Action Plan. The idea of a river district has created a "buzz" in the community. There have been discussions on how to take the next step to move from a plan to reality. Ernie Pearson, a consultant out of Raleigh, has organized a team with Sanford Holshouser. The scope of work includes a microstudy to validate the findings in the Outdoor Action Plan to ensure the area can support a river district as planned. The framework was provided for a public-private partnership that may be needed to assist developers. Over the last six months, many developers have said the return on investment (ROI) is not where it needs to be in the area, so there needs to be a way to bridge the gap. There will also be meetings with potential developers and plans for development. A six-month consulting fee would be paid from a river district project budgeted the previous year. Mayor Hauser stated that a catalyst would be needed to get the project going. He also believes this would be money well spent. Commissioner Day noted that this is working on a list of reasons to move to North Wilkesboro. Commissioner Palmer asked if Sanford Holshouser says the river district project will not work, do we still pay the full consulting fee? Manager Minton replied yes, but she would verify. He also asked if it would help to reach developers. Manager Minton replied that it was part of the project's scope of work. She also commented that the project cost was much lower than originally thought. Commissioner Parsons commented that the river district is a multi-prong attack and is good for getting the ball rolling. Manager Minton replied that the town needs to take the lead on this project to push it forward. Commissioner Palmer commented that without something like the

plan, nothing is ever going to happen. Manager Minton replied that this is an important piece for the community following the excitement from the Outdoor Action Plan. Commissioner Palmer stated that plans do not always go into practice but need to put "Paper to the real world." Commissioner Hall commented that if we go with this group, we are golden, and he knows Tom Carroll. The Board expressed approval of the project process.

School Cleanup at North Wilkesboro & C.C. Wright Elementary.

- Manager Minton commented that the school cleanup day went excellent and that she had received thanks from Wilkes County Schools Superintendent Mark Byrd.
- We want people to know that we support our local schools in North Wilkesboro and C.C. Wright. She thanked Commissioner Palmer for pushing the project forward and the Board of Commissioners for their support.

Emerging Issues

Commissioner Palmer began emerging issues by speaking about the school cleanup day. The work was difficult, but he was happy with the effort.

Commissioner Palmer also requested to remove property Parcel ID 1202501 from the town surplus property list as an expansion to the parks. Adding a road or parking lot to the park is possible rather than walking. The Board and staff discussed the location of the property and the area Commissioner Palmer is referencing. Manager Minton stated that removing the property from the surplus list would require a resolution. The issue will be addressed at the next meeting.

Town Attorney Daniel Johnson has nothing to report.

X. Consideration of Old Business-

F.) Highway 115 Lighting Discussion and Approval- *Meredith Detsch, Planning Director & Curt Hayes, Building Inspector*

Ms. Meredith Detsch's presentation included the following:

- Ms. Detsch reminded the Board that the 115-corridor project was quickly approaching and asked if the town wished to upgrade the current lighting or maintain the present light fixtures.
- There are 13 lights on the street. Any others are privately owned. Upgrading the light fixtures would double the cost and the lights we are responsible for.
- Duke and the Department of Transportation will be upgrading the lights at the main intersections
- The 13 lights we have will be moved forward, but we will be doubling the lights and the cost.

Commissioner Parsons commented that the 115 corridor needs to be more inviting despite the cost as a "critical corridor" into the town and accessing the speedway. He understands there is an incurred cost of installing the lighting and the monthly maintenance cost. Commissioner Church commented that this is a no-brainer; we need to do it.

Mayor Hauser questioned the project cost. Ms. Detsch replied that Duke Energy gave her a per-light cost. We would rent the LED pole for \$19.52; we currently have a \$3 rate, and a potential rate increase is also coming. We receive the municipal rate, but it is an operating expense. Not all lights are in North Wilkesboro; some are in our zoning jurisdiction and some in the County, but they led to us.

Another issue is the utilities upgrade and landscaping.

- The Department of Transportation allows for 1% of project cost to go toward landscaping
- Ms. Detsch would like to explore doing the same on Highway 268, due to an expensive mowing bill for the corridor. Smart landscaping could save the town money. There will be a future meeting on the cost of the landscaping after consulting with the Department of Transportation. Mayor Hauser replied that this could pay dividends due to mowing costs. Working simultaneously on projects on 115 and 268. This is the first of many votes. Requires a formal motion due to a budgetary expense.
- Commissioner Palmer asked how the lights on 115 would compare to 268. Ms. Detsch replied that the lights on 268 were not upgraded. Commissioner Palmer said the cost would be \$2,500 a year and light to Highway 421. Manager Minton commented on how the DOT does complete streets now; there will be sidewalks coming in those areas. Ms. Detsch also said these lights will be more directional than the half-moon style we currently have.

The motion to approve progressing with the light upgrades on the Highway 115 corridor was made by Commissioner Parsons and seconded by Commissioner Hall.

Motion unanimously carries, 5-0.

XI. Consideration of New Business –

- G.) Proposed Text Amendment for Town Code Chapter 3 Alcoholic Beverages, Article II Social Districts, 3-11 Revoking –*Rob Thornburg, Police Chief*

Manager Minton presented this item. Police Chief Thornburg requested that in the case of an immediate risk to the public, the police chief could revoke a social district permit. This is an oversight in the code. He has the authority as a law enforcement officer, but this would put it in writing. Commissioner Parsons will miss the Board meeting on September 21st.

The motion to schedule a public hearing on September 21st, 2023, to add the language to the town code was made by Commissioner Day and seconded by Commissioner Church.

- H.) Capital Project Budget Amendments for Park Improvements & River District Capital Project -
Holly Minton, Town Manager

Manager Minton presented the budget amendments. River District Capital Project was allocated \$500,000 last year as part of a potential match for the Rural Transformation grant. The grant was unsuccessful. Smoot Park construction will begin soon and the funding would be better in the Parks Improvement Fund as a contingency plan. \$100,000 would remain in the account as progress with the river district. Commissioner Palmer asked about the use of the \$100,000 and Manager Minton stated \$34,000 for consultant fees and the rest is a cushion for future use.

The motion to approve the amendment to move the funding of \$400,000 from the North Wilkesboro River District to North Wilkesboro Parks and Recreation Improvement was made by Commissioner Parsons and seconded by Commissioner Hall. Motion unanimously carries, 5-0.

- I.) Fee Schedule Changes – Amend fees for Sanitation and Inspections- *Meredith Detsch, Planning Director & David Webb, Public Works Director*

Planning Director Meredith Detsch presented the first fee schedule amendment. The first concerns the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) inspection regarding daycares and group homes. These inspections are time-consuming; Ms. Detsch requests that the Board change the wording to include any inspection required by DHHS to open operations. This would allow for equal treatment across all parties. The fee would remain the same.

Public Works Director David Webb presented the subsequent fee schedule amendment. The town is having issues with tires being dumped into the dumpsters, which can incur fines for the town. The problem is somewhat repetitive at apartment complexes, staff attempts to check for tires if they are visible and set them to the side. The landfill has cooperated over this issue because they can fine the town \$250.00 per tire as a first offense, but have allowed staff to take the tires to the appropriate location. Mr. Webb requests a change to take to business owners with this issue. Mayor Hauser requested how the fine was approached if in an apartment complex dumpster. Mr. Webb has suggested that these owners install a lock and lid on their dumpster to prevent the issue. Commissioner Church suggested making the locking lid a requirement. Commissioner Palmer requested that staff give a warning prior to fining the dumpster owner. Manager Minton commented that this would give a consequence for continuing this behavior. Ms. Detsch stated that this would be part of an updated sanitation ordinance with the help of Code Enforcement Officer John Ganus as a town code amendment. Commissioner Parsons suggested this could be an educational opportunity for business owners and prevent people from dumping in their dumpsters. Commissioner Day stated that this was why dumpsters were removed from town ballfields. Commissioner Parsons requested that this get added to the town code next month.

The motion to amend the fee schedule was made by Commissioner Palmer and seconded by Commissioner Church. Motion unanimously carries, 5-0.

XII. Closed Session- *No closed session tonight.*

XIII. Adjourn-

With no other comments or concerns, Mayor Hauser called for a motion to adjourn. The motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Commissioner Church and seconded by Commissioner Hall. The meeting adjourned at 6:30 p.m.

J. Dylan Blankley
J. Dylan Blankley, Town Clerk

Marc R. Hauser
Marc R. Hauser, MAYOR

Approved: September 5th 2023

