

**TOWN OF NORTH WILKESBORO
COMMISSIONERS REGULAR MONTHLY
MEETING AUGUST 26, 2021**

5:30 p.m.

HELD AT THE NORTH WILKESBORO BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS BOARD ROOM

Zoom online platform:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84275417853>

And YouTube:

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

THERE WERE PRESENT: Robert L. Johnson, Mayor
 Angela Day, Commissioner
 Debbie Ferguson, Commissioner
 Bert Hall, Commissioner
 Michael Parsons, Commissioner

ALSO PRESENT: Wilson B. Hooper, Town Manager
 Debra Pearson, Town Clerk
 Daniel Johnson, Town Attorney
 Interim NWP Chief Rob Thornburg

AND: Joining by ZOOM Andrew Palmer,
 Commissioner/Mayor Pro-Tem
 Meredith Detsch, Town Planner
 Connie Bauguess, Finance Officer

CALL TO ORDER

I. II. III. Mayor Johnson called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. and delivered the Invocation. Mayor Johnson asked Interim Chief Rob Thornburg to lead the Pledge of Allegiance.

IV. Additions/Deletions to the Agenda- *There was one change to the agenda. Item G.- Amendments to Position Classification and Pay Scale- Briefing attachments were included on this item. 1. Enhanced Public Utilities Director job description. 2. Salary range comparison table.*

V. Approval of Agenda- Mayor Johnson called for a motion to approve the agenda as amended. **Motion to approve the agenda was made by Commissioner Day and seconded by Commissioner Ferguson. Motion unanimously carries.**

VI. Awards and Comments-

VII. Public Comments- *Mayor will acknowledge no more than 5 speakers. Speakers have five-minute limit.* There was one citizen that wished to speak. Christopher McBurney, a resident of 6th St., addressed the Board about traffic speeds and volumes on his street.

VIII. Consent Agenda -*All consent items may be approved in one motion. Items requiring further discussion will be pulled and voted upon separately.*
A.) Approval of Meeting Minutes – August 3, 2021 Regular Meeting and Closed Session Meeting Minutes

B. Purchasing Policy Exception

C.) Resolution for merger and Regionalization Feasibility (MRF) Grant Application-

Motion to approve Item A.) Approval of Meeting Minutes – August 3, 2021 Regular Meeting and Closed Session Meeting Minutes, and C.) Resolution for merger and Regionalization Feasibility (MRF) Grant Application- was made by Commissioner Day, and seconded by Commissioner Ferguson, motion unanimously carries.

B. Purchasing Policy Exception was pulled for further discussion. After discussion, motion to approve Item B. was made by Commissioner Ferguson and seconded by Commissioner Hall. Motion unanimously carries.

XI. Town Manager's/Attorney's Report-

Town Manager's and Town Attorney's Reports as needed- Town Manager Hooper began his report by saying he has 2 good news items and 1 challenging item. The first good news is that street improvements are set to begin with creating a bike lane on 6th street. This bike lane will not only be good for cyclists, but it will also cause a “pinch” effect hopefully slowing traffic down on that street. Work to realign 6th and Hinshaw making this area a 4-way stop and restriping will begin September 7, 2021. Temporary traffic realignment will also be in place. 6th Street traffic data continues as well. A FEMA Grant application was submitted by Public Services Director Dale Shumate and N. Wilkesboro Fire Chief Jimmy Martin has been approved to the tune of \$950,000.00. for a new firetruck. The total cost will be around \$1.3 million for the truck. Town Manager Hooper and Finance Director Bauguess will work to see what monies can be used towards the balance of the cost of the purchase and may be able to bring that information to the next commissioners meeting.

The Challenging news is the increase of numbers of COVID illnesses and hospitalizations hitting again. As of this meeting there are 8620 new cases statewide with reports of an average of 44 cases per day. N. Wilkesboro has 2 town employees out at this time and two awaiting test results. With the increase of numbers, it is probable that monthly meetings may go back to being virtual. There is a meeting scheduled with Public Health Director Rachel Willard and other town officials. (North Wilkesboro and Wilkesboro), to discuss amending the local state of emergency. The Town Manager asked the Board to start thinking about the possibility of making vaccines compulsory for town employees.

Town Attorney Johnson had nothing to report at this time.

X. Public Hearing

D.) Public Hearing for AMZ Entertainment Small Business Development Incentive Grant – Lee Ann Nixon and Mic Zulpo were present at the meeting. Zulpo, owner of the former Melody Square property was introduced to the board. Mr. Zulpo is owner of AMZ Amusements and has named the former Melody Square property “The Block”. Mr. Zulpo, a native of Australia, has traveled world-wide, and now calls Wilkes County home. At 6:05 Mayor Johnson declared the floor open for Public Hearing to discuss Mr. Zulpo’s intentions for his new business. “The Block” will offer numerous games for children, teens and young adults. He states he loves this area and wanted to make it home for himself and his family. He hopes this venture will bring citizens out with their children and provide entertainment to the town. EDC President Lee Ann Nixon says Mr. Zulpo’s personal investment of \$100,000.00 and personal property investment of \$300,000.00 qualifies him for the Small Business Development Incentive Grant of \$2500.00 eligible to small businesses. Criteria is investment of \$250,000.00 or more and creation of five or more new jobs at 100% of the average county wage for that job type. Mr. Zulpo intends to have 23 jobs and over \$400,000.00 invested in this project. State laws requires a public hearing be held before these incentives can be awarded. The public hearing on this matter was advertised in the Journal Patriot Wednesday August 11, 2021. The Board is asked to vote on granting incentives to AMZ Entertainment. Mayor Johnson asked if there were any questions or comments

on this matter and there were none. At that time Mayor Johnson declared the Public Hearing closed and called for a motion to approve the \$2500.00 Small Business Development Incentive Grant to AMZ Entertainment. **Motion to approve awarding the Incentive Grant was made by Commissioner Ferguson and seconded by Commissioner Hall. Motion unanimously carries.**

Motion to approve a budget ordinance reappropriating town funds from reserves to operating funds to make the payment was made by Commissioner Day and seconded by Commissioner Parsons. Motion unanimously carries.

IX. Policy-

E.) Hidden River Rezoning Application – Meredith Detsch

Rick DeCarlo is the owner of the property also known as Maplewood Court. It is the only Planned Development Conditional District within North Wilkesboro's Planning and Zoning jurisdiction. The property was originally zoned for manufactured homes but with the current zoning it allows for stick-built homes as well. The property owner, Mr. DeCarlo wants the property rezoned to R-20 allowing for manufactured homes only. R-20 Rural Residential allows a manufactured home park to be established with conditions that certain standards being met before permits are issued. North Wilkesboro Planning Board met on this item August 12, 2021 and approved the rezoning application. The Planning Board made the request to the board to call for a public hearing on the matter. **Motion to call for a public hearing was made by Commissioner Parsons and seconded by Commissioner Ferguson. Motion unanimously carries. A public hearing will be held October 5, 2021.**

F.) Comprehensive Financial Policy Second Discussion: Operating Budget Practices – Wilson Hooper, Connie Bauguess

This item was for discussion only. Manager Hooper presented a draft policy calendar to the board in November 2020 to consider a fund balance/reserves policy for 2021. In November, the Town Manager presented a draft policy calendar to the Board of Commissioners. It proposed that the Board consider a "fund balance/reserves" policy in 2021.

Town Manager Hooper recommended, and the Board agreed on July 22, to undertake the process of developing a Comprehensive Financial Policy which will establish guidelines for managing fund balance/reserves, debt, capital budgeting, investment practices, and operating budget development practices. Comprehensive Financial Policies are statements of the goals and standards that will guide the financial management practices of the town. These policies are helpful to staff during budget season. They're also helpful to banks and other lending agencies who see them as signs of stability and creditworthiness.

On August 3, Commissioners shared their goals for the town's financial health, and thoughts on what the preamble and objectives of the policy should be. The Town Manager will compile those thoughts and bring back a recommended objectives list for discussion. Commissioners are asked to consider codifying best practices for the development of the annual operating budget. Several of these recommendations raise significant policy questions, and require input from the Board.

Manager Hooper went over an attachment containing proposed guidelines for the development of the operating budget. He covered nine items ranging from developing an annual budget in conjunction with a stated program of priorities and performance objectives to setting a tax rate each year based on the cost of providing general governmental services, paying debt service, and projecting revenue needs for projects on the horizon. Several of the proposed guidelines are considered best practices in government budgeting, while others would create trade-offs. The Town Manager sought the Commissioners' feedback on the latter. Two items pointed out by Commissioners were:

The Board held some discussion on Item#4-

- This item states the Board of Commissioners must approve grant acceptance on applications that require a local match. Commissioner Ferguson supported the proposal which required that local matches be identified during budget development the previous year. However, Commissioners Palmer and Parsons indicated that they'd like to keep some flexibility, and would be willing to consider grants with local matches mid-year.

The Board discussed Item #6-

- This proposal would have the Board consider adopting a full-cost recovery approach to town service funded by fees, with the philosophy that the cost of services that mainly benefit an individual should be borne by the individual. The Board requested more information on what peer cities are doing with regard to setting their fees, as they do not want to deter individuals from utilizing town services because of a fee.

The Board was totally in favor of item #7 Policy Choice-

- The town shall endeavor to reduce its reliance on property tax revenues by revenue diversification, implementation of user fees, and economic development.

G.) Amendment to Position Classifications and Pay Scale – Wilson Hooper

Item G. as amended and approved-Town Manager Hooper is recommending several amendments to the Positions Classification and Pay Scale that are needed as the result of changes in the workforce. *Attachments “Public Utilities Director” and “Proposal to Amend Pay Range for Enhanced Public Utilities Director Position” were given to the Commissioners at the meeting to review.*

Dale Shumate, Public Services Director, is retiring at the end of the month. Dale oversees a department that is currently a combination of both utilities and public works functions. Manager Hooper has broached the subject of splitting the department to the Board of Commissioners. The Board has agreed to consider it. With Public Services split back into Public Utilities and Public Works, the public services classification will need to be eliminated from the Positions Classification Plan and replaced with positions “Public Utilities Director” and “Public Works Director”. Town Manager Hooper is also recommending enhancing the responsibilities of the Public Utilities Director position, and is therefore recommending an increase to the salary range to make it competitive with similar positions in the region. **After discussion and review of attachment items, a motion to Amend the Position Classification Plan to eliminate “Public Services Director” and reinstate distinct “Public Utilities Director” and Public Works Director” positions was made by Commissioner Ferguson and seconded by Commissioner Day. Motion unanimously carries.** *The second attachment, “Amend Pay Plan to Increase Salary Range for Public Utilities Director Position was tabled by consensus of the board and will be discussed at a future meeting.*

H.) Town Manager Evaluation Completion and Work Plan Discussion – Commissioner Michael Parsons-

The Board of Commissioners recently completed its annual evaluation of the Town Manager’s work performance in August 2021. They shared feedback with the Town Manager and discussed his evaluation in a closed session held also in August 2021. Public discussion by the board on this item was heard in both regular monthly meetings in August. The Board is asked to publicly share the results of the recent Town Manager’s evaluation. Commissioner Parsons spoke for the board and reported Town Manager Hooper’s evaluation was favorable and that the board looks

forward to working with him in this next coming year. Manager Hooper passed out a work plan for himself for the board to review. It listed 5 targets and subgoals. Commissioner Ferguson said in the sixteen years she has served on the Board of Commissioners she has never seen a manager attend to the requests of the board as Manager Hooper has. Commissioner Day states his work plan is concise and she likes it. Commissioner Palmer would like to see Manager Hoopers evaluation align with the yearly board retreat.

XII. Emerging Issues-

Commissioner Parsons began by saying “its amazing to see pictures of one of our crown jewels and to see it from the highway”. “It’s all moving in the right direction and hopes for great success”. Mayor Johnson noted that firemen from all over the county participated in the recent clean up at the speedway. Their volunteer work is greatly appreciated.

XIII. Closed Session- At 7:30 p.m. Mayor Johnson called for a motion to go into Closed Session.to discuss an item related to GS 143-318-11 (a) (3). **Motion to go into Closed Session was made by Commissioner Parsons with the statement “to consult with an attorney employed or retained by the public body in order to maintain the attorney-client privilege between the attorney and the public body” and was. seconded by Commissioner Hall. Motion unanimously carries. At 7:45 Mayor Johnson asked for a motion to come out of Closed Session. Motion was made by Commissioner Hall, seconded by Commissioner Day. Motion unanimously carries.**

XIV. Adjourn- With no other comments or concerns, Commissioner Parsons made a motion to adjourn., **Commissioner Day seconded that motion. Motion unanimously carries, meeting adjourned at 7:50 p.m.**

Debra W. Pearson Town Clerk

Robert L. Johnson MAYOR

Approved: _____