

**TOWN OF NORTH WILKESBORO  
COMMISSIONERS REGULAR MONTHLY  
MEETING September 7, 2021**

**5:30 p.m.**

**HELD AT THE NORTH WILKESBORO BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS BOARD ROOM**

**Zoom online platform:**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85008538497>

**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  
   NW Police Captain Brad Mathis

AND:                                 Joining by ZOOM Andrew Palmer,  
   Commissioner/Mayor Pro-Tem  
North                                 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 North Wilkesboro Police Captain Brad Mathis to lead the Pledge of Allegiance.**

**IV.     Additions/Deletions to the Agenda- *there were none.***

**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 Ferguson and seconded by Commissioner Hall. Motion unanimously carries.**

**VI.     Awards and Recognitions-** Manager Hooper informed the board that Planning Director Meredith Detsch and husband Zack welcomed baby girl Jaqueline Beckett Detsch into the world two weeks ago. All are doing well. Manager Hooper also announced that North Wilkesboro Police Captain Rob Thornburg, serving as the Interim Police Chief has been named North Wilkesboro Police Chief and will be ceremoniously sworn in before the Board at a future date. Congratulations to both the Detsch and Thornburg families.

**VII.    Public Comments-** *Mayor will acknowledge no more than 5 speakers. Speakers have five-minute limit.* There was no one that wished to speak.

**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 – Debbie Pearson
- B.) ABC Board reappointment – Debbie Pearson
- C.) Budget amendments – Connie Bauguess
- D.) Street Closing Ordinance – Crystal Keener

*There was one request to change to the Consent Agenda. Item C.-Budget Amendments on Splash Pad was pulled for separate discussion and vote. **Motion to approve Item A, B, and D was made by Commissioner Ferguson, seconded by Commissioner Palmer. Motion passed unanimously.***

At the request of Commissioner Parsons, to discuss Item C. Budget Amendments #1 and #2, Town Manager Hooper explained these amendments were increases on the Budget Amendments for adding new fencing between the swimming pool and splash pad at Smoot Park, and for flexibility for any unforeseen changes or needs in the completion of this project. Duke Energy will dig a trench from the light pole between the pool house and skate park to run power. Manager Hooper states this is a bit tricky as there are buried lines there but feels confident it will go smoothly. Finally, he informed the board that any funds in these amendments not being used would go to the Capital Reserve line item. **After discussion, motion to approve XI. A- items (C) Budget Amendments #1 and #2 was made by Commissioner Parsons 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 had previously invited the new Wilkes County Public Library librarian, Ms. Suzanne Moore to introduce herself to the board and give a brief update on the events and services our local Public Library offers the citizens of Wilkes County. She highlighted goals such as developing outreach services to improve educational and technology literacy. Librarian Moore works with Ashe, Watauga and Wilkes counties. She is from Ashe County but has recently moved to the Millers Creek area. She informed the group that September is "Library Card and Sign- Up Month". There are 3000 magazines online and audio books can be obtained through the NC Cardinal Courier Program. The Public Library offers unusual services that include the ability to check out items such as fishing gear and disc golf equipment using the "honor system" for free. The board thanked Ms. Moore for coming and sharing an interesting presentation on what our local library has to offer.

*Town Attorney Johnson had nothing to report at this time.*

#### **IX. Policy-**

E.) Water Sharing Memorandum of Understanding – Town Manager Wilson Hooper presented a Resolution to Commissioners asking their approval memorializing North Wilkesboro's intent to cooperate with Wilkesboro in the preparation of a grant application, and to together consider the recommendations of the engineering reports and feasibility study on updates to each town's water system. This resolution comes from a previous resolution authorizing Town Manager Hooper and Mayor Johnson to submit an application for a State Merger and Regionalization Feasibility Study or (MRF) grant. Advisors from Withers Ravenel advised the town that a formal document indicating an agreement between the town of North Wilkesboro and the town of Wilkesboro will make the

application more competitive. **Motion to approve the MOU Regarding Water System Compatibility Study was made by Commissioner Ferguson reading “the board approves a resolution/memorandum of understanding agreeing to jointly fund and engineering study with the Town of Wilkesboro on the possibility of physically connecting the two town’s water systems for water-sharing purposes” and seconded by Commissioner Day. Motion unanimously carries.** Commissioner Parsons requested a brief insight from Wilkesboro Mayor Mike Inscore, who was present at this meeting. Mayor Inscore greeted the board and remarked that the town of Wilkesboro will support this merger unanimously. He said “the key to success for both towns is to collaborate and grow and to earn credibility from the people we serve”. He said he was 100% behind the Memorandum of Understanding Resolution. *See attachment E. Resolution #2021-016 MOU Regarding Water System Compatibility Study.*

F.) Accept FEMA Grant and Designate Funds – North Wilkesboro Fire Chief Jimmy Martin is asking the board to approve a resolution accepting \$952,185.71 FEMA Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) for the purchase of a new aerial fire truck and designate funding sources for an approximate local match of \$348,000.00. The Supplement Spending Plan passed by the Board in June recommends that the proceeds from last year’s real property sales (\$267,000) be designated for this purpose. Afterward, there will remain a balance of \$80,814. The plan also recommends drawing upon the \$5,000 designed for “Fire Apparatus” in the General Fund Capital Reserve Fund. This action will leave a balance of \$75,814 and will exhaust the “Fire Apparatus” fund for now. Town Manager Hooper now recommends using \$13,300 in proceeds from last year’s sale of the Town’s surplus garbage truck, which would leave the remaining balance at \$62,514. and recommends paying the remaining balance with funds from the “Major Equipment” pot of the General Fund Capital Reserve Fund. After this action, there will be approximately \$13,500 left in that fund.

The current fire truck is thirty (30) years old and although it looks brand new, has outdated features with one of them being an open cab that does not meet OSHA requirements any longer. Fire Chief Martin brought grant writer Robbie Bowlin along to the meeting to answer any questions the board may have. He informed the board that once this resolution for the grant is accepted, we have a performance period of one (1) year to use the grant money. If the chosen truck is not available or ready for delivery due to delayed circumstances at the end of that one year, the department will ask for an extension on the grant. **Motion to approve Resolution #2021-018 was made by Commissioner Parsons and seconded by Commissioner Ferguson. Motion unanimously carries.** *See attachment Resolution #2021-018 Accepting FEMA AFGH Grant for Purchase of a New Aerial Fire Truck for NWFD*

G.) North Wilkesboro Fire Department Training Center Proposal – Jimmy Martin presented an idea to the board. The town owns an approximately 3.6-acre parcel on Boston Avenue that contains the old Women’s Detention Center facility and is tax valued at approximately \$240,000. Although the facility is officially vacant, it is currently being used ad-hoc as a satellite training facility for the North Wilkesboro Fire Department (NWFD). NWFD is using the facility “as-is” for simple training installations within its walls. They have not done any renovations or improvements to the building. NWFD leadership is requesting that the Board permit them to take permanent possession of the building, make improvements, and convert it to a permanent area firefighter training facility.

An in-town training facility will help the FD maintain readiness and certifications for its firefighters, which in turn can help NWFD maintain a good ISO score. With a few upfits, the facility would meet the OSHA and NC Department of Insurance standards for a certified/fully recognized training facility.

The most significant upfit made to the property would be the construction of a live-burn training facility made of shipping crates on the lawn behind the current building.

No money is currently budgeted for this purpose and staff have only estimated the cost of the fully built conversion.

NWFD propose the conversion of the facility be funded gradually with the following sources:

- NWFD fundraising money: This has been approved in-concept by the members of the NWFD.
- NWFD operating funds small expenses can be funded by the existing NWFD budget, or requested in future operating budget.
- Current FEMA grant: It's possible that some NWFD's current FEMA dollars could be redirected for this purpose. Staff will investigate this possibility.
- New federal/state grants: FEMA has addl. grants for training facilities that the department could apply for.
- Grants from private organizations: A number of companies with local ties have charitable foundations that often provide grants for projects such as this.
- NWFD in-kind donations: NWFD has a number of members skilled in various trades that could perform some of the required work on a volunteer basis

Staff believe this type of use can be developed right on the property, with no special zoning required. This proposal will permanently remove the land from the open market, and prevent it from being sold and becoming a tax-generating property. It will also bring additional traffic, industrial-like fixtures, and occasional open fire and hazardous conditions to the area. NWFD had pledged to ensure that their activities don't affect neighboring properties.

Commissioner Day expressed concerns for nearby residents and two (2) daycares regarding the smoke from "live burn" exercises. She would like to market and sell the property. Town Manager Hooper stated that any money spent on this project would be a small fraction of the cost of a Public Safety facility. Commissioner Palmer said he is not in favor of "giving a blank check to the project", and that he would like to see numbers even if they're estimates for getting the building ready for use. Commissioner Parsons asked about the condition of the buildings. He asked if it met town codes, and what the condition of electrical is, and if the building currently even usable. Chief Martin assured the board the building is steel and concrete and "solid as a rock". Commissioner Palmer questioned the safety factors due to Duke Power lines being very close to the "live burn" area. He asked if this live burn in the area was ok with Duke Power. Fire Chief Martin assured the board that any burn exercises would be done in the early evening 7:30 – 8:00 p.m. and that the live burn would not compromise any Duke Power lines. Commissioner Hall commented that he is in favor of going forward with this project. Commissioners Ferguson and Parsons asked for this item to be tabled for 30 days to look at the numbers. Town Manager Hooper said projections could be compiled and item brought back before the board in October. **Motion to table Item G Resolution #2021-017 Designating Town Owned Property at 700 Boston Avenue as a Firefighter Training Facility and Authorizing NW Fire Chief and Town Manager to Take Steps to Create the Facility was made by Commissioner Parsons and seconded by Commissioner Ferguson. Motion approved 4-1 with Commissioner Hall not in favor of tabling item at this time.**

**XII. Emerging Issues-** Commissioner Palmer asked about the current progress on the 6<sup>th</sup> Street traffic changes. Town Manager stated he had compiled information on that topic and would be sending that out Friday.

**XIII. Closed Session-** At 6:45 p.m. Mayor Johnson called for a motion to go into Closed Session to discuss an item related to GS 143-318-11 (a) (5). **Motion to go into Closed Session was made by Commissioner Parsons with the** statement “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 the price and other material terms of a contract or proposed contract for the acquisition of real property by purchase, option, exchange, or lease **and was seconded by Commissioner Ferguson. Motion unanimously carries. At 7:35 Mayor Johnson** asked for a motion to come out of Closed Session. **Motion was made by Commissioner Parsons, seconded by Commissioner Day. Motion unanimously carries.**

**XIV. Adjourn-** With no other comments or concerns, **Commissioner Parsons made a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Ferguson seconded that motion. Motion unanimously carries, meeting adjourned at 7:40 p.m.**

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Debra W. Pearson Town Clerk

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Robert L. Johnson MAYOR

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_

**\*\*\*\*\*THERE WILL BE NO SECOND MONTHLY COMMISSIONERS MEETING IN SEPTEMBER\*\*\*\*\***

**RESOLUTION #2021--016**

**MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING REGARDING WATER SYSTEM COMPATABILITY STUDY**

**WHEREAS**, the Towns of Wilkesboro, NC and North Wilkesboro, NC are neighboring municipalities along the Yadkin River; and

**WHEREAS**, each municipality operates its own water treatment and wastewater treatment enterprise utility; and

**WHEREAS**, each town's utility provides clean drinking water to various rural water associations that, when combined with the in-town customers of the utilities, constitute a majority of the population of Wilkes County; and

**WHEREAS**, each town draws its raw water from a different source: Wilkesboro from the Yadkin River and North Wilkesboro from the Reddies River, and each town uses different treatment and corrosion control processes; and

**WHEREAS**, the systems are physically connected with three unmetered interconnections; and

**WHEREAS**, the towns have a gentlemen's agreement to temporarily exchange treated water with one-another in case of emergency, such as contamination of one town's water source, or dire need such as drought; and

**WHEREAS**, to exchange water for long periods a number of as yet unknown updates to each system, or one system or the other, must be made; and

**WHEREAS**, the State of North Carolina has appropriated money to fund the combination of municipal water systems, but those grants/loan typically require detailed engineering reports to describe the need.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that the towns of Wilkesboro and North Wilkesboro do hereby agree to jointly fund a study performed by an independent firm that will identify updates to make the two systems physically and chemically compatible for long-term water exchange;

**AND, THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the towns of Wilkesboro and North Wilkesboro will use the results of the study to consider making enhancements to the systems that ensure the long-term health and safety of both towns water customers, with further cooperation on possible joint grant applications, rates, and other policy matters at a later time.

Duly adopted this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2021.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Robert L. Johnson, MAYOR, North Wilkesboro

ATTEST: \_\_\_\_\_  
Debra W. Pearson, TOWN CLERK

\_\_\_\_\_  
Michael Inscore, MAYOR, Wilkesboro

ATTEST: \_\_\_\_\_  
James K Byrd, TOWN CLERK

**Attachment F. Resolution FEMA Grant NWFD**

**RESOLUTION 2021-018**  
**RESOLUTION ACCEPTING \$952,185.71 FEMA AFG GRANT FOR THE PURCHASE OF A**  
**NEW AERIAL FIRE TRUCK FOR THE NORTH WILKESBORO FIRE DEPARTMENT**

**WHEREAS,** In February 2021, the Town of North Wilkesboro Board of Commissioners authorized staff to submit an application to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for funds to replace the town's aging aerial fire truck.

**WHEREAS,** In August 2021, the Town of North Wilkesboro received notice that FEMA awarded the Town a grant of \$952,185.71 from the Assistance to Firefighters (AFG) program for the purchase of said truck.

**NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, BY THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF THE TOWN OF NORTH WILKESBORO;**

That the Town officially accepts the FEMA AFG grant in the amount referenced above.

That the Town will make provisions to meet the \$47,609.29 required local match, and any additional costs associated with the purchase of the new aerial firetruck.

That the North Wilkesboro Fire Chief and North Wilkesboro Town Manager are authorized to take whatever administrative and legal steps are necessary to administer the grant.

That the Officials named above are authorized and directed to furnish such information as FEMA or other agency may request in connection with the administration of the grant.

That the Town has substantially complied or will substantially comply with all grant guidelines.

Adopted this \_\_\_\_\_ day of September, 2021, North Wilkesboro, NC

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Robert L. Johnson, MAYOR

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Debra W. Pearson, Town Clerk

**Attachment G. Training Center Proposal**

**RESOLUTION 2021-017**

**DESIGNATING TOWN-OWNED PROPERTY AT 700 BOSTON AVENUE AS A FIREFIGHTER TRAINING FACILITY AND AUTHORIZING FIRE CHIEF AND TOWN MANAGER TO TAKE STEPS TO CREATE THE FACILITY**

WHEREAS, The Town of North Wilkesboro owns an approximately 3.6 acre parcel at 700 Boston Ave., colloquially known as the Old Women’s Prison facility; and

WHEREAS, The North Wilkesboro Fire Department has identified the need to construct a fire training facility for its members, and has requested that the Board of Commissioners designate the property for that purpose.

**NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, BY THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF THE TOWN OF NORTH WILKESBORO;**

That the property at 700 Boston Ave. is hereby designated as a training facility for the town’s firefighters, and therefore removed from consideration for disposal as a surplus property.

That the North Wilkesboro Fire Chief and North Wilkesboro Town Manager are authorized to take whatever administrative and legal steps are necessary to convert the property into a training facility.

That the Officials named above are authorized and directed to furnish such information as the appropriate State, Federal, or other certifying agency may request in connection with the development of said facility.

That the North Wilkesboro Fire Department shall take steps to ensure that their activities on the site will not create negative impacts for other residents of the neighborhood.

That the Town has substantially complied or will substantially comply with all Federal, State, and local law, rules, regulations, and ordinances applicable to the project and to Federal, State, and private grants and loans pertaining thereto.

Adopted this \_\_\_\_\_ day of September,  
2021, North Wilkesboro

\_\_\_\_\_  
Robert L. Johnson, MAYOR

\_\_\_\_\_  
Debbie Pearson, Town Clerk

***THIS ITEM HAS BEEN TABLED UNTIL IT CAN BE REVIEWED AT THE OCTOBER MEETING***