

**TOWN OF NORTH WILKESBORO
COMMISSIONERS MEETING**

Date: September 21st, 2023

5:30 p.m.

HELD AT THE NORTH WILKESBORO BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS BOARD ROOM

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

ALSO PRESENT: Daniel Johnson, Town Attorney
 Rob Thornburg, Police Chief
 Meredith H. Detsch, Planning Director
 J. Dylan Blankley, Town Clerk
 Robert Gentle, Fire Chief
 David Webb, Public Works Director
 Taylor Gann, Community Development Director

Commissioner Andrew Palmer attended via Zoom.

Commissioner Parsons was absent.

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 Police Chief Rob Thornburg to lead in the Pledge of Allegiance.

IV. Additions/Deletions to the Agenda -

There were two deletions to the agenda tonight. Manager Minton requested to remove items F and I from the agenda.

V. Approval of Agenda -

Mayor Hauser called for a motion to approve the agenda as amended. **The motion to approve the agenda as written was made by Commissioner Hall and seconded by Commissioner Church. Motion unanimously carries, (3-0).**

VI. Awards and Recognitions

A.) Presentation by Appalachian Regional Library- *Suzanne Moore & Jacob Starks*

Ms. Moore presented on behalf of Appalachian Regional Library. She began by introducing the new Appalachian Regional Library System director, Jacob Starks. He received his Master's degree from the University of South Florida with a focus on community engagement and support through digital outreach and in-person events. Ms. Moore commented on health issues preventing her from visiting before now and then began her presentation on current updates. She reflected on keywords from the library's vision: inspire, connect, explore, and empower. There have been tastings and feedings this summer through partnerships with local restaurants and the school nutrition system to feed local children through the summer, totaling 1,092 meals. There was also the first community garden and the free fridge. There were also heritage cooking classes and book tastings to feed your mind. Ms. Moore also commented on a tomato that grew a horn that gained popularity on social media.

Connect: We are all together now, was this year's summer reading theme. The library also had its first human library covering the civil rights movement, the Civil War, and disability. Ms. Moore showed the members of the human library. James Adams, Pat McNeil, and Jacks were featured. The library lockers that were funded through a grant are arriving soon. The lockers allow patrons to put books on hold and pick them up outside of regular operating hours to reduce access barriers. The Narcan vending machine was funded through the opioid settlement grant. We are waiting on the disbursement of funding to get that, as well as complementary programming.

The next word in the program is exploring. There has been teen, children, and wellness programming for all ages. We partnered with the Health Foundation and the Partnership for Children. They anticipate beginning some intellectual programming soon, starting with a grant for chess sets that have been popular with tournaments planned.

The last word is empower. September is library card signup month. They have a partnership with Don's Bakery. If you sign up for a library card, you will get a free sweet treat. This Saturday, there is a film through a partnership with the health foundation, Anonymous People at Two Rivers Cinemas, in recognition of recovery month. The Fresh Wreaths Collection is a new program to break the stigma on high-interest, low-level readers working on their reading.

Traphill Branch: is open on Tuesday, Thursday, and alternative Saturdays. They have a new director who is working tonight and thus absent from the meeting. Every Saturday, there is "Jammin at the Branch." They have been decorating and renovating the location and offering tai chi classes. Lastly, Ms. Moore mentioned the library hosting the Wilkes Chamber of Commerce after-hours event on October 19th, with the local band Crooked Road Ramblers attending. In closing, Mayor Hauser complemented the presentation and welcomed Mr. Starks.

VII. General Public Comment Period -

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

Debbie Davis of the Brushy Mountain Ruritan Club made one public comment tonight. Ms. Davis requested Friday night of Apple Jam be a family-friendly event and asked the Board to suspend the social district temporarily. The event is from 6:00 p.m.-9:00 p.m. the night before the Apple Festival. Mayor Hauser replied that the Board was okay with Ms. Davis's request.

VIII. Routine Business/Consent - (action needed)

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- July 18th and September 5th, 2023-
Dylan Blankley, Town Clerk
- C.) Approval of Board Closed Session meeting minutes- July 18th- *Dylan Blankley, Town Clerk*
- D.) Budget Amendment #3- *Connie Bauguess, Finance Director*
- E.) Special Events Road Closure- *Taylor Gann, Community Development Director*

The motion to approve the consent agenda was made by Commissioner Day and seconded by Commissioner Church. Motion unanimously carries (3-0).

IX. Manager's Report/Emerging Issues –

Holly Minton, Town Manager & Town Attorney Daniel Johnson

Manager Minton's report included the following:

- After Hours: The library will have an after-hours event in coordination with the Chamber of Commerce on October 19th. Manager Minton requested the Board endorse the event so the library can use the town stage and speaker system for a band. The library has gotten permission from the Brushy Mountain Ruritan Club. Manager Minton requested a head nod from the Board to endorse the event. *The Board endorsed the event.*
- Outdoor Economy Conference: Ms. Minton reported that she and several staff members attended the Outdoor Economy Conference earlier this week to gather information about outdoor activities and had good sessions there.
- Downtown Workday: Manager Minton is planning for a downtown workday. The workday is scheduled for September 29th. This year, we started a downtown workday. There was one in the spring where planters were planted. The leadership team has discussed doing these workdays twice a year. We would like to do our second one before the Apple Festival and fall activities such as spooktacular and light up downtown so things can be as clean and tidy as they can be.

- Kickoff with Lobbyist: Ms. Minton had a kickoff meeting with the lobbyist and Ken Noland of Wilkesboro and John Yates of Wilkes County. The lobbyist requested meetings with department heads to discuss priorities the Board has already set. We want to incorporate the Capital Improvement Plan into this vision with them. The leadership team will meet next week to discuss these priorities and what we want to move to the top of her list.
- Personnel Revisions by Crystal Kenner and Tyler Holden: our North Carolina Lead Fellow, Tyler Holden has been working to revise our personnel policy. He and Crystal Kenner have worked diligently to create a draft of personnel policy revisions. Manager Minton and Finance Director Connie Bauguess will approve the draft. After feedback, the document will be shared with department heads and town attorney Daniel Johnson for further feedback to achieve the best possible document.
- Manager Evaluation: Most of the Board has completed Manager Minton's evaluation, her one-year mark is October 17th, and the Board has been diligently working to meet the deadline of October 10th.
- Quotes for Unified Development Ordinance: We are still gathering quotes for the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO). We have not gotten feedback for three of the quotes yet, and we want to proceed with caution to receive the best price for the project.
- Carmen James: Ms. James has brought to the town's attention that in 1980, John Minton offered to purchase a lot on B-street, and the deed was improperly recorded. Ms. James has offered to work with Town Attorney Johnson to remedy the oversight. The town was paid for the property, and it was approved in a regular Board meeting. The completion of the deed transfer did not occur. The Board verbally approved moving forward with fixing this issue.
- Three traffic studies were requested; two met the criteria: One is on Coffee Avenue, and the other is on 8th Street. The last one is on Joel Bently Alley. We will work through those, but staff resources are important. Ms. Minton closed the manager's report and opened it to the Board for emerging issues.

Emerging Issues:

There were no emerging issues at this meeting.

X. Consideration of Old Business- (action needed)

- F.) Public Hearing on Proposed Text Amendment for Town Code Chapter 3 Alcoholic Beverages, Article II Social Districts, 3-11 Revoking –*Rob Thornburg, Police Chief*
Item F was removed from the agenda for this meeting.

XI. Consideration of New Business- (action needed)

- G.) Introduction to Restriping of Wilkesboro Avenue/ Wilkesboro Boulevard- *Holly Minton, Town Manager*

Wilkesboro Boulevard and a portion of Wilkesboro Avenue are set to be resurfaced in the next year. The Department of Transportation (DOT) is requesting if the town wants to include bicycle lanes as a part of the resurfacing. This is only an introduction, and no final decisions are needed tonight. Manager Minton included pictures from the outdoor economy plan, and Commissioner Church requested the project cost. Manager Minton replied that since it is a DOT project, we need to get numbers from them, but has not been able to communicate with them yet. Manager Minton requested the Board's opinion and feedback on adding a bicycle lane, which would remove the center turning lane on these roads. Mayor Hauser commented that the road is very busy. He had never seen a bicycle on those roads and did not know if we could encourage it. Ms. Martha Nichols commented that she had never seen a bicycle in a bike lane and that they are an absolute nuisance. Manager Minton requested that when thinking about this issue, we should consider who we want to be and not who we currently are. When we think about the river district, we want to encourage a work, live, and play atmosphere that will encourage more foot traffic and more bicycle traffic to frequent our town with other forms of transportation.

Commissioner Day commented that there is an opportunity to make the area look nice and compared it to the planning with our downtown area. Many people come down Brushy Mountain

Road, which is their way into the town. We need to look at it as a way to look good and ride a bike or walk on it. Mayor Hauser asked if this would include the bridge. Manager Minton replied that the bridge was a separate item. There would be a bicycle lane on the bridge but would like to see the DOT do something closer to the Outdoor Action Plan. Manager Minton asked the Board if they were open to hearing about bike lanes. Commissioner Palmer commented that he was open to it and agreed with Manager Minton that we need to think about who we want to be and not who we are. He rides his bike often and probably would more if there were more options to do so. He is in Atlantic Beach and has been riding his bike in similar places. Mayor Hauser mentioned he would like to see a bike lane on the bridge. Commissioner Day agreed. Mayor Hauser continued that who we want to be is if the road could be open to bicycles, it would be, even if it does not go all the way to the light. Manager Minton replied that we could explore all options. The board agreed to continue with the project. Commissioner Church commented that he wants to see more lights on the bridge. Commissioner Day stated that walkability is a must there are many who do not own a car here. Manager Minton replied that the staff is looking into a Ped head at the ABC store. She believes removing the turn lane could create a road diet to slow down traffic. She believes this is what Mr. Leadbetter is suggesting. He is a corridor development engineer and has recently returned to the area. Discussion continued about Mr. Leadbetter's background before Manager Minton stated we would return to this issue with costs and other things.

H.) Proposed Changes to the Trash Ordinance- *David Webb, Public Works Director & Meredith Detsch, Planning Director*

Planning Director Detsch began by stating that this ordinance had been in the works since 2019. Code Enforcement Officer John Ganus was asked to step in to assist with issues faced by the sanitation department. When he had time, he began working on the best practices that could be incorporated based on what he had seen in other jurisdictions, what worked and what did not. We want to keep our staff safe and unfortunately, there have been challenges. Ms. Detsch then asked Public Works Director Webb to comment on the challenges affecting staff.

Mr. Webb commented on things being put in trash cans that are not supposed to be there including human waste. A piece of paper would not stop it completely but would allow staff to take action on the issue when it occurs. Another problem is tree trimmings. There are contractors who just pile the brush up at the side of the road for the town to get. If you are paying a contractor, they should take it with them. It is costing the town money to deal with these situations. These practices have not been updated since the 1960s. There is nothing in there about the programs we currently have including recycling. These changes are designed to keep our sanitation staff safe. Commissioner Day asked if it was time for a reminder of what is and is not allowed regarding trash and brush pickup. Mr. Webb agreed that it was. Commissioner Day mentioned there are some broken trash cans including hers. Commissioner Church asked if there were new trash cans on order and Mr. Webb replied that there were trash cans in and more on order. Manager Minton commented that the issue with the trash cans is that they were on backorder last year, and there was an eight-month lag on the orders. Mayor Hauser asked Mr. Webb if there was normal wear and tear on a can and if the town would make it right, and Mr. Webb agreed. Mayor Hauser continued that if someone hires a contractor to take trees down, the contractor is responsible for the brush. He asked Mr. Webb if someone was cleaning their septic tank out into their trash can. Mr. Webb replied that no, they were using the bathroom in a bag or bottle and putting it in the trash. He spoke with the owner, and it has stopped. Commissioner Day asked if cutting bamboo was a regularly practiced behavior, and Mr. Webb agreed.

Ms. Detsch stated that anything in the proposal that was in red was a proposed change to the code and anything in black was part of the existing code, highlighting the issues that need attention. Ms. Martha Nichols commented on the code language requiring brush to be placed in bundles. Ms. Detsch replied that was the practice in the 1950s. Mayor Hauser would like to see the language adjusted or removed if Mr. Webb approves. Mr. Webb replied that bundling was not a big issue, but the length of the brush was. The current code says three feet, but Mr. Webb would be okay with amending this to six feet. Ms. Nicholas commented that we have the best people working for the

town and the Board agreed. Commissioner Church emphasized the need for disabled individuals to have their trash can brought to the street and returned by staff. When he first moved to the area, town staff would get your trash can from behind your property and return it to the back yard, but stopped this practice years back. Mr. Webb did not know why the practice was stopped but thought it may be regarding town insurance on private property. A practice they have had in the past, if someone got a doctor's note, staff would bring the trash to the curb and return it afterward. Mayor Hauser commented that we could accept a handicap sticker since they went to the doctor for that, and Ms. Detsch replied that we could create a request form based on other jurisdictions as well. Commissioner Church reemphasized the need for disabled individuals in the community. Ms. Detsch commented that the language was still being adjusted and may include stronger language for violations, including tires.

- I.) Proposed Changes to Street Name, Colonial Drive- *Meredith Detsch, Planning Director*
Item I was removed from the agenda for this meeting.

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 6:13 p.m. Mayor Hauser called the meeting to order, and Commissioner Day made the motion to go into closed session and read the statute in accord to 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. Commissioner Hall seconded the motion. Motion unanimously carries, (3-0).

XII. Closed Session

Conduct a closed session in accord to *143-318.11(a)(4)*.

Closed Session Minutes are separate and sealed.

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 7:11 p.m.

Marc R. Hauser, MAYOR

J. Dylan Blankley, Town Clerk

Approved: _____