

**Town of Pilot Mountain
Board of Commissioners Meeting
Monday, August 21, 2023
7:00 PM**

Members Present: Mayor Evan Cockerham, Mayor Pro-Tem Donna Kiger, Commissioner Rachel Collins, Commissioner Scott Needham and Commissioner Dwight Atkins

Staff Present: Town Manager, Michael Boaz and Town Clerk, Holly Utt

Call to order 7:00 PM

Mayor Cockerham called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM. After a moment of silence, Commissioner Kiger led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Adoption of Agenda

Commissioner Collins made a motion to adopt the agenda as presented and it was unanimous.

Public Comment

Mayor Cockerham - anyone may speak on any issue. Before speaking, please state your name and address and limit your comments to three minutes. I'll just remind everybody to please make sure that your comments are addressed to the board as a whole. This is not a forum to debate or anything like that, so we want to keep it as civil as possible and have a good discussion.

Stephanie Ballowe, Foxy Blue Boutique - I was asked to speak on behalf of a concerned citizen that just wanted have this out there and they asked me just to speak for them because they didn't want to. So I'm just going to read what they said. And if the concerned citizen says that they want to say it was them, they can, but if not, they can remain anonymous. The first thing I have is approachable. It felt like this last year it was more of an aggravation to ask questions and years before they didn't feel like it was that way. They don't feel like the town is approachable to ask questions anymore. Inclusion, in years before the end of the street was used, like the opposite end where Hardees is, that end of the street was used and this year it seems like everything has moved down to the other end of the street and there was just concerns why things were not spread out evenly between on the streets. The next was honesty. One being asked about things. Just be honest. No need to give a person three different answers at three different times. So this person felt, they had asked about something to the same person three different times and each time they got three different answers. So they just want more honesty and consistency.

Damion Richardson, 241 Swiss Haven Drive. Good evening, I'm here on behalf of the Pilot Knob Volunteer Fire Department. I'm here to talk about the lack of communication from the town when there are street closures due to downtown events. Even though we've got members of our own department that have talked with people from the town and downtown communication. Downtown committee communication is minimal at best at times. When we receive an email once a year with a list of upcoming events for the entire year, it's not enough. There are events that are canceled and even added to the list that we are never notified about. We are rarely notified of which streets are being closed or the times that are the openings and closings are happening. When we receive this information more often is because the wife

of one of our officers follows Facebook pages. And if she sees the information and times she notifies the officers who can then relay the information to the rest of the department. There are also instances that even when we know, the information of what roads and times the openings and closings occur, we have noticed that some have either been extended for reopening or closed before the date and time that we've received. All this information is imperative, it needs to be exact, not just for our department, but for all emergency services that serve in the town in order to serve the citizens in a timely manner. In closing, this lack of communication and delayed emergency services, who is going to be held responsible for that? I do commend Chief Jackson. He does give us timely information as far as when we have streets that are being closed. He relays that information over to us. So, you know, we do get some, but we need it better and more timely and to be more concise on this.

Chastity Willard – Owner of Grace & Sparrow Boutique, 101 W Main Street. Tonight I'm speaking from two different viewpoints. One as a consumer and one as a business owner here in town. So let's take a moment to acknowledge how successful Amazon is. Amazon is successful in part because of its convenience to a customer. Let's admit that in today's fast paced world, that convenience is a cornerstone to a successful business. Just this past week as I was returning to Pilot from Mount Airy and I come down Main Street and I'm sitting here with chocolate chunk cookies on my mind and I want to pull in the Liv's and get about four of them because I'm thinking I deserve it. But as I approach Liv's, there's absolutely nowhere where to park. Nowhere. So unfortunately, Liv lost a sale because I was going to have to park more than halfway down Main Street to get out and get up the street, get the cookies that I wanted. Go back even further to back when the marketplace was on Main Street with their delicious deli, which was a really good thing. One day I was preparing to head out to go pick up some merchandise. I wanted to pop in and grab a salad and get on the road. When I approached the location, there was nowhere to park. I approached the town hall parking lot, which again was full. On two separate occasions the former marketplace lost two separate sales because I couldn't conveniently park somewhere run in, grab lunch, which is what I needed to do and get back on the road. So I know if I'm doing it, a lot of other people are too. And you know, as a business owner, when you constantly have customers come in and complain about parking, it's hard. I know we only have so much we can offer when it comes to parking, I get that. I mean there's only so many options. But at the same time, parking directly impacts a business. And customers need their experiences to be frictionless and simple as possible from running into Indulge Soapery, to grab a gift from picking up that vitamin from Blue Mountain Herbs or even getting a cookie from Liv's sometimes just what our daily errands are. We need a little more accessibility downtown if all possible. So I've had several customers come ask me to put an item on hold and messaged me later on the day that they said they were coming to pick up and said, I come by to get the shoes I had on hold, but there was absolutely nowhere park I'll try to come back next week. And she did. She came next week and got them. But when you're driving around in the same area, whether it be in a circle or up down the street looking for parking, it's frustrating. And a frustrated customer is usually one that doesn't come back. People don't like frustration, they're not going to come back. It also makes an impact on branding of all downtown businesses in downtown as a whole. Insufficient parking capacity is a poor reflection of downtown businesses in downtown. Even though it's not always at the top of the list, the people patronizing downtown do feel like it's an important thing. We hear it every single day, it is a big concern. When it becomes difficult to get somewhere, people stop coming and that costs your business. Parklets, I love the parklets, I do. They're not a bad thing. I do believe there's room for them in landscape downtown. But many others that shop and do business downtown do think that until the issues of parking

are resolved, the parklet program should be planned a little differently or moved to areas where they would be utilized more than they are. The photos that we see posted on social media on the downtown page or pages, there's several different ones that show people sitting in the parklet with it being full, is typically during an event. This demonstrates a false sense on how the parklet program is actually performing. On a daily basis, they are very far from full. Sure, you may get a few during the weekend, but what I can guarantee you and the majority consensus from business owners and customers alike is that parking is getting impossible downtown. And there needs to be solutions, not empty promises. And until there can be parking solutions implemented, please consider the impact to the majority of businesses when placing these parklets. Thank you for your time. I hope that you can find a way to consider how your decisions directly impact all businesses downtown. And I hope that in the future you'll reach out to small business owners for their input on things such as parklets and whether or not they're impacting us in a positive or negative way as you navigate forward with downtown revitalization. And I just end with one question that I would like for you all to keep on your mind as you go forward and make decisions. Without your downtown small businesses, what would downtown look like?

Joni Handley – 1010 Haley Lane. I am here as a concerned individual and as part of this business community. I want to talk about the alleyway project at First Citizens Bank. I became a member of the Main Street Revitalization Design committee in 2022. And, it was old business when I started, of the town acquiring access and use of the alleyway and parking lot beside of and behind First Citizens Bank. So it was discussed and by November of 2022, much had been approved and plans underway. However, it became very evident that time was wasted and input from myself and a few others was dismissed and other much lesser projects were considered more important. Therefore I decided to resign in January. I'm here because our town needs this access to the parking lot for the town as a whole to grow and flourish. The town needs the alleyway to be an attractive, open, inviting space for the visitors to want to come through and want to park back there behind the bank. Many do not know of that parking lot back there. We hear it a lot. People come in, they say, I came through last week, I was going to stop, get something from you, no parking anywhere. So I just went on and so I came back this week and we go, we have a parking lot back here behind us, a big one. And they say, well, I didn't know that. So I am grateful that the town is growing and it is, but making it even more important to have more access for parking in the town. So that's my agenda. I'm still invested in helping out with any way I can, whatever I can do to help the town to grow. Thank you very much.

Charlotte York, 203 W Main Street. I would like to see some handicap parking downtown and I know parking is a problem for everybody. I talked to Mayor Cockerham about this and he said there used to be some on Depot Street but they were temporary. Is it a possibility to get some of those back where we had them?

Mayor Cockerham - typically we don't answer questions during the public comment, but I want to make sure I let everybody know that we did talk about that so we're working on getting some permanent spaces in those same locations.

Jesse Eads, 376 Black Mountain Road. I have three points I'd like to make two of those being connected to Armfield Center, more specifically Nelson Acres. My first point is Nelson Acres. Primarily the disc golf course is inconsistently maintained being the mowing, the rest is maintained by another group. After a call to town hall and then Armfield Center, I was able to find out that most of that work is done by volunteers, which is quite commendable for them. And I would like it to be known that I'm very appreciative on behalf of the club and all users of that area. However, who is financially responsible and contractually obligated to perform this duty on behalf of the town? Second point is, upon inspection of Nelson Acres, there is no emergency directive signage anywhere on the property. After a call to the fire department, there is a confirmed incident of someone injured and their friend was able to track back to the beginning of the trail to get the emergency services to them. However, going back in crossed a bridge that a four by four was unable to cross. This may seem insignificant due to the fact that the person injured was fine and able to get out. However, if this was more of an extreme case, be that anaphylactic shock, cardiovascular incidents or something else, this could be potentially fatal. And I do not believe this is something the town wants. Is this something that the town would be willing to fund through a service organization being the scouts, the Rotarians, or any other community service organization that may approach with the project of this in mind? My third point, and more importantly to me. After the Pilot Mountain Outdoor Adventure Expo, a wonderful event that happened in town, specifically the old Crow Medicine Show. While volunteering to help tear down for this event, I was asked to help with public works to move some of the safety gates, more than happy to help. While riding in a town vehicle back to town hall. The driver of this vehicle who was a public works employee, decided to make disparaging and quite racist remarks due to the outcome and the turnout of this particular event. I find this to be ridiculous and if someone that you were willing to put volunteers to decide to help to make these kind of comments should not be tolerated. There was another volunteer in the vehicle with us that was their first event volunteering and I do hope that they come back to another one. I made the bold statement that this was an isolated incident and I hope that that statement was true. I informed a town employee of this directly, after the same evening. I was told that I would be followed up with if I had anything else I wanted to say and I have heard nothing from anyone. I understand that events have a lot of comments and concerns throughout, before and after. This may be a slight overlook. However, I hope it isn't. And I hope that you would look further into something like this because I find that the town does not want that sort of reputation with volunteers and other members of the public. Thank you.

Kim Quinn, 102 W Main Street. Downtown business owner, Downtown building owner, Downtown resident.

I request that my comments tonight be received and recorded into the minutes in FULL.

I also request more time to speak tonight on behalf of Will Hurley with Mount Pilot Antiques, Tabitha & Jerry Snider with Squeezebox and Susie Cooper with Blue Mountain Herbs. They were unable to attend tonight's meeting due to illnesses and other commitments.

I am here to stand with my fellow business owners to state **on the record** that the failure in communication, procedures, management, and protocols **MUST stop now**. Most of the people here tonight, even if they don't speak, agree that it's time for change. WE are the downtown. We have a right to clear communication, effective government, procedures, and fairness.

We have addressed all the following issues with the Town privately but that has NOT worked. It is a complete shame that taking the issues to social media is the avenue needed to get a response from the Town of Pilot Mountain. And even more shameful as we call for unity and a path forward, some have responded by blocking us on social media, labeling us as a troublemakers and socialists looking for government handouts.

We are ready to work together to find a path forward and now it's up to you to accept responsibility and work WITH us to fix the problems.

Let me identify a few things that have brought us here tonight.

Do you know what the #1 purpose of the Main Street Committee is listed as on the Town Website? **To strengthen business in downtown Pilot Mountain.**

There are 5 committees for downtown, appointed by the Board of Commissioners, none of which have enough members to hold a legal meeting. No minutes have been provided to the public for years. Most members exit or stop attending the meetings within months.

Let's DIVE into the issues:

Lack of communication

Nonresponsive management

Nonresponsive Board

Emails go unanswered.

Unreturned phone calls

Misinformation

If we get a response, it is along the lines of "we will get back to you" but you don't

- Let's take this meeting TONIGHT as an example: Town gave us the July meeting date. Yet that meeting had already been canceled. Town gave us the August meeting date. But that date was changed. So here we are tonight.

Moving on to Town coordinated events.

- Event Dates, times, and location are conflicting. Facebook doesn't match the emails we receive from the Event coordinator. Which doesn't match the flyer. Which doesn't match the advertisements. There is conflicting information – always.
- Event emails from the town have recipients that are not even located in Pilot Mountain, incorrect email addresses, list recipients whose businesses have closed over a year ago and missing new businesses.
- The Event coordinator has indicated that they are not required to take minutes at that meeting. Minutes should be standard for any public meeting held by a government employee or board. And posted minutes should be available to the public.

- Event coordinator is not a volunteer position. It is a paid position for the Downtown. We have a right to keep informed with minutes from committee meetings. **Who is held accountable for this?**

Moving on to Town Budget.

- We aren't asking for your money. In fact, this board (you guys and past board members) have prioritized Downtown. The Board budgeted \$140,000 last year specifically FOR Downtown including \$60,000 of paid staff FOR Downtown. 2 dedicated employees FOR Downtown. The Board spends approximately \$8000 a year on a trip to the NC Main Street Conference to learn to grow Downtown.
- Who exactly are you working for so hard if you aren't listening to the downtown businesses? Are you working for the concrete sidewalks? The road?
- Let's go back to that #1 purpose of the Main Street group that you guys appointed. **To strengthen business in downtown Pilot Mountain**

Moving on to Favoritism.

- A friend of town staff was allowed to use the EV (Electric Vehicle) stations to charge a business truck. That business said they had a rental agreement with the town to do so. But the contract between the Town and the NC grant used to get the EV Stations clearly states that it cannot be sublet, and it is for use for EV cars only. The town was in direct violation of the NC Grant for these EV Stations. Favoritism over law.
- Parklets (outdoor road dining areas) were built at Commission Needham's personal residence. Placed at 2 of Needham's commercial buildings for use. After 3 information requests to the Town, the town has not answered who paid for the materials for 2023 parklets.
- The 3rd parklet was placed at a business that requested one. But the official town response for 2023 parklets is that there is no request process. For the record, Squeeze Box requested one, but town staff forgot that conversation. Favoritism over fairness.
- Only **certain** businesses get continued recognition on the social media pages run by the Town. Downtown Pilot Mountain page and Visit Pilot Mountain page. But if you have crossed the town in the past like Grace N Sparrow – you have been cut from any posts at all.
- Ribbon cuttings for some but not all new businesses

Moving on to following through:

- The town continues to spend taxpayer funds on new or updated items but fails to maintain them.
 - o Music on the streets. It hasn't played since March 2023 at that time it was still Christmas music.
 - o Parking signs for handicap and 30 min parking on Depot. The town moved the signs for the Expo event into First Citizen ally and never retrieved them. Now the town claims they can't find them. Check First Citizen's. After you abandoned them for months, they use them now.
 - o Blocking traffic for days after events with barriers.
 - o Event Supplies are left behind for days. There are barriers, tents, chairs right now on Depot left since Friday night.
 - o Remember that part about the purpose being to strengthen business downtown?

- Litter in the streets from unmaintained trash cans
- Water flow grates not cleaned out.
- Tents flooding at events with backed up water runoff.
- Let's talk about your website. Taxpayers have paid for at least 2 new website overhauls over the past 8 years. Go check that website when you get home tonight. There are minutes missing. The calendar for tonight's meeting doesn't even show a location change. Go under the EAT SHOP section. There are businesses that left over a year ago listed. And missing new businesses. Go under the STAY section. It lists NOTHING. NOTHING. When we have 2 air bnbs downtown alone.
- **These are not volunteer positions that update and communicate. Who is held accountable for these things?**

Moving on to breaking the law:

- Do you know how often the town equipment is used by non-employees? The gator used for events is an example. What happens when one of those volunteers causes damage to property? Since that is exactly what happened to my carport, I can tell the town will cover it up and list a town employee on the police report and insurance claim.
- Do you know how many people have a CODE to the side door at town hall? I can list at least 5 citizens that have the CODE that do not work for the town. When the town forgets to show up to let a group in to have a meeting – the CODE is given freely to non-employees to get in. How many people have that code?
- **Who is held accountable for these things?**

With the lack of communication, procedures, the failure to maintain what you spend funds on, the lack of care that is happening and the appearance of favoritism – how do you expect us as business owners or anyone in the community to have confidence and trust in our elected officials and town staff? How do you post on social media that businesses owners should care enough and join groups when we have tried and been ignored or silenced.

You are not required to respond to this. But know this – if you care so much about the future of downtown Pilot Mountain then step it up and get it together. If you continue to budget funds and enter grants and programs for the downtown, follow through. We sent you solutions a year ago. Start with those.

To wrap this up:

Remember what you said on the website? The purpose is to strengthen business in downtown Pilot Mountain.

We are ready to work together to find a path forward and now it's up to you to accept responsibility and work WITH us to fix the problems.

Again, I request that this comment be received and recorded into the minutes in FULL. Thanks for your time tonight.

Julie Henne, 128 Northview Drive. I'm a business owner and a town resident. First, I'd like to ask that, after hearing some of the business owners and towns people's comments that we may be allowed to have a

meeting with you guys at some point to kind of go over in more depth on some issues that we have so that we can come together on the same page. But I want to just give you a scenario. School starts, kindergarten classroom. All the kids are super excited to come into the new classroom. There's four tables, okay? There are four children at each table. This one group, they're so cute. The teacher just immediately just loves this table. They're so awesome, they're cute, and their backpacks are cute. Like they're so excited and they just, the teacher gravitates towards them, okay? When they go to line up for the bathroom, that table gets to go first. When they line up for the water fountain, that table gets to go first. When they go outside on the playground, they get to line up first, which means that they get to be on the playground first. So they go home and they're so excited and they love school and they want to come back the next day and they love their teacher and everything is awesome for them, right? And there's nothing wrong with that. Those kids are great. Those kids are awesome. But what about the other three tables? They go home and some of them might cry and say they don't want to go back to school. They don't like their teacher. They don't understand why this table gets to go to the playground first. Always. Why the teacher's eyes light up when they see these kids and not them. One parent gets so upset that they pull that child out of school and start homeschooling them. Another parent decides to send their kid to a different school. Again, there's nothing wrong with this table. This table's great and, and the kids have done nothing wrong. But these children here at these tables aren't getting the same treatment from that teacher. And they're upset and they're crying and they don't want to be there and their success isn't being built up. These kids are being successful, they're getting good grades. These kids aren't. Why? Because the teacher is favoring those children and that table. And again, there's nothing wrong with those children, but then the parents decide to talk to the teacher and nothing gets done. The teacher doesn't see that there's a problem because she's treating everybody good. She's not mean to these kids. So nothing gets done. So then the parents go to the principal and the principal goes in for a few minutes, sees that you know, the class is happy and you know, everyone's working. Then the teacher's doing their job. So then she doesn't really, that principal doesn't really do anything. So then the parents go to the school board, which is what we're doing tonight, us as businesses. And guess what, I'm sometimes at that table, but sometimes I'm not at that table. Sometimes I'm over here at these tables. And so I'm bringing this to you guys as all businesses. Every business should be treated fairly. Whether they've been labeled as a troublemaker or too outspoken or whatever, we're all business owners and we should all be treated the same. And I'm coming from, I do get treated well most of the time, but what about these other guys? And is that why we can't keep businesses in downtown? Is it because they go home and they cry or they don't want to be there or they want to be somewhere else? And so that's why I pose the question to you guys, is can we all get on the same page, all be treated fairly so that we can all grow together? Because whether you think it or not, every business owner that's here tonight wants to be united together, work together with you guys, and we want to be like a family and we want to show that to everyone. So that was my scenario and thank you.

Donald Mueller, 132 Bumpy Trail. I'm a former owner of Mountain View Restaurant and I operate My Kitchen food truck based out of Pilot because Pilot is my home. Listening to a lot of the comments from the business owners and a lot of them have legitimate points where the town can get better. But there is an attitude in our town right now that says the town is responsible for our success, for our failure as a business owner. And that's absolutely incorrect. The town is supposed to set an environment for businesses to operate and then it's up to the businesses to do their own advertising, to market their business. If people are coming in your store and they're not buying something that is on you, you have to

look at what you're doing as a business owner and operate effectively and efficiently. And if it's not working, then you have to change. I've struggled in business for 10 years, good times, and bad times. A lot of you business owners have started after 2017 when the economy got better. Going into a hard economy, it's tough. It's really tough. And then you look for people to blame, you look for people to blame. And you have people pointing at the town, it's the town's fault, the town's not doing enough. The town, it's their fault. We're not, businesses are going out, but they're not taking personal accountability. Business owners sitting outside their business five hours a day smoking cigarettes is not an attractive thing. When you go in the stores and there's dirt, dust or you go in the store and you know, you hear the business owner complaining about the town, it sets a negative tone. And then our town gets attention from news media and we go on Facebook and we tear it all down. All the hard work that we're doing, gets torn down. Right now as a business owner on in Mountain View, Main Street gets all the money. All the businesses outside of Main Street get ignored, period. \$140,000 with businesses last year according to one member. But where do we spend money from Rigatoni's, Cousin, Gary's, all the other businesses that generate more tax revenue for our town than Main Street. I've said this, as long as I've been a business owner, all this attention is getting paid to Main Street. You're trying for a 5 million dollar grant to revitalize Main Street and that's not enough for the business owners. It's your fault that they're not successful, even though all the opportunities and advantages that Main Street is given are being ignored. How many businesses have a business plan? You know, if the people believe that the town is responsible for their success, then why doesn't the town dictate what hours they get to work and when are we going to include all the businesses in Pilot Mountain in the money that's being spent?

Paula Stanley, Cook School Road. I would like to say that I have come to town several times wanting to go to Julie's shop or the vitamin shop and can't find anywhere to park. And usually I would circle around and come back and park on the other side, but because of the parklets, they've taken up valuable parking spaces. I don't see people out front of Liv', I'm not going to sit out there and eat a cupcake. And she has some tables in front of her store anyway. So to me that was three spaces that we didn't really to use. The Tilted Ladder has their own outside dining area, so, but then we're taking up three more spaces out in front of their store and then, then at the upper end, that's not as much an issue because there's not as much traffic up there. But again, I would love to see them go away. I just do not think they enhanced the look of the town. I have thought several times I'll come back to Julie's tomorrow or the next day. I don't have time to try to figure out where the park. I just want to run in real quick and grab some things. I appreciate what you're doing. I think we've got a great town. I love Pilot Mountain, but I don't think parklets work for us.

Stephanie Ballowe, Foxy Blue Boutique. This is actually my comments this time. Just really quick, I agree with almost everything that was said. Everybody has touched on everything and everybody's been heartfelt. One thing is, I think this whole town needs a reset between the town and the business owners. There's so much tension between everything. There's so many past stuff, there's so many water under the bridge, it needs a total reset. I want come in here and I'm like, I don't want to sit back here. I don't want to sit up there, I don't want to sit in the middle because I feel both of you all's pain I do. And back with the parking has many parklets here or there. When I was up on the other end of town, I love the parklets that forced everybody up on my end to park. I think the biggest issue with the parking is business owners parking on Main Street. We need to get off Main Street and park in the back. So walk

around or whatever. But in front of my store, Monday through Friday, there are three people who park directly in front of my store just to work in an office all day long. And those parking spots are used from 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM Monday through Friday. So I think as business owners, parking off the street would probably bring more parking than, than other things.

Mayor Cockerham – That will close our public comment portion. I'll ask our board, I know everybody wants to address the comments tonight, but I'll ask them to hold your comments to commissioner and mayor comments.

Consent Agenda

Commissioner Needham made a motion to adopt the consent agenda and it was unanimous.

Board & Committee Reports

Sales for the ABC Store for the month of June 2023 were down about 2.24% but July 2023 sales were up 4.38%.

New Business

FY 2023 Budget Amendment 2

This amendment closes out FY 2022-2023. This reflects the transfer of the money, the loan that was closed with USDA from the Capital Project back into the general fund and accounts for some cost overruns in other departments. Commissioner Kiger made a motion to approve FY 2023 Budget Amendment 2 and it was unanimous.

Recreation and Parks Advisory Board Appointment

Nancy Deaton was one of the original members of the Recreation and Parks Advisory Board. She has since taken a position with the town as the assistant director. There was an application from Tim Childress from the first time that the Board hasn't considered yet. Commissioner Collins made a motion to appoint Tim Childress to the Recreation and Parks Advisory Board and it was unanimous.

ABC Board Appointments

Elton Crutchfield's seat has already expired and Billy Pell's seat will expire in September. The ABC Board is asking that they both be reappointed for three year terms. Mayor Cockerham asked if there had been any other applications for that Board. Mr. Boaz stated that he had not received any for the ABC Board. Commissioner Atkins made a motion to approve the appointments of Elton Crutchfield and Billy Pell for three year terms and it was unanimous.

Administrative Reports

- The town has received the \$500K grant from Parks and Recreation Trust Fund. The town can start that process in October or November.
- New fitness equipment has been installed and the weight room equipment should be finished this week
- The town hall parking lot has been paved and should be open on Monday
- Last fall staff submitted a proposed historic district for West Main Street to the State Historic Preservation Office. The cost to submit the study list application is \$16,500 and no decision needs to be made at this meeting. The benefit for the property owners, no one has to do anything that

they don't want to do, there are no zoning regulations or requirements if the district were to be approved. The district would cover from Key Street to Lynchburg Road.

Mayor Cockerham asked if the issued had been addressed about the brush. Mr. Boaz stated that there were no issues that he is aware of other than a few that were too long for the truck.

Commissioner Collins asked about the paving in front of ESHS. Mr. Boaz stated that the company that paved the parking lot will be back to pave the utility cuts around town.

Nancy Deaton introduced herself to the Board. She has worked with the YMCA for 17 years and teaching since 1997. She lives in King and she really loves this area and thanked the Board for the opportunity.

Randy Ingram introduced himself to the Board. He was the Parks and Recreation Director in Stokes County for 18 year and then worked for the City of Winston-Salem for 12 years running several recreation centers.

Mayor and Commissioner Comments

Commissioner Needham: First off, I want to thank everybody for coming tonight. I really appreciate seeing the community come out and, and talking however they feel about things. As I was speaking to, Commissioner Kiger, maybe we should have more meetings here so we have more space. I wish everybody would've stayed because many people mentioned that we are like family and I want us to be a family and I want us to get along and, and work with each other. It's my firm belief that when the waters are high, we all feel it. I try to do for my community. It doesn't make any difference if it benefits me directly or not. If I'm helping somebody else, then you know, it helps me. So that's just the way I feel about things. I wish everybody would've stayed because that would gave me more of that feeling that we're all going to work together. But I do hope that we are able to meet. My phone number and email are on the website, anytime anybody has anything that they want to talk to me about, I try my best to get back to them and to answer their question and try to find an answer.

Commissioner Kiger: I'm just going to say what Scott said. I wish everybody could have stayed here and I do appreciate all you coming. I like having these meetings much better when people show up because, I really love this town and I know everybody's heard me say it. I love my little town, I do, I have a real passion for it and I love working with people who also have passion for our town. What I want say about tonight's meeting is that, it's real easy to lose perspective when things don't go your way, sometimes we jump to conclusions without asking questions. I think sometimes if we come from a position of curiosity and ask questions, things start to make sense. But there's nobody in this town that wants a business to fail. But I'm a business owner and I believe that when you open a business, you do need a business plan. And if you start out without a business plan, the odds are not great that you're going to be a successful business. And our town has done a lot for the businesses and for building owners. In just six years, I checked with Christy to get some numbers, six years ago we had six businesses on Main Street and now we have 14. And so I think we've come a long way and we've offered a facade grant that's to businesses or the building owners. We have the Downtown Reinvestment grant and we've had two of those approved. We have one pending. Now. I talked to a building owner the other day, didn't know we had it, so we're information and she'll be ready for it. We've offered lunch and learns and hardly anybody shows

up for them. And if the time is not right for the business owners, I don't know that we've had feedback that says, Hey, instead of doing a lunch and learn, learn how about we do a breakfast? But even in the Pilot after hours, we've had very few business owners show up. Most of the people who've shown up for that are outside of our town. About the events, you know, we, we get people to town with events and everything doesn't always work the way we think it's going to because life's a learning process. Having events, having new events, it's all a learning process. We get people to town, we can't make them go into the stores. So if you don't grab onto and jump on the train, then you'll get left behind. And you have to communicate, communication goes both ways. So it's not just for the town. And I'm not saying that we don't have a problem with communication. I know that we do, but we all have to work together on it. When you show up to a meeting only to say all the things that are wrong and then you leave before we can have a conversation, I think that that speaks volumes. But I do want all of them to be successful, and that's all I got to say.

Commissioner Collins: I'm glad you guys came and you know, sometimes growing up here, you don't think about people not knowing the parking lot is behind the building, that's a very good point. We definitely need some more marketing signs or something directing people to that parking lot because we do have adequate parking back there. But they need to know about it. And I'll be honest with you, I didn't even know, I'm not able to come during the day because of work, but about the alleyway, that's the first time I've heard of that.

Mayor Cockerham: We would like to purchase, for the town, that parking lot. So we've been working with them to try to do that because not only do we want to fix that alleyway, but we want to fix the parking lot too. I'll make sure I further address that question too. And I appreciate you coming to the meeting and asking.

Commissioner Collins: And one other thing, about Main Street. I guess a while back when one of the points made about some of the things on social media, to me, I was just like, wow, how did it get to this divide? Just like Stephanie said, there was a divide, it seems like, and I mean, I really want us to work on that relationship both ways. For the business owners, I want all of you to feel like we are honest and approachable. I've not had anybody say anything to me, you know? And I'd be glad to talk because I try to come in everybody's store as much as I can and purchase things when I can. So if you guys are having problems or people listening, I mean, like Scott said, feel free to let us know because somewhere there is a divide and if we can help fix that divide, that's what we want to do. I had a couple of other things. Whoever's putting cat food out at Extreme Marketing is causing a problem with skunks and possums and all kinds of things that are eating that cat food. And the only other thing I had was I know we had, someone ask about water meters. I know we responded to her, but I then realize that my water meter evidently is broken. How would that be resolved billing wise? Because I think that's what Ms. Cook had a question about.

Mr. Boaz stated that if the meter is broken they are still receiving water and receiving a minimum bill, there is no economic impact to the user. We can't go back and bill the customer for water that we didn't capture. There are a number of meters that have failed and they are inside the warranty period. Mueller is replacing them at no cost to the town.

Commissioner Atkins: First of all, I want to thank everybody for coming out and the comments you made. A lot of the comments I was not aware of, other than of course, about the parking. I would like, since it seems like there were so many issues, particularly brought up by Kim, I would like, maybe we could have

a workshop or a roundtable to discuss the issues. I think we need to more or less formally address this, particularly since we're doing so much downtown. I do appreciate all of your comments. A few other things. Welcome to Nancy and Randy. They are doing a great job. Really appreciate you from you guys. We've been to a couple of the car shows. The last one was, was just great. I attended the National Night Out. I was really impressed with how you have so many agencies from all around that participated. The only other thing I have is school started again and down School Street where the soccer field is they are parking on one side.

Mr. Boaz: Soccer games will start next week and the Public Works Department will be putting up something similar to what East Surry did on Old 52 so people will not be able to park there.

Mayor Cockerham: I would like to congratulate our Town and our staff, the PARTF Grant and our course, Dave Diamont and all the other folks that serve on our parks and recreation board. I know we're instrumental in getting that done for our community. A half a million dollars. I know Mike and I talked about it. By the end of this year we'll probably spend the better part of a million dollars toward improvements of the Armfield Center, which is just awesome. This place is a real asset for this community and one that I'm glad that we're able to take ownership of as a community, I'm glad that it's publicly owned because that's, that's what needs to be. It's important for our youth and staying healthy. The senior center provides a lot of great programs for our town as well. Michael, to address the comments made earlier in the meeting about the volunteer fire department, I would like you and I to meet with Damion or whoever else with the fire department. Let's talk about how we might improve communication and whatever else they might need. I want to make sure we keep that line of communication open. We appreciate all that they do for our community. I want to talk about some of the comments tonight. I appreciate everybody coming out to speak, whether they were able to stay or not. I'm going to focus on the people that are in this room still and I appreciate you all willing to stay and hear us out a little bit too. So, I think a lot of the comments were about things that we can improve and we do need to improve. I've talked to our staff about communication and we're trying to make steps to, to streamline that process and make that easier for us. It's a challenge as our downtown grows, that communication that those two staff people we have gets spread out thinner and thinner and I know that's difficult. Jenny, our Main Street Coordinator, is unable to attend due to sickness so we'll make sure we pass along these comments to her as well. Obviously since this is her department we want to make sure that she hears that feedback as well. One of the things that I've had a hard time working, working around, I always like to deal with people very directly. I've always taken every call that comes through my phone number. There's maybe in my six years I've missed a couple of emails, but I always make sure I get back to people. If I ever miss anything from you, email me again because I likely just missed it. I'll make sure I get back to you. All of us up here work full-time as well, so we try to give as much to the community as we can. But, we have to work around our own schedules as well, just like our business owners do. I know it would be tough to come out to meetings, it's a sacrifice you make. I know with business owners we talk a lot about what you can do to stay open later and that sort of thing. But we also realize that as small business owners, you also have to sometimes be home and cook dinner for the kids and do things at home as well. It's, it's hard to change your hours around. So I understand that it can be difficult to participate. But I want you all to do what you can to try to participate more. I want to make sure that everybody knows that they're welcome to come participate. Joanie, I know that you've worked with us quite a bit with the design committee and I appreciate you coming to those meetings. Sometimes I know with this kind of work, it can be frustrating. I'll follow up with Jenny, but I believe the last I heard about the alleyway project, we still have your design on file up. I think everybody still likes that design too. We are waiting on them to finally come around and make a

decision for us. I want to address social media really quickly. Because sometimes I get confronted with an angry person or somebody on Facebook and they're talking about a narrative that I've not been a part of. I know that there are Facebook groups that I'm not a member of and I've had people call me and fuss for me for not responding to those comments. And I said, I've never seen them before because I'm not in that group. So at the same time, while we want to open our doors for our business community to come in, I want to make sure our business community opens their doors for us to come in and make us feel welcome to be a part of your family as well. I know a lot of the comments were things that we can address. We won't be able to address all of it tonight of course, but we'll make sure we get to it. One of the things that I had thought about was there are a lot of things that we've been asked to improve on. And I think we can do those things. There's really no reason why we can't work through these projects and work through communicating those things better. Some of the things that were brought up are things that happened in the past. We can go around and figure out who to blame more from each side and everything else. But I think we would lose something in that process and that's the opportunity for unity. I think that's the most important thing we can have. As we come together to try to make that \$140,000 that we invest of our tax payers money, you know, we can put that toward other things. We fight to have that priority as part of our budget for our town and we forego with things like cutting water rates and lowering taxes because we believe downtown is an important investment. But as we go through that, I want make sure that we're able to have a fresh start and that everybody in this room can come together and find the common ground. Let's find the things we can work on together and, let's have that clean slate because I think this Board, we've been able to, in my time in office and Commissioner Quinn's time was part of that, that Board that established Main Street and helped us get things started. So she deserves credit for what she's done for our community. One of the things that we were able to tackle that was the big elephant in the room was our infrastructure. Our infrastructure was decades behind. A lot of comments we've heard this week was one of concern over raising water rates. And that's a pain that we have been through as well. Any time we raise water rates, we're raising our own rates as well. And I always think about people that are on fixed incomes that might struggle with those rates. But we were able to do so much to address those issues that we are years ahead of where we were supposed to be with our capital improvement project. And if I had to point to one thing out of all the things that we had, of course we had a lot of good expertise. We had good staff that did the job. And, and Michael and, and our staff deserve a lot of credit for the work that they did to find outside funding sources so that we didn't have to raise water rates as much. But at the same time, the reason that this board was able to get so much done was that unity. We stayed committed and we faced that front together. I think there's so much more we can get done if we can find that sense of unity again. We certainly had it at one point with our downtown community and I don't know where it particularly got off track, but I'm saddened that it has. I think it's there and I think we can get it back. Sometimes the progress is super slow, but we're always there and we're always willing to listen to what you've got to say. We've addressed these communication issues with staff and we're working on those as well. We've got to get along to make sure we can move things along. Sometimes we don't always hear all the issues, so I love that you all are coming. I'd rather you all come straight to the school board as Julie said. Come to us and, and let us know if there's an issue and we'll do our best to address it.

Adjourn

Commissioner Atkins made a motion to adjourn and it was unanimous.

Respectfully Submitted:

Attest:

Holly Utt
Town Clerk

Evan Cockerham
Mayor