TOWN OF SYLVA
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR MEETING

Thursday, October 22, 2026, at 9:00 AM

Board Room, 83 Allen Street Sylva, North Carolina

MINUTES

PRESENT: Samuel McGuire, Commissioner
Johnny Phillips, Mayor
Joseph Waldrum, Commissioner
Blitz Estridge, Commissioner
Paige Dowling, Town Manager
Angela Stanley, Town Clerk
Jeff Goss, Attorney

ABSENT: Brad Waldrop, Mayor Pro Tem and Perry Matthews, Commissioner

CALL TO ORDER:
Mayor Phillips called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

STAFF PRESENT: Amanda Murajda (HR Officer), Aimee Sumner (Police Chief), Robbie Carter (Assistant Police Chief), Keith Buchanan (Assistant Fire Chief), Bernadette Peters (Economic Development Director), and Jake Scott (Public Works Director).

VISITORS: Jeremiah Brooks, Maggie Hoke, Mary Estridge, Chuck Hall, Carol Hall, Alicia Stewart, and Emma Stewart.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:
Commissioner McGuire made a motion to approve the agenda. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.

APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA:
Commissioner Waldrum made a motion to approve the consent agenda. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.

PUBLIC COMMENTS: None.

MAYOR'S REPORT: None.

COMMISSIONER'S REPORT:
Commissioner McGuire reported that the Jackson County Historic Preservation committee met on Monday October 19, 2026, and stated the Mountain Heritage Day exhibit was successful. The pictures from this exhibit will be placed on the Jackson County Historic Preservation website. Commissioner Waldrum encouraged the public to vote and to participate in the Art Walk on Thursday October 22, 2026, 5:00 p.m. until 8:00 p.m. in downtown Sylva. Commissioner Estridge noted that he has visited some of the polling sites in Jackson County.

MANAGER'S REPORT: Manager Dowling reported the following:

- Employment Updates:
  The Police Department has a vacant detective position. Jacob Ledford has been hired as a Patrol Officer and will begin with the Town Nov. 2, 2026. Public Works is hiring a maintenance technician. Blake Cabe submitted his resignation from the Fire Department today. His last day will be 11/3/26 before he transfers to Cherokee's Fire Department. Friday is Amanda's last working day with the town before she goes to WCU as the Director of Finance in Advancement. We are thrilled for her new opportunity, we are grateful for her hard work and dedication over the last twelve years, and she will be missed dearly.

- Kristie Walker will begin sometime in November as Sylva's Finance Officer. Kristie is currently the Chief Financial Officer for the Jackson County Public School System. She will bring 11 years' experience in public finance. Kristie grew up in Jackson County, attended WCU, and has a B.S. in both accounting and finance. We are excited for Kristie to join us next month.

- Lynn Bryant's official retirement date is January 1, 2027, but she will use her remaining leave for December and a portion of November. Lynn will retire with 33 years of service to the Town of Sylva. This is an amazing accomplishment.

- The last few weeks and the foreseeable future will be spent transitioning the finance officer's duties. Manager Dowling is grateful to have a team where everyone pitches in and offers to help during a staffing shortage.

- For a FEMA update, Dowling believes we are in the last stage of the EHP process which is great news because most of the permitting has been completed on the Scott Creek Retaining Wall. The bid opening is tentatively scheduled for Feb. 4, 2027. The anticipated construction timeline is March 25, 2027-September 30, 2027.

- Dowling is awaiting signed contracts for Ridgeway Street and Pinnacle Park. Dowling completed the annual site visit for the PARTF grant at Pinnacle Park last week.

- Please plan on the November 12 board meeting to take longer than normal. The Town Board will hear two zoning map amendment applications. The Town's audit presentation will also be held that night.

PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT REPORT: Jake Scott reported the following:

- Awaiting a draft contract from Wurster Construction by the end of day, Thursday October 22, 2026. YRU Contracting has been selected for the PARTF project at Pinnacle Park and is scheduled to start in early December.
- Scott's Creek retaining wall is in the final stages of EHP review
- The JMT construction plans are 95% complete. Awaiting finalized permits from Army Corps, North Carolina DEQ, EHP and Jackson County.
- Ritz parking lot stormwater project RFQ for engineering and design will go out in early November. Start date will possibly be in the Spring of 2027.
- Public works department continues to patch potholes as weather permits.
- Fall leaf collection has commenced and will continue throughout the Fall and Winter of 2026.
- Currently in the interview process for the maintenance technician vacancy.

POLICE DEPARTMENT REPORT: Aimee Sumner, Police Chief, reported on the following:

- Patrol shift is full, now, with the recent hiring of Jacob Ledford. One Detective position vacancy remains.
- 687 actions logged so far this year.
- A total of 15 community care referrals in the last 6 weeks. Noted an increase in domestic violence referrals.
- Collaboration between the police department, Community Care and VAYA on the Crisis Intervention Team Steering Committee to increase CIT training to first responders in Jackson County.
- Working with the Jackson County Department of Public Health to establish a multi-county re-entry program for individuals being released from incarceration back to the community.
- In the final stages of planning for the Western Carolina homecoming parade on Friday October 23, 2026, at 6:00 p.m.
- Assistant Chief Robbie Carter has completed the FAA licensing requirements as a UAS pilot. Assistant Chief Carter is working with the Asheville Police Department's drone unit to implement policy and procedures for the use of the Sylva Police Department's new drone.
- Community response to HOPE, the pink breast cancer patrol car, has been successful. Special thanks were given to Andy Shaw Ford's general manager, Erica Bullock, and her husband DJ Bullock, who painted the patrol car for free.

FIRE DEPARTMENT REPORT: Keith Buchanan, Assistant Fire Chief, reported the following:

- 1628 calls so far this year.
- Fire & Life Safety education conducted for grades K through 5th for Jackson County Schools.

MAIN STREET REPORT: Bernadette Peters, Economic Development Director reported on the following:

- Highway 107 project is in the utility phase. Weekly updates are being sent via email to the largest employers and the Jackson County School system. Updates will also be made to notify the community via Facebook and the Town of Sylva website.
- Weekend cleanup project, for downtown Sylva, was successful. The Sylva Rotary worked on the landscaping while other volunteers picked up litter and removed graffiti.
- Hosting a candy drive for the Treat Street event. Multiple donations drop off sites throughout Sylva.
- Christmas parade applications are available on the Town of Sylva website. The theme this year is A Mountain Storybook Christmas. The Grand Marshal will be The Sylva Herald.
- Christmas tree lighting ceremony December 4, 2026, downtown Sylva.
- November 28, 2026, Sylva Shop And Stroll will begin and continue every Saturday up until Christmas.
- January 19, 2027, Greening Up The Mountains application will be available on the Town of Sylva website.

PLANNING BOARD REPORT: Will meet Thursday, October 22, 2026.

TWSA BOARD REPORT: Manager Dowling reported that the wastewater treatment plant in Dillsboro is progressing and the Clearwell project is almost complete.

PINNACLE PARK REPORT: Manager Dowling, Jake Scott Public Works Director and three members from the Pinnacle Park Foundation. completed the annual site visit for the PARTF grant last week.

NEW BUSINESS:

SELECTION OF MAYOR PRO TEM: A motion was made to name Blitz Estridge Mayor Pro Tem while Commissioner Waldrop is taking a temporary leave of absence to care for his parents. *Commissioner Waldrum made a motion to approve. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.*

JACKSON COUNTY TDA PRESENTATION: Nick Breedlove, Jackson County Tourism Development Authority Executive Director, gave a 2026 update presentation to the Board.

ADJOURNMENT: Commissioner *Estridge made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:35 a.m. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.*

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Johnny Phillips
Mayor

Angela D. Stanley
Town Clerk