



# TOWN OF SYLVA BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS MEETING

Thursday, September 22, 2022 at 9:00 AM  
Board Room, 83 Allen Street Sylva, North Carolina

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## MINUTES

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**PRESENT:** Lynda Sossamon, Mayor  
Mary Gelbaugh, Commissioner  
Ben Guiney, Commissioner  
Greg McPherson, Commissioner  
David Nestler, Vice-Mayor  
Natalie Newman, Commissioner

Paige Dowling, Town Manager  
Amanda Murajda, Town Clerk  
Eric Ridenour, Town Attorney

**ABSENT:**

### CALL TO ORDER

*Mayor Sossamon called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.*

**STAFF PRESENT:** Lynn Bryant (Finance Officer), Jake Scott (Public Works Director), Mike Beck (Fire Chief) and Chris Hatton (Police Chief).

**VISITORS:** Dave Russell

### APPROVAL OF AGENDA

*Commissioner Nestler made a motion to approve the agenda. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.*

### PUBLIC COMMENTS

None.

### MAYOR'S REPORT

Mayor Sossamon reported that she attended the NC Mayors Association meeting in Greensboro, NC. There will be an upcoming meeting of the association in Hendersonville, NC.

### COMMISSIONER'S REPORT

Commissioner Nestler mentioned that he believed there were issues with the current sidewalk policy and that it was time to review the policy. He noted that one problem is the continuous increase in the cost of constructing a sidewalk. Commissioner Guiney added his support for the sidewalk review. Guiney also thanked everyone for their services during the Sylva Pride event. He reminded everyone that Covid booster shots are available and that there will be a drive-thru vaccine clinic at the Health Department on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 2:00 - 6:00 p.m. for flu and covid shots. Guiney also noted that he had received complaints on the bathrooms at Poteet Park and would like to see them updated and asked that staff look at funding options. Commissioner McPherson offered his support for the Poteet Park restrooms. He added that the Art and Design Committee would be hosting a skate park theme show on September 30, 2022, and October 1, 2022, from 6:00 - 9:00 p.m. as a fundraiser for a larger skatepark. Commissioner Newman offered her support for review of the sidewalk ordinance and Poteet Park restroom updates.

**MANAGER'S REPORT:** Manager Dowling reported the following:

- Tax bills for 2022 have been mailed.
- Town decorations will be put up ahead of Mountain Heritage Day.
- The skate ramp parts have been delivered and Jake Scott is working to have power and security cameras installed.
- The cost for construction on Allen Street and Bryson Park is over budget. The shortfall is approximately \$618,435. Staff is working with engineers and the construction company to set prioritization for a closer estimate.

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- The construction date for R-5600 (NC107) is now set for 2025 due to right-of-way and appraisal processes taking longer.
- Auditors have completed their field work for the FY2021-2022 annual audit.
- The RFP for the Bridge Park stormwater project is due September 30, 2022.
- Walk for Hope is October 1, 2022.

**PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT REPORT:** Jake Scott reported the following:

- The department will be working on the skate park implementation and assembly.
- Scott is working on a rural transformation grant for Bridge Park
- The rooftop HCAV unit at the police department has been installed.
- Allen Street bridge repairs will be completed soon and are due to the annual bridge inspection.
- On October 6, 2022, Public Works staff will be participating in Hands on Jackson.

**POLICE DEPARTMENT REPORT:** Chris Hatton reported the following:

- He reviewed calls for services
- He reminded everyone of Walk for Hope on October 1, 2022.
- A UNC SOG criminal justice innovation lab is working on case studies across the state with social worker-based programs. They will interview Sylva Police Department personnel and may become a case study.
- The current homeless situation is taking up a lot of the police department time. There is a definite increase in the area. The community care program is helping, and the department is meeting weekly with community stakeholders on ways to help.

**FIRE DEPARTMENT REPORT:** Mike Beck reported the following:

- There have been 856 calls since January 1, 2022.
- Paid staff has helped on response time for calls.
- Saturday, September 24, 2022, on Crestview Heights the department will conduct a training burn beginning at 8:00 a.m.
- October 1, 2022, is open house from 12:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.

**MAIN STREET REPORT:** Bernadette Peters reported the following:

- The Main Street program is sponsoring a culinary apprentice program designed to retain staff and elevate the talent in the area.
- There was a great turnout for the Bridge Park Boogie which was a dance for those with disabilities.
- The theme for the 2022 Christmas parade is "My Christmas Story" and the grand marshals will be story builders of Sylva which is a group of individuals who have contributed to the story of downtown sylva through design, building, growth and storytelling.

**PLANNING BOARD REPORT:** Manager Dowling reported that there was no quorum at the September meeting and the board discussed by-laws.

**TWSA BOARD REPORT:** Commissioner Nestler reported that the lift station at Jackson Paper will soon be completed.

**PINNACLE BOARD REPORT:**

Commissioner Nestler reported that he was not at the last meeting, however an RFP for a master plan will soon be out.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **Bridge Park Sculpture Discussion**

Manager Dowling reported the Mr. Sims has offered to loan the Town of Sylva a Purr Pod sculpture. Commissioner McPherson gave a presentation on the sculpture, named Scooby Doo. The sculpture would be on permanent loan to the Town of Sylva. He would like it to be located at Bridge Park. The board discussed the sculpture, where to place it and any legal requirements for a lease. *Commissioner Guiney made a motion to accept the loan of the sculpture and have staff draw up loan paperwork. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.*

### **Resolution for NC Department of Commerce Rural Transformation Grant Fund**

Manager Dowling reported that the resolution is for the Rural Transformation Grant application that the Southwester Commission is administering and will apply for the Town of Sylva. *Commissioner Nestler made a motion to approve the resolution. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.*

**Proclamation for Breast Cancer Awareness Month**

Mayor Sossamon read the proclamation for Breast Cancer Awareness Month. Everyone is reminded to wear pink on October 21, 2022. Commissioner Gelbaugh made a motion to approve the proclamation. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.

**Police Department Take-home Vehicle Policy**

Manager Dowling reported that this is an update to the board approved policy from 2016. The current housing shortage has created problems for employees to find housing within the required limits. The proposal is to change the requirement from living within 10 miles of city limits to being able to arrive at work within 30 minutes to have a take-home vehicle. This is coming before the board because it was originally approved by the board. There is also a budget impact for driving farther.

*Commissioner Guiney made a motion to approve the changes to the take-home vehicle policy. The motion carried with a 4-1 vote. Voting in the affirmative were Commissioners Gelbaugh, Guiney, McPherson and Newman. Voting against was Commissioner Nestler.*

*Commissioner Guiney made a motion to make the police department take-home vehicle policy an administrative issue rather than board issue. The motion carried with a 4-1 vote. Voting in the affirmative were Commissioners Gelbaugh, Guiney, McPherson and Newman. Voting against was Commissioner Nestler.*

**CLOSED SESSION:** *Commissioner Gelbaugh made a motion to enter closed session pursuant to NCGS. 143-318-11(a)(3) to consult with the town attorney at 10:40 a.m. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.*

*Commissioner Guiney made a motion to come out of closed session. The motion carried with a unanimous vote and the Board entered into regular session at 11:22 a.m. No action was taken during closed session.*

**ADJOURNMENT:** *Commissioner Guiney made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 11:23 a.m. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.*

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Lynda Sossamon  
Mayor

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Amanda W. Murajda  
Town Clerk