



TOWN OF SYLVA BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS MEETING

Thursday, March 21, 2024 at 9:00 AM
Board Room, 83 Allen Street Sylva, North Carolina

MINUTES

PRESENT: Blitz Estridge, Commissioner
Mary Gelbaugh, Mayor Pro-Tem
Mark Jones, Commissioner
Natalie Newman, Commissioner
Johnny Phillips, Mayor
Paige Dowling, Town Manager
Amanda Murajda, Town Clerk
Eric Ridenour, Town Attorney

ABSENT: Brad Waldrop, Commissioner

CALL TO ORDER

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

STAFF PRESENT: Jake Scott (Public Works Director), Bernadette Peters (Main Street Director), Keith Buchanan (Assistant Fire Chief) and Chris Hatton (Police Chief).

VISITORS: Dustin Hayes, Destri Leger, Terri Clark, Leigh Ann Young, Lauren Baxley, Beth Baxley, Burgin Mackey, and Keith Blaine.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

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

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Leigh Ann Young shared a letter with the board in support of the Sylva Pride Parade Event signed by several downtown businesses. Burgin Mackey, coordinator of Sylva Pride, spoke in support of the Sylva Pride Parade Event.

MAYOR'S REPORT

Mayor Phillips reported that he reached out to Jackson Paper and they are willing to give tours to the public when requested.

COMMISSIONER'S REPORT

Commissioner Gelbaugh apologized for missing the last meeting to attend a school function for her son. She reminded everyone of the UCM Superhero Stroll happening on Saturday, March 23, 2024. Commissioner Jones extended his thoughts to Commissioner Waldrop's father during a time of illness. Commissioner Estridge thanked Jay Coward for sending the board the history of Pinnacle Park.

MANAGER'S REPORT: Manager Dowling reported the following:

- The Bridge Park project is still on track. Bioretention is being installed this week. Planting should begin April 1st. Paving will happen around April 15th.
- Dowling has finalized a written agreement for the cat sculpture's permanent loan at Bridge Park.
- The Chamber's Friends Night Out is March 28th from 12:00 p.m.-6:30 p.m. downtown.
- Town offices will be closed March 29th in observance of Good Friday.

PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT REPORT: Jake Scott reported the following:

- Scott is working with Bliss Products on finalizing the playground equipment order.
- Public Works is working on patching pot holes and cleaning out drains and ditches.

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POLICE DEPARTMENT REPORT: Chris Hatton reported the following:

- The department is currently planning for Town events coming up.
- They still have 3 job vacancies.
- There will be a Community Care symposium on March 4th.
- Hatton updated the board on calls for service.

FIRE DEPARTMENT REPORT: Keith Buchanan reported on the following:

- Just over 300 calls so far in 2024.
- Reminder everyone, in light of several brush fires recently, that the area is still dry.

MAIN STREET REPORT: Bernadette Peters reported the following:

- Greening Up the Mountains is full for all vendors. Still need volunteers.
- Updated Highway 107 project information is on the Town's website.
- Attended the Main Street Conference in Goldsboro.
- Received 2 grants for the Main Street work.

TWSA BOARD REPORT: Manager Dowling reported that the Clearwell project will be bid in June and they are currently working on the budget.

NEW BUSINESS

VANCE STREET PRESENTATION TO FAMILY: Manager Dowling read a resolution of appreciation for Mr. R.O. Vance. Mayor Phillips and board members presented the family with the resolution and street sign.

PINNACLE PARK REPORT: Jay Coward gave a report on the history of Pinnacle Park and the Foundation's mission and purpose.

SYLVA PRIDE EVENT APPLICATION: Manager Dowling gave a brief history in the Town Board has always approved temporary road closure permits to send to NCDOT for events that stop, block, or detour traffic on state-maintained roads. In 2022, Town staff updated the park application and procedure for outdoor special events. Town staff started working on special event changes in September 2022 because of increasingly large events being held at Bridge Park and requests for street closures along with 5k races. During the first Pride event, a car did not realize a parade was happening and followed closely behind the crowd before being stopped. During Walk for Hope, a car wasn't aware the walk was happening and started to back out of their parking space on Main Street. Town staff realized they needed to work to make these events safer. The revised outdoor special even application encourages bigger events to take place at Bridge Park due to safety and constraints on manpower. Larger events increase the need for more resources. Town staff can approve park rentals, but the authority to request closing the street still rests with the board. Currently, the Board approves road closure permits for the Christmas Parade, Greening Up, WCU Homecoming (WCU PD also works this detour), Treat Street, and July 4th (this is a temporary detour during the fireworks, if necessary). Walk for Hope and the Veteran's Day events have both been moved to Bridge Park to limit traffic disruptions.

Pride is requesting the two-block march on Main Street as they have done the last two years. The park rental for Pride is approved, but the Town Board will vote on approving the march only. Pride volunteers will staff the other events that weekend. Having a two-block march would involve staff time for planning, coordination, and overtime the day of the event, but a total road closure where we clear the street would use all our resources for a day like the Christmas Parade. The Board needs to vote on the temporary street closure resolution to submit to NCDOT for the same route Pride marched the last two years. When the Town submits the resolution to NCDOT, it is saying that the Town is responsible for managing the road closure and accepting liability. The Board also needs to decide whether to charge Pride for the Town resources involved in the road closure. The Board has charged groups in the past for large events, but this has mainly been for security and traffic control.

Mayor Phillips asked for the pleasure of the board. *Commissioner Jones made a motion to deny the application for the parade.* Board members had discussions in regard to the logistics of the parade, detour routes, etc., and general conversation. Commissioner Newman asked if the application could be postponed to a future meeting for further conversation or could a different application be submitted. Newman asked Commissioner Jones if he would amend his motion to accommodate a future meeting. Jones did not want to change his motion. *After discussion, Mayor Phillips continued that there was a motion on the floor and asked for votes. The motion carried with a 3-1 vote. Voting in the affirmative were Commissioners Estridge, Gelbaugh and Jones. Voting against the motion was Commissioner Newman.*

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DOWNTOWN PUBLIC RESTROOM—EXTERIOR PAINT COLOR: Mayor Phillips noted that at the last meeting the board reviewed the colors for the restrooms and there seemed to be a consensus of battleship gray. This would stand with the historical pictures of the old depot. *Commissioner Estridge made a motion to use the battleship gray color for the depot. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.*

ADJOURNMENT: *Commissioner Jones made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 10:27 a.m. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.*

Johnny Phillips
Mayor

Amanda W. Murajda
Town Clerk