



TOWN OF SYLVA BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS REGULAR MEETING

Thursday, March 27, 2025 at 9:00 AM
Board Room, 83 Allen Street Sylva, North Carolina

MINUTES

PRESENT: Jonathan Brown, Commissioner
Blitz Estridge, Commissioner
Mary Gelbaugh, Mayor Pro-Tem
Johnny Phillips, Mayor
Brad Waldrop, Commissioner

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

ABSENT:

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), Mike Beck (Fire Chief), Robbie Carter (Assistant Police Chief) and Chris Hatton (Police Chief).

VISITORS: Christine Taber, Taylor Armstrong, Joe Waldrum, Tom Howard, Hannah Yarrington and Keith Blaine.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

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

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Christine Taber addressed the board about Hurricane Helene response.

MAYOR'S REPORT

Mayor Phillips has worked with Jackson Paper to clean up Chipper Curve Road. He attended the recent Southwest Commission meeting.

COMMISSIONER'S REPORT

Commissioner Gelbaugh mentioned thoughts for all those affected by recent forest fires in WNC. Commissioner Estridge thanked Tyler Watras for his work painting the Sylva Supply sign. Commissioner Brown thanked everyone for their condolences for his mother's passing. He noted that the Sylva Supply sign should be completed in the next week.

MANAGER'S REPORT: Manager Dowling reported the following:

- Employment Update: The Police Department is still conducting interviews for the vacant officer position. Public Works is advertising for a vacant maintenance technician position.
- Bryson Park renovations continue and the siding on the building will be painted the same grey as the public restroom. The Town is aiming to open the park in June. Concrete work will be the determining factor.
- There is a vacancy on the Planning Board for the remainder of a term that will end December 31, 2026. Applications are being accepted.
- Greening Up the Mountains is Saturday, April 26th from 10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. There will be a ribbon cutting ceremony at 2:00 p.m. for the public restroom.

PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT REPORT: Jake Scott reported the following:

- Volunteer work to clean up flower beds and other areas around town will take place on Saturday, March 30, 2025.
- Preliminary cost estimates are expected soon for repairs of the retaining wall behind Town Hall.
- Assault on Blackrock race was a success.

POLICE DEPARTMENT REPORT: Chris Hatton, Police Chief, reported the following:

- Still have one personnel vacancy.

- Reviewed calls for service.

FIRE DEPARTMENT REPORT: Mike Beck, Fire Chief, reported the following:

- Calls for service have increased and currently stand at 346 since January.
- The Sylva FD has been working a significant forest fire in the Kitchens Branch area along with the NC Forest Service and other local emergency agencies.
- The Sylva FD has also sent crews to Polk County and surrounding areas to help with much larger forest fires due to such dry conditions.

MAIN STREET REPORT: Bernadette Peters reported the following:

- The Jackson County Business Appreciation dinner was held with over 200 attendees from across the county.
- Peters attended the NC Main Street Conference with three members of the MSSA board.

PLANNING BOARD REPORT:

- The Planning Board met February 27, 2025, to review two zoning map amendment requests.
- There will be no March meeting.

TWSA BOARD REPORT:

- A resolution to establish repairs to the wastewater treatment plant near Harolds Supermarket was approved.
- Clearwell plant will have concrete work beginning in early April.

PINNACLE PARK REPORT:

- Board is working with master plan and grant funding.

NEW BUSINESS

LOAN AGREEMENT FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT DISASTER RESPONSE ACTIVITIES: The State Treasurer's office is disbursing principal-only loans, without interest, to local governments impacted by Hurricane Helene. The Town was preapproved for \$203,928.93 based off the damage inventory that we have submitted in our FEMA/NC Emergency Management grant portal. The cashflow loan must be used for disaster response activities and must be repaid when we receive funding from FEMA. The schedule in the agreement is 10% due on June 30, 2027, and 20%, 30% and 40% would be due in full in the 5th year, but we will pay it back as soon as we receive funding from FEMA. *Commissioner Waldrop made a motion to approve the agreement, and the motion carried with a unanimous vote.*

PINNACLE PARK MASTER PLAN ADOPTION: Equinox presented the draft master plan agreement to the Town Board around this time last year. The final version includes more detailed recommendations, a strategic plan for implementation, a rendering for the trailhead kiosks, and cost estimates. If the Board approves the final master plan for Pinnacle Park, Equinox will submit the PARTF application again for this round of funding. The grant cycle deadline is May 1, 2025. *Commissioner Estridge made a motion to approve the master plan. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.*

BOARD OF COMMISSIONER VACANT SEAT APPOINTMENT: Board members were given copies of application for those interested in serving on the Town Board in the vacant seat at the March 13, 2025, board meeting. Those applicants included Taylor Armstrong, Nathan Clapsadle, Tom Howard and Joseph Waldrum. Board members were given a ballot that included the name of each applicant. They were instructed to choose one applicant and sign the ballot. Ballots were read for votes as the following:

Commissioner Brown—Joseph Waldrum
Commissioner Estridge—Joseph Waldrum
Commissioner Gelbaugh—Joseph Waldrum
Commissioner Waldrop—Joseph Waldrum

By vote of ballot, Joseph Waldrum is appointed to the Town of Sylva Board of Commissioners. His swearing-in ceremony will be on April 10, 2025.

ADJOURNMENT: Commissioner Waldrop made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:36 a.m. *The motion carried with a unanimous vote.*