



TOWN OF SYLVA BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS REGULAR MEETING

Thursday, February 26, 2026, at 9:00 AM
Board Room, 83 Allen Street Sylva, North Carolina

MINUTES

PRESENT: Perry Matthews, Commissioner
Samuel McGuire, Commissioner
Johnny Phillips, Mayor
Joseph Waldrum, Commissioner
Brad Waldrop, Mayor Pro Tem

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

ABSENT: Blitz Estridge, Commissioner

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Pro Tem Waldrop called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

STAFF PRESENT: Mike Beck (Fire Chief), Robbie Carter (Asst. Police Chief), Chris Hatton (Police Chief) and Jake Scott (Public Works Director).

VISITORS: Eric Romanisyn, Ken Brown, Katie Price and Alex Pickard.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Commissioner Waldrum 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:

Mayor Phillips noted prior discussions with Public Works Director Jake Scott regarding the potential installation of a small guardrail at the switchback curve on top of King's Mountain due to safety concerns. The town manager advised that the item has already been included in budget worksheets and would be most appropriate for discussion during the upcoming budget work session.

COMMISSIONER'S REPORT:

Commissioner McGuire thanked staff, volunteers, the American Red Cross, and The Blood Connection for organizing a recent blood drive. He also gave recognition to the Jackson County Education Foundation and volunteers organizing the upcoming prom fundraiser. Funds raised will support local teachers and students by providing resources and educational opportunities. Commissioner Waldrop reported that the recent Jackson County Public Library board meeting was cancelled due to a medical procedure for Director Tracy Fitzmorris. The future of the current board structure remains uncertain as the library system undergoes organizational changes. Waldrop expressed appreciation for Tracy Fitzmorris, recognizing her 30 years of service to the library system. He also provided an update from the Mountain Projects Board of Directors meeting. Mountain Projects is a valuable community organization providing assistance with food support, housing, childcare, and transportation. Commissioner Matthews announced the upcoming grand opening of the Sunrise Jackson County Recovery Community Center on March 11, 2026, above Blue Ridge Bootleg Coffee.

MANAGER'S REPORT: Manager Dowling reported the following:

- Jackson County TDA and the Jackson County Commissioners approved the Town's grant application for \$341,322 to match the PARTF funds at the County Commissioners meeting.
- The Town received notice to proceed from the Recreational Trails Program, so the contractor has started the trails in Pinnacle Park. The work is expected to take 40 days.
- TWSA's annual meeting is March 3rd with a social at 4:00 p.m. and the meeting at 4:30 p.m.
- Jackson County's joint meeting with municipalities is March 10th at 6:00 p.m. at the Burrell Building at SCC.

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- Scotts Creek & FEMA: The FEMA Public Assistance application is still pending review under Environmental and Historic Preservation. This portion of the review period usually takes several weeks. S&ME completed their borings the week of February 13th and soil samples have been sent to the lab.

PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT REPORT: Jake Scott reported the following:

- Poteet Park Restroom Project remains on schedule--framing, plumbing, and electrical work are complete; fixtures and door frames are on site and fence upgrades have been completed.
- Scotts Creek Retaining Wall Project--tree removal is scheduled for the following week. This will be the first major physical step for the project.
- Recreational Trails Program (RTP)--contractors began work immediately after the notice to proceed and completion is expected by early spring.
- Fisher Creek Dam--a site meeting was held with the engineering firm S&ME. A report is being prepared detailing costs for either repairing or decommissioning the dam.
- Assault on Black Rock Event is scheduled for March 21. Public Works crews will maintain the trail prior to the event.
- Municipal Drive/Vance Street road resurfacing is planned from the fire department to Grindstaff Cove Road once weather conditions allow.

POLICE DEPARTMENT REPORT: Robbie Carter, Asst. Police Chief, reported the following:

- Reviewed calls for service.
- Lieutenant Amy Sumner completed the FBI Leadership Institute Supervisor program.
- Detective Chris Cobb received his Advanced Law Enforcement Certificate, the highest certification level in North Carolina.
- The department implemented **Axon AI Assistant technology** integrated with body cameras. Capabilities include real-time translation in 76 languages and assistance identifying hazardous materials placards and evacuation distances.

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

- A total of 219 calls for service so far in 2026.

MAIN STREET REPORT: Manager Dowling, reported the following:

- Hosted a We Speak event with the Mountain West Partnership and economic development partners.
- Greening Up the Mountains Festival-- Vendor spaces are full and volunteers are still needed.
- Participated in Western Carolina University College of Business accreditation review discussions highlighting partnerships with local businesses.
- Attended a housing stakeholder meeting related to the Jackson County housing plan.

PLANNING BOARD REPORT: None.

TWSA BOARD REPORT: None.

NEW BUSINESS

WATR—WATERSHED ACTION PLAN PRESENTATION: Katie Price from the Watershed Association presented findings related to a Watershed Action Plan for Scotts Creek and Savannah Creek. Both creeks have been federally listed as impaired since 2008 due to fecal coliform bacteria levels. Monitoring indicates frequent exceedances of recommended recreation safety thresholds. Data suggests the primary sources include human-related contamination, domestic animals, aging septic systems, and sediment runoff. Proposed solutions include septic system repair and replacement programs, and agricultural best management practices, stormwater management improvements, etc. Completion of the Nine Element Watershed Plan will allow access to additional grant funding for remediation projects. The plan has been submitted to the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality for review. Town officials expressed interest in exploring potential partnerships and grant opportunities once the plan is approved.

AUDIT RFP ADDENDUM: As of the February 13, 2026, deadline, the Town received one audit proposal. In order to promote full and open competition and ensure the Town has adequate opportunity for reviewing qualified firms, the Town is extending the deadline for submission of proposals until March 6th at 4:00 p.m. *Commissioner Waldrop made a motion to authorize the extension and reopening of the audit services RFP deadline to March 6, 2026 at 4:00 p.m. to promote competitive participation. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.*

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SMALL BUSINESS INFRASTRUCTURE GRANT PROGRAM RESOLUTION: This resolution allows the Town to apply for a grant from the NC Commerce Department's Rural Engagement and Investment Program for assistance with a stormwater project in the Ritz lot. This grant would repair infrastructure and improve business access. The Town plans to apply for \$952,760.00. A local match is not required. Bernadette Peters has been working with the Southwestern Commission on this grant application. *Commissioner Waldrum made a motion to approve the resolution. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.*

CLOSED SESSION: Commissioner *McGuire* made a motion to enter closed session at 10:07 a.m. pursuant to NCGS. 143-318-11(a)(3) and (6) for personnel and to consult with attorney. *The motion carried with a unanimous vote.*

Commissioner McGuire made a motion to come out of closed session. The motion carried with a unanimous vote and the Board entered into regular session at 11:14 a.m. No action was taken during closed session.

ADJOURNMENT: Commissioner *Waldrop* made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 11:15 a.m. *The motion carried with a unanimous vote.*

Johnny Phillips
Mayor

Amanda W. Murajda
Town Clerk