



# TOWN OF SYLVA BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS MEETING

Thursday, April 25, 2024 at 9:00 AM  
Board Room, 83 Allen Street Sylva, North Carolina

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## MINUTES

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**PRESENT:** Blitz Estridge, Commissioner  
Mary Gelbaugh, Mayor Pro-Tem  
Mark Jones, Commissioner  
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) and Chris Hatton (Police Chief).

**VISITORS:** Luther Jones, Rachel Byrd, Ann Melton and Kris Alexander.

### APPROVAL OF AGENDA

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

### APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA

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

### PUBLIC COMMENTS

Luther Jones addressed the board and thanked everyone for their work on Bridge Park. He suggested adding a marker to the new downtown bathroom explaining the center of town location.

### MAYOR'S REPORT

Mayor Phillips reported that he would like to have a Business Development Board established for property owners who own property in the city limits but do not live and vote inside city limits. This would be a 5-member board appointed by the Town Board.

### COMMISSIONER'S REPORT

Commissioner Gelbaugh noted that she had been contacted about the train cars outside of Jackson Paper having graffiti on them and the possibility of having them become professional murals, ADA compliance at Bridge Park and she would like the Town to consider changes to Treat Street. Commissioner Waldrop liked the idea of changes to Treat Street. He reminded the board about a ceremony on May 4<sup>th</sup> at Innovation Station for the installation of a highway marker for the Cowee Tunnel Nineteen. Commissioner Jones noted the fundraiser for the Karup family was a success. He also announced that the Tim Haskett family had agreed to work with the Town of Sylva on a land lease for installation of a Pinnacle Park sign at the entrance to Fisher Creek. Commissioner Estridge commented that Bridge Park looked great after construction, and he was looking forward to Greening Up the Mountains.

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

- Commissioner Vacancy: Timeline for filling the board vacancy.  
April 18 & 25, 2024—Advertise vacancy in the Sylva Herald  
May 1, 2024—Applications for Board vacancy due to Town Hall  
May 9, 2024—Applications will be distributed to Board for review in open session. *Candidate's names will not be shared before the May 9, 2024 meeting.*  
May 23, 2024—Board of Commissioners will vote by ballot to fill the vacancy.

*Ballots will contain the board member's name and a list of candidates to choose from. **The announcement of the vote must be public including board member's name and selection choice.***

May 30, 2024—newly appointed member will be sworn in.

- **Employment Update:** Assistant Police Chief John Thomas has been hired to be the Police Chief in Claremont. We would like to extend our most sincere congratulations to John. We thank him for his service to Sylva and wish him the best in his promotion.
- **Bridge Park Update:** This project is almost complete. Dowling recognized and thanked the TDA for their investment in Bridge Park, as well as the Southwestern Commission for their assistance with the grant application.
- **Public Restroom Update:** The unsuitable soil has been stabilized so you will see progress soon.
- Greening Up the Mountains is Saturday from 10:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m.

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

- The department is busy preparing for Greening Up the Mountains

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

- Assistant Police Chief John Thomas has accepted a position with Claremont Police Department.
- They still have 3 job vacancies.
- The department is busy preparing for Greening Up the Mountains.

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

- Just over 430 calls so far in 2024.

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

- Reviewed Greening Up the Mountains parking.
- Unveiled a façade grant program recently.
- Thank you to the Chamber of Commerce for hosting Friends Night Out

**TWSA BOARD REPORT:** Manager Dowling reported that bids for a Cashiers project came in much higher than expected so they are evaluating options.

#### **NEW BUSINESS**

**CIRCLES OF HOPE—ANN MELTON:** Ann Melton, founder of Circles of Hope, addressed the board and gave a presentation on what the Circles of Hope program is about, services offered, and clients served.

**PINNACLE PARK MASTER PLAN:** Mayor Phillips noted the plan had been reviewed at the previous meeting. *Commissioner Gelbaugh made a motion to approve the Pinnacle Park Master Plan. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.*

**ABC BOARD TERM LIMITS:** Mayor Phillips explained that the current ABC board would like to remain as is to maintain consistency during the Highway 107 construction and time of revenue concern. Currently, board members can serve a maximum of three, 3-year terms on the ABC board. Phillips would like to see the term limits removed. *Commissioner Jones made a motion to remove the term limits of the ABC Board. The Town Board discussed options for the ABC Board. Commissioner Gelbaugh noted that she was a part of the original board who approved term limits. Commissioner Waldrop added that he generally supports term limits. Gelbaugh suggested keeping the term limits but extending them to four, 3-year terms which would see the town through the Highway 107 project. Commissioner Jones rescinded his original motion and made a motion to extend the term limits of the ABC Board to four, 3-year terms. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.*

**ABC BOARD APPOINTMENT:** *Commissioner Gelbaugh made a motion to appoint Maurice Moody to a fourth term on the ABC Board. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.*

**ABC BOARD CHAIRMAN APPOINTMENT:** The ABC merger agreement states that the Chairman will be jointly appointed by both the Town and County boards annually. *Commissioner Gelbaugh made a motion to appoint David Noland as Chairman of the ABC Board for a one-year term to expire June 30, 2025. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.*

**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 and NCGS. 143-318-11(a)(6) personnel at 9:54 a.m. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.*

Regular Board Meeting April 25, 2024

*Commissioner Waldrop made a motion to come out of closed session. The motion carried with a unanimous vote and the Board entered into regular session at 11:00 a.m. No action was taken during closed session.*

**ADJOURNMENT:** *Commissioner Waldrop made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 11:00 a.m. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.*

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Johnny Phillips  
Mayor

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Amanda W. Murajda  
Town Clerk