



# TOWN OF SYLVA BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS REGULAR MEETING

Thursday, January 11, 2024 at 5:30 PM  
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  
Natalie Newman, Commissioner  
Johnny Phillips, Mayor  
Brad Waldrop, Commissioner

Richard Hicks, Interim Town Manager  
Amanda Murajda, Town Clerk  
Eric Ridenour, Town Attorney

**ABSENT:**

### CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Nestler called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m, following the Board of Adjustment meeting.

**STAFF PRESENT:** Lynn Bryant (Finance Officer), Robbie Carter (Police Lieutenant) and Chris Hatton (Police Chief).

**VISITORS:** Rose Bauguess, Russ Harris, LeNay Shuler, Luther Jones, Carol Hall and Chuck Hall.

### APPROVAL OF AGENDA

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

### APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA

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

**PUBLIC COMMENTS:** David Nestler addressed the board and expressed his support for appointing Commissioner Newman to the NC Home Consortium board.

**MAYOR'S REPORT:** Mayor Phillips noted that he would like to see the brick wall at the Police Department repaired and he is willing to volunteer with others to make that happen. He also added that there was a need for guardrail on Kings Mountain. He noted that he had been approached by a few citizens requesting the Town look at improvements to a dog park. Phillips would like the sidewalk ordinance reviewed in the near future.

**COMMISSIONER'S REPORT:** Commissioner Gelbaugh reported that she had a conversation with Motion Makers who said that the skatepark was in need of repair. Commissioner Jones followed up on signage for Pinnacle Park on Fisher Creek and would like the Town to investigate the need. Commissioner Estridge reported that he recently met with Bernadette Peters regarding the Mainstreet program as well as he toured the Fire Department with Mike Beck.

**MANAGER'S REPORT:** Richard Hicks, Interim Town Manager, reported the following:

- The first budget meeting will be January 25, 2024
- The Fire Department will be conducting training burns in the next few weeks.
- The Police Department still has 2 vacancies.
- Town Hall will be closed on January 15, 2024 for the Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday.

### NEW BUSINESS

**APPOINTMENT TO THE RURAL PLANNING ORGANIZATION (RPO):** Russ Harris and Rose Bauguess from the Southwestern Commission addressed the board and discussed the mission and purpose of the RPO. Commissioner Gelbaugh made a motion to appoint Mayor Phillips to the RPO. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.

Regular Board Meeting January 11, 2024

**SOUTHWESTERN NC HOME CONSORTIUM BOARD OF DIRECTORS:** Mayor Phillips noted that Commissioner Newman had an interest in serving on this board. *Commissioner Jones made a motion to appoint Commissioner Newman to the Southwestern NC Home Consortium Board. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.*

**HISTORIC PRESERVATION BOARD APPOINTMENT:** Mayor Phillips reported that Luther Jones wished to be reappointed to the Historic Preservation Board. *Commissioner Estridge made a motion to reappoint Luther Jones to the Historic Preservation Board. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.*

**PUBLIC NOTICE: BRYSON PARK PLAYGROUND EQUIPMENT SURVEY OPEN:** Mayor Phillips reported that the Bryson Park Playground Equipment is now open to the public.

**SCHEDULE PUBLIC HEARING FOR THE BRYSON PARK PLAYGROUND RENOVATIONS:** *Commissioner Newman made a motion to schedule the public hearing for February 8, 2024. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.*

**REQUEST FOR AUTHORIZATION TO JOIN THE NATIONAL COOPERATIVE PURCHASING ALLIANCE AND THE PURCHASING COOPERATIVE OF AMERICA:** Interim Manager Hicks explained the purchasing alliance process and suggested it would be beneficial for the Town in light of upcoming projects. North Carolina General Statutes allow for purchases made through a competitive bidding group purchasing program, which is a formally organized program that offers competitively obtained purchasing services at discount prices to two or more public agencies. The two purchasing programs used by numerous local governments in North Carolina are the National Cooperative Purchasing Alliance and the Purchasing Cooperative of America. Both of these agencies routinely prepare detailed bid documents for an extensive list of materials and equipment. As a member, a local government is allowed to purchase from vendors that have gone through the bid process. The bid price on an item is provided to all of the members of the organization. Staff is requesting authorization to join both agencies. There is no cost to join. By joining both agencies, staff will be able to get competitive prices on items such as playground equipment at a nationally competitive price. This would save the staff a tremendous amount of time by not having to develop our own specifications and bid documents. Selecting playground equipment is comparable to selecting oranges to tangerines with a few different selections of apples being thrown in. Both agencies have already done all of the hard work with professionals that are familiar with playground equipment. This will allow the staff to provide the Board with two nationally competitive proposals for the Bryan Park improvements. The same process can be used for other equipment and materials in the future the Town may be interested in purchasing.

*Commissioner Waldrop made a motion to authorize the Town of Sylva to join both organizations. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.*

**REQUEST FOR STAFF TO DEVELOP A PROPOSED PANHANDLING ORDINANCE:** Mayor Phillips opened the discussion and noted that he believed the Town needed to look at panhandling and solicitation. He would like the board to approach carefully a way to regulate panhandling.

*Commissioner Estridge made a motion request that staff draft an ordinance regarding panhandling. Mayor Phillips asked for discussion.*

Commissioner Waldrop expressed his concerns with the ordinance. Commissioner Jones added that the ordinance needed to also address safety. Commissioner Newman questioned the goal of the ordinance. The board continued to discuss these suggestions. Commissioner Gelbaugh asked if it should be more of a public conduct and solicitation ordinance.

*Commissioner Estridge withdrew his motion. Commissioner Gelbaugh made a motion to request that staff propose a solicitation ordinance. The motion carried with a 4-1 vote. Voting in the affirmative were Commissioners Estridge, Gelbaugh, Jones and Newman. Voting against the motion was Commissioner Waldrop.*

**ADJOURNMENT:** *Commissioner Waldrop made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:22 p.m. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.*

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Johnny Phillips  
Mayor

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Amanda W. Murajda  
Town Clerk