



# TOWN OF SYLVA BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS REGULAR MEETING

Thursday, November 13, 2025 at 5:30 PM  
Board Room, 83 Allen Street Sylva, North Carolina

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## MINUTES

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**PRESENT:** Jonathan Brown, Commissioner  
Blitz Estridge, Commissioner  
Mary Gelbaugh, Mayor Pro-Tem  
Johnny Phillips, Mayor  
Joseph Waldrum, Commissioner

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 5:30 p.m.*

**STAFF PRESENT:** Lynn Bryant (Finance Officer), Keith Buchanan (Asst. Fire Chief), Robbie Carter (Asst. Police Chief) and John Jeleniewski (Jackson County Planner).

**VISITORS:** Sheila Gahagan, Robert Hunt, Sam McGuire, Natalie Newman, Shawn Oberlies and Lydia White.

### APPROVAL OF AGENDA

*Commissioner Gelbaugh 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 reported on a visit from Anna Stein, North Carolina's First Lady.

### COMMISSIONER'S REPORT:

Commissioner Gelbaugh reported that the Sylva Support Stop is gaining activity and is stocked more frequently. Commissioner Waldrum thanked voters for their support. Commissioner Estridge had a business owner ask about removing a dead tree on Main Street. Public Works will evaluate the tree. Commissioner Brown met with the Community Table about being prepared for increased business. He also reported that he attended a Pinnacle Park board meeting.

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

- The Town received one proposal for the RTP trails. RYU Contracting Inc.'s proposal was for \$115,000. This is the amount of the RTP grant award. The Town used this company in 2019 to build the Shelter Rock Trail. The contract is currently being reviewed and should be executed soon.
- The Town's FEMA Public Assistance amount is still under review since submitting an engineer's estimate. A new program manager has been assigned through FEMA and NC Emergency Management. Dowling and Jake Scott have a meeting scheduled to meet the new FEMA representative and go over the Scotts Creek project.
- The Christmas Parade is Sunday, December 7<sup>th</sup>.
- The Essentials of Municipal Government course through the School of Government is January 15-16<sup>th</sup> in Asheville. The entire board will attend together to complete this required ethics training.

**PUBLIC HEARING--ZONING MAP AMENDMENT REQUEST—OPM HOLDINGS, LLC:** *Commissioner Gelbaugh made a motion to open the public hearing at 5:38 p.m. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.*

John Jeleniewski, Senior County Planner, presented the staff report as follows:

**Applicant:** OPM Holdings, LLC (Kole and Kim Clapsaddle) – Property Owners

**Property Location:** 89 Apollo Drive, Sylva NC 28779; PIN 7641-48-6031

**Current Property Zoning:** High Density Residential - HDR

**Ordinance Section for which the Text Amendment is requested:** Article 3 - Procedures - Section 3.9.B – Zoning and Map Amendments

**Description of Request:**

The applicant is requesting a map amendment that would designate the subject property as General Business (GB) District.

**Background:**

The General Business District (GB) is the largest district within Sylva's commercially zoned jurisdiction. The GB District offers a broad range of permitted (use-by-right) and special uses (SUP) such as lodging, retail/commercial, restaurants, public/civil and recreational uses. Property improvements in this district are subject to development standards as set forth in the zoning ordinance including building setbacks, landscaping, architectural standards, sidewalk construction, parking, storm water treatment, etc.

The subject property is located on the northeast side of the Highway 107/Asheville Highway (Business 23) intersection just behind vacant property that is currently zoned as General Business (GB) and in the Hall Heights neighborhood. This property is a total of 0.48 acres in land area with one existing residential dwelling. Access to this property is from the public right-of-way of Apollo Drive (Town road). This property is adjacent to properties to the west and south that are in the GB District and are not located within the 100-year flood plain. This property is served by Tuckasegee Water & Sewer Authority for public utilities.

**Application Response:**

The applicant is requesting that the existing Town of Sylva Zoning Map be amended to designate this property (0.48 acres total) to the General Business District.

**Staff Findings:**

The requested map amendment would not constitute "spot zoning" as the properties to the west and south are zoned GB District.

The Town's adopted Land Use Plan for 2040 establishes that this property will be in the future *Urban Neighborhood District*. The encouraged land uses for this future district include primarily residential: small lot single family, townhome residential, two-, three- or four-family units, and multifamily; civic and educational uses that support community residents, live-work units, small scale in-home businesses and small scale public open space (e.g. active pocket parks, passive open space, greenways). However, if the map amendment request is approved, this property will be in the future *Community Corridors District* with encouraged land uses for this district being mixed-use buildings, institutional uses, walkable neighborhood commercial (retail, office, personal services), large scale commercial, business centers, community services and civic/educational services. In addition, this requested map amendment will create available property and opportunity in the GB District that may be needed to serve the community during/after the proposed Highway 107 improvement project.

Board members asked about the number of private residences on Apollo Drive as well as ingress and egress.

Natalie Newman, a property owner on Apollo Drive, addressed the board and expressed her concerns about approving such a request. She was not in favor of approving the zoning map amendment request.

Commissioner Waldrum asked what the future plans were for the home. John Jeleniewski explained that the property owner would like to convert it to a professional business office. Commissioner Gelbaugh asked what the Planning Board felt was appropriate. Manager Dowling reported that the Planning Board voted to recommend approval.

*Being no further comment, Commissioner Gelbaugh made a motion to close the hearing at 5:52 p.m. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.*

**NEW BUSINESS:**

**ZONING MAP AMENDMENT REQUEST—OPM HOLDINGS, LLC:** The board continued their discussion on the map amendment request. Mayor Phillips gave the board details on the professional use of the building and explained that it would most likely be a mental health counseling office.

*Commissioner Estridge made a motion to approve the request. Voting in the affirmative were Commissioners Estridge and Brown. Voting against the motion were Commissioners Gelbaugh and Waldrum. Being a tie, Mayor Phillips voted in the affirmative to approve the request. The motion carried with a 3-2 vote.*

*Commissioner Gelbaugh read the Statement of Consistency. Commissioner Brown made a motion to approve the statement. Voting in the affirmative were Commissioners Estridge and Brown. Voting against the motion were Commissioners Gelbaugh and Waldrum. Being a tie, Mayor Phillips voted in the affirmative to approve the request. The motion carried with a 3-2 vote.*

**FIRE DEPARTMENT REQUEST TO PURCHASE NEW PUMPER TRUCK:** Keith Buchanan, Assistant Fire Chief, addressed the board and explained that the Fire Department would like to purchase another pumper truck. This would complete the replacement of the two pumper trucks that are beyond their service time. This is the same type of truck the Town currently has ordered. Manufacturing is taking over a year, so the department wants to begin the process to bid and order it. To provide an idea of costs, in December 2025, bids ranged from \$495,300 to \$684,906. The truck we have ordered, including equipment and contingency, is budgeted at \$566,150. Trucks typically have a life cycle of twenty years. The department is trying to stagger the smaller apparatus before it is time to buy another ladder truck. A portion of the truck would be paid out of the Fire Department Capital Reserve fund and the remaining paid from other sources, depending on final price. Buchanan requested approval to advertise for bids in January. *Commissioner Waldrum made a motion to approve the request to advertise for bids. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.*

**TWSA BOARD APPOINTMENT:** Mick McCardle has completed two terms on the TWSA Board and would like to be reappointed for his third and final three-year term. *Commissioner Gelbaugh made a motion to reappoint Mick McCardle to the TWSA Board. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.*

**AMENDED AUDIT CONTRACT FY 2024-2025:** The original audit contract had a deadline of 10/31/2025. The auditor did not meet the deadline established in initial contract; therefore it needs to be amended to 12/31/2025. The Local Government Commission's deadline is 12/31/2025. *Commissioner Waldrum made a motion to amend the audit contract. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.*

**AUDIT REPORT:** Sheila Gahagan, CPA presented the financial statements and auditor's report for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2025. A clean audit opinion was given with no findings. Gahagan encouraged the board to review the report and to read the management discussion.

**ADJOURNMENT:** *Commissioner Waldrum made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:17 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