



TOWN OF SYLVA BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS REGULAR MEETING

Thursday, January 22, 2026 at 9:00 AM
Board Room, 83 Allen Street Sylva, North Carolina

MINUTES

PRESENT: Blitz Estridge, Commissioner
Perry Matthews, Commissioner
Samuel McGuire, Commissioner
Joseph Waldrum, Commissioner
Brad Waldrop, Mayor Pro Tem
Paige Dowling, Town Manager
Amanda Murajda, Town Clerk
Eric Ridenour, Town Attorney

ABSENT: Johnny Phillips, Mayor

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), Bernadette Peters (Economic Development Director) and Jake Scott (Public Works Director).

VISITORS:

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:

Keith Blaine, a member of the Jackson County America 250 Committee, requested consideration of a Fourth of July parade permit in Sylva as part of America's upcoming 250th anniversary celebration. Mr. Blaine stated that the committee plans countywide events, including a parade in Sylva on July 4, with flexible timing. Additional planned events include a rotating movie night across approximately ten county locations. Mr. Blaine emphasized community involvement and participation by veterans' groups, motorcycle groups, and other organizations.

MAYOR'S REPORT:

Mayor Pro Tem Waldrop recognized Town staff for their professionalism, budgeting knowledge, and dedication to the overall interests of the Town. Appreciation was expressed for department leadership and staff for their expertise and collaboration. The Mayor Pro Tem also acknowledged the role of local media in keeping citizens informed and holding elected officials accountable, noting the importance of a free and independent press.

COMMISSIONER'S REPORT: Commissioners reported the following:

Commissioner McGuire offered his appreciation for the opportunity to attend the Essentials of Municipal Government training and for the professionalism of Town staff during the program. He, as well as other board members, noted the value of ongoing education, ethics training, and learning from peer municipalities across the state. Commissioner Waldrum recognized Chief Hatton in anticipation of his upcoming retirement. Commissioner Waldrop added his support for free and independent media, respectful civic dialogue, and constitutional principles. He gave positive feedback regarding police community engagement efforts, including officers walking downtown sidewalks and interacting with businesses. Commissioner Matthews expressed gratitude to Town staff for their service and dedication.

MANAGER'S REPORT: Manager Dowling reported the following:

- Commissioners were thanked for attending the Essentials of Municipal Government training and were reminded to submit ethics certificates.
- Bid opening for the new commercial fire truck is scheduled for February 2 at noon.

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- A joint municipal meeting with Jackson County is scheduled for March 10 at 6:00 p.m. at the Burrell Building at SCC.
- Audit proposals are due February 13.
- Dowling will attend the North Carolina City/County Managers Conference in Winston-Salem January 27th-30th.

PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT REPORT: Jake Scott reported the following:

- Storm preparation is underway for potential winter weather, with staff working in shifts and coordinating with emergency management.
- Progress at Poteet Park, including completed demolition, new plumbing installation, and ongoing electrical and masonry work. The project is ahead of schedule.
- The Pinnacle Park RTP Trails Project is pending final permit approval.
- Scotts Creek retaining wall project updates include FEMA coordination, survey completion, and upcoming geotechnical exploration.
- The department has planned resurfacing of Vance Street and Municipal Drive in the spring.

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

- Over 12,000 calls for service in 2025, averaging approximately one call per hour.
- Activity for the prior month included traffic stops, follow-up investigations, school zone enforcement, security checks, park patrols, and suspicious activity investigations.
- Staffing updates, including officer marriages and professional certifications.
- Attendance at the Chiefs Conference, including discussions on grants, policy updates, and collaboration with the Attorney General's Office.

FIRE DEPARTMENT REPORT: Keith Buchanan, Asst. Fire Chief, reported the following:

- Receipt of an improved ISO insurance rating, moving from Class 5 to **Class 3**, which may reduce insurance premiums.
- A total of 1,583 calls in 2025, reflecting continued growth in service demand.
- Increased staffing levels and mutual aid participation.
- The department has completed Fire and Life Safety programs in all schools.

MAIN STREET REPORT: Bernadette Peters, Economic Development Director, reported the following:

- A successful Christmas Parade with 67 participating groups and approximately 25 volunteers.
- Vendor applications for Greening Up the Mountains opened and are already half full.
- Upcoming business-focused events:
- We Speak – February 19
- Bloom Business Appreciation Event – March 23
- Empower Her Women in Business Event – May 13
- Promotion of the County's Code Red emergency alert system and plans to share sign-up information through Town platforms.

PLANNING BOARD REPORT: Manager Dowling reported the following:

- The Planning Board did not meet due to a canceled agenda.

TWSA BOARD REPORT:

- Updates were provided on the Clear Well Project, expected to increase water storage capacity.
- The annual meeting is scheduled for March 3 at 4:00 p.m.

NEW BUSINESS

TOWN ATTORNEY APPOINTMENT: *Commissioner McGuire made a motion to reappoint the Town Attorney for the next four-year term following the recent election. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.*

PLANNING BOARD APPOINTMENTS: Manager Dowling explained that Melissa Madrona and Larry Tyson are up for reappointment. This would be for their second three-year term. *Commissioner Waldrum made a motion to reappoint Melissa Madrona and Larry Tyson to their second three-year term. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.*

RESOLUTION OF EXEMPTION FROM ARCHITECT/ENGINEER/SURVEYOR QUALIFICATIONS-BASED SELECTION: SM&E COST AND ALTERNATIVES ANALYSIS FOR FISHER CREEK DAM: Manager Dowling presented a resolution allowing exemption from qualifications-based selection to retain a geotechnical firm for cost analysis and repair options for the Fisher Creek Dam, pursuant to North Carolina General Statutes. *Commissioner Waldrum made a motion to approve the resolution of exemption. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.*

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CLOSED SESSION: Commissioner *Estridge* made a motion to enter closed session 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 Waldrum made a motion to come out of closed session. The motion carried with a unanimous vote and the Board entered into regular session at 10:22 a.m. No action was taken during closed session.

ADJOURNMENT: *Commissioner Waldrum* made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 10:22 a.m. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.

Brad Waldrop
Mayor Pro Tem

Amanda W. Murajda
Town Clerk