



TOWN OF SYLVA BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS REGULAR MEETING

Thursday, September 25, 2025 at 9:00 AM
Board Room, 83 Allen Street Sylva, North Carolina

MINUTES

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

VISITORS: Caleb Lynch, Susan Bogardus, Kass Patterson, Erin Adams, Francesco Savilio, Jason Kimmenker, Kathy Didanato and Shay Harr.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Commissioner Brown 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 agenda. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Caleb Lynch expressed his supports for the Sylva Support Stop. He regularly donates to the box and has never encountered any issues. He believes this should be a judgement free area.

Susan Bogardus serves as a volunteer at the Community Table and remembers the time the box was moved due to construction. She explained that the Community Table has nothing to do with the Sylva Support Stop.

Kass Patterson, Executive Director of Cornbread and Roses explained that the Sylva Support Stop is a blessing box and it is really important to have this for the needy. She has clients who use the Sylva Support Stop. Blessing boxes are good and if removed, you are taking away a blessing from someone.

Erin Adams read a statement from Eli Hashemi who manages the Sylva Support Stop. It was created in response for the desire to help those in need anonymously.

Francesco Savilio expressed his support for the Sylva Support Stop and explained that the kindness in the Town is what keeps him here.

Jason Kimmenker has an office location where you can see the Sylva Support Stop and is grateful and appreciative that there is this opportunity for the community. He is a regular contributor to the box.

Kathy Didanato with Help Sylva also regularly donates to the box and is appreciative of everyone who helps.

Shay Harr explained that the Sylva Support Stop is managed by the community, and you should not take something away that the majority wants. The Sylva Support Stop is for those who not only do not have housing, but those who need a little extra between bills, etc.

MAYOR'S REPORT: Mayor Phillips explained that first and foremost he never made a statement that he wanted to do away with Sylva Support Stop. He believes there is a responsibility to take care of everyone and will not back down from moving it. Phillips issued a public apology to Paige Christie and the Community table for comments made at a previous meeting. He added he does support the Community Table and its efforts. The Sylva Support Stop is a needed thing but it can be improved.

COMMISSIONER'S REPORT: Commissioners reported the following:

Waldrop—Thanked everyone who spoke and added that the words spoken during the meeting were inspirational.

Waldrum—Also thanked those who spoke in support of the Sylva Support Stop and added it is an important resource.

Estridge—Explained that he is in support of the Sylva Support Stop and believes the board can help with maintaining it.

Brown—Thanked those who shared their support. He also thanked the Police Department for their presence during recent events.

MANAGER'S REPORT: Manager Dowling reported the following:

- The Bryson Park ribbon cutting was held today.
- Employment Update: We want to welcome Officer Katie Roberts to the Police Department. Katie started September 15th after relocating to the area. She formerly served as a detective in South Georgia. We still have a maintenance technician position open in Public Works.
- The floodplain mapping public meeting will be held September 29th at the Department on Aging at 5:30 p.m.
- Sheila Gahagan is here conducting audit fieldwork today and tomorrow.
- The Maps Group is coming October 1st to begin the employee meeting for the pay and classification plan. Every 5 years we go through a salary study and review of the personnel policy.
- The Essentials of Municipal Government course through the School of Government is January 15-16th in Asheville.
- The Fire Department's ISO rating has been rescheduled for October 29th.
- The Fire Department's Open House is October 4th from 12:00 p.m.-4:00 p.m.
- Walk for Hope is October 4th from 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. at Bridge Park.

PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT REPORT: Jake Scott, Public Works Director, reported the following:

- Still reviewing the contract for engineering for the Scotts Creek wall
- Prebid meeting for the Pinnacle Park trail expansion is today at 1:00 p.m.
- Fall decorations are up
- Repairs to sidewalks on Landis and Schulman streets are complete
- Loading zones will be repainted soon
- Public Works department will participate in Hands on Jackson October 9th.
- There is one vacant position open in the department.

POLICE DEPARTMENT REPORT: Chris Hatton, Police Chief, reported the following:

To address misconceptions, he noted that Poteet Park gates are locked on time. Officers try to lock at dark unless they are on a call. They are required to report when it is locked. On average the reporting shows 8:35 p.m. as the time the park is locked. Hatton added that the Police Department is dealing with the idea that things are always like they used to be and that they have time for coffee. This is not the case as the officers answer 1000+ calls per month which is approximately 25 per day on average. Officers carry out the vision of the board and it's important to remember your words are very powerful.

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

- Calls for service have increased and the department is approximately 100 more than at the same time last year.
- The department received a state grant to purchase side-by-side for rescue purposes.
- The ladder truck is still out for repairs.
- The department's open house will be Saturday, October 4th.

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

- All town events take a tremendous number of volunteers and workers, and the three department directors (Fire, Police & Public Works) work all events. She thanked them for all of their support.
- The Mountain Brewfest was a success. There were 500 attendees.
- The Outdoor Economy Conference was held last week and there was an excursion bringing a group of attendees to Sylva for the evening.
- Mountain Heritage Center concert is Friday, September 26, 2025.

TWSA BOARD REPORT:

- TWSA and WCU are working on an interconnect between their agencies to help supply water.

NEW BUSINESS

COMMUNITY TABLE PRESENTATION: Paige Christie, Director of the Community Table, addressed the board and gave an update on the happenings at the Community Table. She explained where their funding comes from, updates on the number of people fed and future plans.

SYLVA SUPPORT STOP: Commissioner Gelbaugh noted that perception is reality and what the Sylva Support Stop looks like changes by the minute as donations are made and then used. She added that she mentioned at last meeting that maybe a board member could volunteer to watch over it. Gelbaugh volunteered till December to visit and look after the Support Stop. Commissioner Brown thanked Gelbaugh for volunteering. He would like to see if volunteers could work together to build a new one. Jake Scott reminded the board it was not designed to be moved. *Commissioner Brown made a motion to table to the next meeting. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.*

ADJOURNMENT: Commissioner Waldrop *made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 10:21 a.m. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.*

Johnny Phillips
Mayor

Amanda W. Murajda
Town Clerk