



TOWN OF SYLVA BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS MEETING

Thursday, May 23, 2024 at 9:00 AM
Board Room, 83 Allen Street Sylva, North Carolina

MINUTES

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, Geoffrey Hirsch, Sarah Hirsch, Nathan Mann, Tracey Mann, Jessie Roberts, Jonathan Brown, Tammy Brown, Rachael Bartlett, Lilly Knoepp (Blue Ridge Public Radio), Emmie Cornell, Jay Coward, Jennifer Harr, Becky Abel, Destri Leger, Mary Slagle, Dave Russell (Sylva Herald), and Natalie Newman.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Commissioner Jones made a motion to add a closed session pursuant to NCGS 143-318-11 (a)(3). The motion carried with a unanimous vote. Commissioner Gelbaugh made a motion to approve the agenda as amended. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Sarah Hirsch addressed the board and asked for their support in appointing her as a new commissioner. Nathan Mann addressed the board and offered support for the Sylva Pride parade and requested the board reconsider their vote. Tracey Mann added her support for the parade and asked the board to approve the proclamation for June as Pride Month. Jessie Roberts, Jennifer Harr and Destri Leger also offered their support of Sylva Pride and the proclamation for June as Pride Month.

MAYOR'S REPORT

Mayor Phillips thanked Mayor Pro-tem Gelbaugh for serving in his absence at the last meeting. He also thanked Mark and Tammy Haskett for their work on Greening Up the Mountains.

COMMISSIONER'S REPORT

Commissioner Gelbaugh attended the quarterly Library Board meeting and noted there are several summer events coming up for children this summer. Commissioner Waldrop added that he had noticed an increase in public input in recent weeks and encouraged participation to continue.

MANAGER'S REPORT: Manager Dowling reported the following:

- The Jackson County ABC Board's budget has been distributed for review.
- The Town budget is currently being advertised in the Sylva Herald and is on our website. The next meeting is May 30th at 5:30 p.m. This meeting is to hold a public hearing on the budget and to swear in the new commissioner.
- Employment Update: Steve Shuler retired from Public Works last week after 16.5 years with the Town. We wish Steve a happy retirement. We are currently accepting applications for a Maintenance Technician position.
- Dowling attended the School of Government's Affordable Housing Seminar in Marion, NC.

Regular Board Meeting May 23, 2024

- Town staff participated in open enrollment for supplemental benefits.
- Town offices will be closed Monday, May 27, 2024, for Memorial Day.

PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT REPORT: Jake Scott reported the following:

- Completed plans for Bryson Park have been sent to contractors for pricing.
- Working on Partf grant.
- Paving on 1st and 2nd Avenue and Oakwood Lane will begin in the next few weeks.
- Congratulated Steve Shuler on his retirement.

POLICE DEPARTMENT REPORT: Chris Hatton reported the following:

- Working on filling vacancies.
- Calls for service are up.
- Community Care will be represented at a national conference later in May.

FIRE DEPARTMENT REPORT: Mike Beck reported on the following:

- Just over 554 calls so far in 2024 which is approximately 150 ahead of last year.

MAIN STREET REPORT: Bernadette Peters reported the following:

- Unveiled a façade grant program recently.
- Attended the Investing in Rural America conference.
- Launching the third phase of the co-working feasibility study.

TWSA BOARD REPORT: Manager Dowling reported that the budget is available to review.

NEW BUSINESS

BOARD OF COMMISSIONER VACANT SEAT: Board members were given copies of application for those interested in serving on the Town Board in the vacant seat at the May 9, 2024, board meeting. Those applicants included Johnathan Brown, Luther Jones and Sarah Hirsch. Board members were given a ballot that included the name of each applicant. They were instructed to choose one applicant and sign the ballot. Ballots were read for votes as the following:

Commissioner Estridge—Johnathan Brown
Commissioner Gelbaugh—Johnathan Brown
Commissioner Jones—Johnathan Brown
Commissioner Waldrop—Sarah Hirsch

By vote of ballot, Jonathan Brown is appointed to the Town of Sylva Board of Commissioners. His swearing-in ceremony will be on May 30, 2024.

MAIN STREET SYLVA ASSOCIATION BOARD APPOINTMENT: Mayor Phillips noted this was discussed at a previous meeting and that Commissioner Estridge would like to serve on the board. *Commissioner Jones made a motion to appoint Commissioner Blitz Estridge to the MSSA board. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.*

SOUTHWESTERN NC HOME CONSORTIUM BOARD APPOINTMENT: Mayor Phillips noted that Manager Dowling volunteered to serve on this board. *Commissioner Gelbaugh made a motion to appoint Manager Paige Dowling to the Southwestern NC Home Consortium board. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.*

MSSA FAÇADE GRANT APPROVAL: Bernadette Peters presented three applications eligible for a 1:1 match up to \$3,000 to the board for approval:

1. 629 & 633 West Main Street—Southern & Sunkissed building—will be repainted.
2. The Hooper House—improve façade with outdoor improvements.
3. 617 West Main Street—Mad Batter building—new awnings.

Commissioner Estridge made a motion to approve the three grant applications. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.

PROCLAMATION DESIGNATING JUNE AS PRIDE MONTH: Mayor Phillips introduced the request for a proclamation to designate June as Pride Month in the Town of Sylva. *Commissioner Waldrop made a motion to approve the proclamation. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.*

CLOSED SESSION: *Commissioner Jones made a motion to enter closed session pursuant to NCGS. 143-318-11(a)(3) to consult with the town attorney at 9:42 a.m. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.*

Regular Board Meeting May 23, 2024

Commissioner Jones made a motion to come out of closed session. The motion carried with a unanimous vote and the Board entered into regular session at 10:25 a.m. No action was taken during closed session.

PINNACLE PARK: The Board discusses granting a right-of-way across town property to parcel # 7643-85-6440. *Commissioner Gelbaugh made a motion to convey a right-of-way over the road in its present location leading from the Pinnacle Park Parking Lot to that approximate 152-acre tract of land more specifically described in deed book 2267 page 1140 and bearing PIN 7643-85-6440 contingent upon sale by the Bradley family to Mainspring Conservation. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.*

ADJOURNMENT: *Commissioner Waldrop made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 10:28 a.m. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.*

Johnny Phillips
Mayor

Amanda W. Murajda
Town Clerk