

**TOWN OF WEBSTER**  
**March 1, 2023 Board Meeting Minutes**



The Webster Board of Commissioners met at the Webster Town Hall, located at 1411 Webster Rd., Webster, on Wednesday, March 1, 2023, 5:30 p.m. for the March Commissioners Meeting.

**Members/Staff Present:** Mayor Tracy Rodes; Vice Mayor Leigh Anne Young; Commissioners Dale Collins, Allen Davis, Brandon Core; and Danell Moses; Town Clerk Stephanie Gibson.

**Planning Board:** Sara Stahlman

**Sylva Herald:** Stephen Pierce, Intern

**Absent:** Town Attorney Will Morgan

*BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS MEETING*

**Call to Order/Ethics Statement:** Mayor Tracy Rodes called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. and read the Ethics Statement. No board member expressed any conflict of interest.

**Approval of Agenda:**

*MOTION: Commissioner Collins moved to approve the amended agenda with the revision that the topic of Firearms be removed. Commissioner Core seconded. Motion carried.*

**Approval of Minutes:** The minutes of the February 1, 2023, meeting were emailed prior to the meeting for review.

*MOTION: Commissioner Collins moved to approve the minutes of February 1, 2023, Commissioner Core seconded. Motion carried unanimously.*

*PUBLIC COMMENT*

None.

*CONSENT AGENDA*

**Financial Report:** Financial statements for January were emailed prior to the meeting for review. February transactions currently include income of \$ 17,175.37 and expenses of \$2,753.72. ARPA funds expended as of February 23, 2023, are \$34,165.83. Account balances as of February 28 are:

\$ 306,021.91 - First Bank Business Essentials

\$ 85,547.65 - First Bank Money Market

*MOTION: Commissioner Core moved to approve the Consent Agenda. Commissioner Davis seconded. Motion carried unanimously.*

*OLD BUSINESS*

- 1. STR Planning Recommendations:** Planning Board member, Sara Stahlman, shared that the Planning Board discussed short term rentals, and recommends that the Town Board clarify and modernize language in town ordinances about Rooms for Rent to offer specifics about Short Term Rentals. She shared that the current Town of Webster ordinances most connected to the topic of short-term rentals include: Accommodation, Apartment, Bed and Breakfast and Building, Accessory.

The Planning Board recommends the following ordinance changes, subject to review and recommended adjustments by the town attorney:

- Add “Short-Term Rental” to the individual words and terms section with the definition: “Overnight accommodations offered to renters for no more than 30 days in exchange for compensation.”
- Add “and Short-Term Rentals” to section 5.2 Apartments and Rooms for Rent after every instance of “apartment”.
- Under 5.2.2 a), adjust to “All apartments, rooms to rent, and short-term rentals must comply with county regulations as well as all applicable codes and ordinances.” Remove 5.2.2 f).
- Under 5.2.2 b) add “Accessory buildings or portions thereof may not be used as apartments, rooms to rent, or short-term rentals. Entire residential dwellings may not be used as apartments, rooms to rent, or short-term rentals.
- Adjust both 5.2.2 and 5.3.2 parking information to refer to Article 7, rather than Article 6.
- Under Article 7, add “Apartments, Rooms to rent, and Short-term Rentals” to the Bed and Breakfast row of parking requirements in the table of uses.

Additional suggestions to modernize the ordinances:

- Remove “transients” from the definition of bed and breakfasts and update to clarify that lodging can be provided for no more than 30 days.
- Merge 5.3.2 a) and f) and adjust to match 5.2: “All bed and breakfasts must comply with county regulations as well as all applicable codes and ordinances.”
- Strike 5.3.2 g)

Once changes are made, the planning board recommends drafting and sending letters to those properties known to be out of compliance with the short-term rental clarifications.

Mayor Rodes asked if the changes should apply to all areas or ETJ only. Vice Mayor Young noted that changes to ordinances would apply to the Town and ETJ areas as it does now.

Commissioner Core asked if there would be a scenario that short-term rentals ordinances would only apply within the Town limits. Vice Mayor Young said that districts can be created, such as historic, recreational, etc. Mayor Rodes said that it would be easier to restrict short-term rentals in the Town limits where it is more densely populated. Commissioner Collins asked Sara how Sylva handled short-term rentals and she said that property owners who already have short-term rentals when ordinances change, keep their short-term rental status until the property is sold.

Mayor Rodes noted that properties that have had rentals for a long time would be grandfathered in. Commissioner Collins recommended that the grandfather clause begin as of 3-1-23.

Commissioner Core asked that the attorney plan and note things that need to specify legal boundaries. The board discussed the role of the Board of Adjustments (BOA) which acts in a quasi-judicial capacity. Property owners can ask the BOA for a variance if they think an ordinance causes them unique hardship.

Vice Mayor Young asked if the Planning Board’s recommendations could be considered a text amendment since it was in keeping with the original intent of our current ordinances and mainly clarified vague language regarding short term rentals. It was agreed that a public hearing would need to be held to make any zoning ordinance changes.

**2. Pavilion Design:** Mayor Rodes asked the board which Pavilion design that they would like to choose. The board discussed options and preferences. Vice Mayor Young said that she spoke with Rusty and he liked the taller Savannah or taller Shed-style. Commissioner Core said that he felt the Shed-style would be a better option to accommodate for family

gatherings, parties, etc. The board discussed cost estimates, and noted that electric installation wasn't included in the estimate, as well as the administrative costs that Parks and Recreation are covering. The board suggested taking a poll, Commissioners each wrote down their first and second choices. The consensus of the board was that the shed style 26' x 40' with height of eaves 8'/12' was the first choice and the shed style 26' x 40' with 9'/14' eave heights was the second choice. Commissioners also listed a third choice to explore the possibility of hiring a contractor to pour a larger pad.

3. **Joint Planning Priorities:** Vice Mayor Young referred to the posterboard of land use plan priorities, and said that she would compile the top choices and bring them to the budget planning session. Rodes noted that legal costs were projected to increase, and that traffic safety funding was also a top priority.
4. **Property Management:** Mayor Rodes said that she had checked with several potential handymen about repair work needed at Town Hall, but did not have any estimates for property management yet.
5. **Investments:** Mayor Rodes and Commissioners reviewed the interest rates that Vice Mayor Young obtained from First Bank, First Citizens Bank, and Jackson Savings & Loan. The best money market rate was 2.75% guaranteed for 180 days. First Bank offered an option to increase the interest the Town is currently earning on their money market to a 2.9% variable rate.

*Motion: Commissioner Collins made a motion to keep town funds at First Bank for the time being, and to update our money market to earn a higher interest rate. Commissioner Core seconded. The motion was carried unanimously.*

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#### *NEW BUSINESS*

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1. **Schedule Annual Budget Meeting:** Commissioners discussed times and locations to hold the annual budget meeting and agreed to hold the meeting at Town Hall, on March 24, from 9:30am - 12:30pm. Mayor Rodes will order lunch from Haywood Smokehouse.

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#### *ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS*

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##### **Mayor's Report:**

- Mayor Rodes shared that she met with Bobby Parrish and that the Balsamwest internet contract has been signed and submitted. Installation is expected within a few months.
- Rodes met with Waynesville Fire Safety on the 27th to get the fire extinguishers serviced/recharged, and will schedule a fire inspection of Town Hall.
- February meetings attended were a Mountain Projects meeting on 2/10, and 3 TWSA meetings.
- Rusty has requested another pavilion option estimate from Bliss, and it will be sent to the Board when received.
- Mayor Rodes and Commissioner Collins attended the TWSA event for their Division of Water Infrastructure Federal ARPA Grant award with Governor Cooper on 2/23. TWSA received \$4.2 million for an upgraded Cullowhee Clearwell tank. The tank will hold a day's worth of clean water for the service area, and be available for use in the event of emergencies or when line repairs are needed.

- The Duke HVAC rebate was approved, and was issued in the form of a gift card. Stephanie was given permission to use the \$350 Duke rebate card to purchase snacks for meetings and supplies for Town Hall until her new debit card from First Bank arrives. A file of expenses and receipts will be kept and reviewed.

**Council Members' and Clerk's Report:**

**Traffic Safety Committee Report:** The mobile speed trailer that was located near the Armory only worked a couple of days and was removed, probably for repair.

- The Traffic committee is working to collect as much data as possible before beginning to determine action items to present to the board.
- Mayor Rodes reported talking with Sheriff Farmer after the TWSA event about speeding issues, citations, and the need to update the contract for Webster patrols.
- Next traffic meeting was set for 3/8.

*ADJOURNMENT*

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*MOTION: Commissioner Core moved to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 7:35 p.m.*

**Next Meetings:**

Annual Budget Planning Meeting: Friday, March 24, 2023, at 9:30 a.m -12:30 p.m.

Regular Meeting: April 5, 2023, at 5:30 p.m.

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Tracy Rodes, Mayor

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Stephanie Gibson, Town Clerk