

TOWN OF WEBSTER
March 4, 2020 Board Meeting Minutes



The Board of Commissioners for the Town of Webster met for a regularly scheduled board meeting at Town Hall, 1411 Webster Road at 5:15 p.m.

Members/Staff Present: Mayor Tracy Rodes; Vice-Mayor Leigh Anne Young; Commissioners Allen Davis, Kelly Donaldson, Allan Grant, and Danell Moses; Town Attorney William Morgan; and Town Clerk Debbie Coffey.

Members Absent: None

Public Present: None

GENERAL MEETING

Call to Order: General Meeting

Call to Order/Ethics Statement: Mayor Tracy Rodes called the meeting to order at 5:15 p.m. and read the Ethics Statement. No board member expressed any conflict of interest.

Approval of Agenda:

MOTION: Commissioner Moses moved to approve the agenda. Commissioner Young seconded. Motion carried.

Approval of Minutes: The minutes of the February 5, 2020, Meeting and Closed Session Meeting were emailed prior to the meeting for review.

MOTION: Commissioner Grant moved to approve the February Minutes. Commissioner Moses seconded. Motion carried.

CONSENT AGENDA

Financial Report:

January Financial statements were provided prior to the meeting. February transactions currently include income of \$3,857.34 and expenses of \$26,271.29. Current Account Balances as of today are:

\$ 44,513.30 - Checking
\$ 45,615.67 - Elite Plus Money Market
\$ 38,630.81 - 48 Month CD

MOTION: Commissioner Young moved to approve the Consent Agenda. Commissioner Moses seconded. Motion carried.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

Mayor's Report:

- Mayor Rodes informed the board of the Green Growth Toolbox sponsored by the North Carolina Wildlife Commission and hosted by the Jackson County Planning Department to be held on March 26th AT SCC's Burrell Building.



- Elite Landscaping crews removed more than twenty 55-gallon bags of litter along Webster Road. This has made the area look much better, but more trash has accumulated.
- The TWSA annual meeting has been postponed until Tuesday, May 12th to allow Daniel Manring time to begin his service as the new Executive Director.
- New reports of speeding and reckless driving have been received from people traveling on North River Road. These have been passed on to the Jackson County Sheriff's department.
- Mayor Rodes recommended waiting until the next fiscal year to begin digitizing records in order to maintain budget projections for this year.
- DOT has not completed road repairs at the intersection of Buchanan Road and Hwy. 116.
- Commissioner Moses volunteered to take a Welcome Package to the new couple who bought the Baker house next to town hall.
- The Planning Board will forward their work on the Webster Land Use Plan (LUP) to the Board of Commissioners for review. Please remember to reply individually on the content of the plan to Commissioner Young, who serves as liaison to the Planning Board.
- Mayor Rodes provided several links on the novel Coronavirus, known as COVID-19, for the board's information. Cases have been reported in North Carolina. Commissioner Moses reported that the World Health Organization has good information available. Mayor Rodes recommended the UNC SOG's Coates Cannon addressing the virus. She also noted that Governor Cooper has set up a taskforce to deal with the virus as it spreads throughout the state.

Council Members' and Clerk's Reports: None

NEW BUSINESS

1. Review of NC GS 160D

A hard copy of the UNC SOG's Chapter 160D and a link to the complete statute was provided to each commissioner for review. This will require the Zoning Ordinance to be amended to be compliant with the GS 160D by January 1, 2021. Attorney Morgan said this process would mostly require text amendments to the existing ordinance, and that several requirements of the statute are already in place. Mike Poston will provide assistance with identifying the necessary text amendments. A Land Use Plan (LUP) must be adopted by June 30, 2022, for compliance with 160D. The Planning Board has a foundation drafted for the LUP at this time. If a town is sued for noncompliance, any attorneys fees would be awarded to the plaintiff.

2. Review of 2020-2021 Budget

Additional corrections and adjustments to the budget worksheets are being made. Commissioner Donaldson received a ballpark estimate from The Trash Company (Ben Wood) of \$21 per month, per residence for curbside pick up. This did not include recycling. Mr. Wood is willing to meet with the board to provide additional information if needed. Providing this service for residents is probably cost prohibitive at this time.



The board will continue to consider a tax rate increase. Commissioner Moses recommended asking residents for suggestions of services during the community dinner. Attorney Morgan stated that legal services for text amendments to the Zoning Ordinance would be \$7,500 or under. Additional upcoming expenditures include the purchase of fireproof filing cabinets, town document digitization, costs related to the 2020 County Grant project, consulting fees for an ordinance review and land use plan, and other necessary capital improvements. Mayor Rodes noted that while none of the expenses are fun or exciting, they are necessary. \$18,500 was used from cash reserves for balancing the 2019-2020 budget. Although several of these are one-time expenses, Commissioner Moses noted that depleted reserves need to be recuperated. The board reached a consensus of a tax rate of .15 cents per \$100 of value. A vote on the final increase was tabled until the budget worksheets can be adjusted and a final budget is drafted.

3. 2020-2021 Tax Rate Discussion

Based on the budget worksheets and discussion at the Annual Workshop, a tax increase is needed. One line item seeing a substantial increase is Fire Protection, which has increased over \$4000 in the last few years. This, coupled with utility and general cost increases, has led to using fund balance over the last several years. It was agreed to continue looking at the budget worksheets to determine the rate increase needed to maintain the current level of services. The tax rate was reduced from .07 cents per hundred dollars of property valuation in 2010/2011 to .05 cents per hundred in 2011/2012 and has remained unchanged. For the past eight years, Webster has had the lowest tax rate allowed by the state to remain eligible for reimbursements.

OLD BUSINESS

1. Approval of letter to JC TDA

Mayor Rodes drafted a letter on behalf of the Webster Board of Commissioners and Webster Planning Board to the Jackson County Tourism Development Authority (TDA) Board of Directors and Executive Director Nick Breedlove requesting a capital project in Webster to provide parking and restroom facilities for visitors using North and South River Roads as access points for the Tuckasegee River. Most TDA funds are utilized for marketing purposes, but did fund two capital improvement projects last year.

Commissioner Davis suggested the letter be general and request help, but not locate specific lots that could be used for this purpose.

MOTION: Commissioner Young moved to approve the letter to the Jackson County TDA Board of Directors. Commissioner Moses seconded. Motion carried.

2. County Grant Update

Two estimates have been received for hard-wiring the lights at the Monument area. The lower estimate is from Catamount Electric for \$2,700. Additional estimates for other components of the Jackson County Grant have been received. This project must be completed and receipts submitted for reimbursement prior to June 30, the end of the



fiscal year. The cost of adding a light at the Welcome sign will be \$8.77 per month, and will require a service agreement with Duke Energy.

MOTION: Commissioner Moses moved to contract with Catamount Electric for hardwiring the lights at the monument as long as it doesn't exceed \$3,000. Commissioner Young seconded. Motion carried.

3. Short Term Rentals (STR)

Commissioner Young reported that Cove City, Dover, and Forrest Hills did not have ordinances prohibiting STR properties. She noted that looking at communities the size of Webster may not accurately reflect the effect of STR properties on the town, as most people renting STR units in Webster are here to visit the larger area. She did state that concerns with STRs in larger cities is that it removes affordable housing from markets that already lack available inventory, they can create nuisance properties in residential neighborhoods, and occupancy taxes are not always collected and reported. Positive effects of STRs include generating extra income for local families, attracting a different type of traveler (ie traveling nurses, families with pets or families that prefer having kitchen facilities), and people who avoid hotels and desire to get to know the community in which they stay. Many towns require a rental license and must have an avenue of ordinance enforcement. Attorney Morgan cautioned about a broad ordinance, stating that definitions must be very concise and would most likely require county enforcement.

CLOSED SESSION

MOTION: Commissioner Moses moved to enter closed session under NC GS 143-318.11(a)(5) for property acquisition. Commissioner Young seconded. Motion carried.

The Board entered closed session at 7:30 p.m.

No action was taken during the Closed Session. Closed Session adjourned at 7:45p.m.

MOTION: Commissioner Moses moved to reenter Open Session. Commissioner Donaldson seconded. Motion carried.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Commissioner Moses moved to adjourn. Commissioner Donaldson seconded. Motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 6:46p.m.

Next Meeting:

Regular Board Meeting - Wednesday April 1, 2020 at 5:15 p.m.

Tracy Rodes, Mayor

Debbie Coffey, Town Clerk