



TOWN OF WEBSTER
April 03, 2024
April Board Meeting Minutes

The Webster Board of Commissioners met at Webster Town Hall, located at 1411 Webster Rd., on Wednesday, April 03, 2024, 5:30 p.m. for the April Commissioners Meeting.

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

Members/Staff Absent: Town Attorney Will Morgan

Public Present: Residents Rick Fulton, Jana Fulton, Daniel Riggs, Billie Joe Bryson, and Laura Lauffer.

Call to Order/Ethics Statement: Mayor Tracy Rodes called the March Commissioners meeting to order at 5:45 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 agenda, Commissioner Young seconded. Motion carried.*

Approval of Minutes: The minutes for March 06, 2024 meeting, and the March 22, Budget Planning Session minutes were emailed prior to the meeting for review.

MOTION: Commissioner Moses moved to approve all March Minutes as presented. Commissioner Core seconded. Motion carried unanimously

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

GUEST SPEAKER ON WEBSTER VILLAGE PROJECT

Rich Price, WCU Executive Director of Economic Development & Regional Partnerships came and shared information about the Webster Village Project. He said that it is a collaborative effort between WCU, Mountain Projects and Givens Communities to work together to lessen the impact of the housing crisis in our area. There is a critical need for senior housing and affordable housing in all income segments of the population. Duke LifePoint purchased the property years ago with medical facility/housing needs in mind. Mountain Projects has now acquired the property through a grant from Dogwood Health Trust and plans to build 33-35 single-family, affordable homes. Mountain Projects' program is a USDA backed, self-help program that provides housing if an individual meets the income cap requirements and qualifies. When an individual qualifies, the homes are constructed one at a time, and they will be owned free and clear by the homeowners. The goal is to create a beautiful community of small homes that people are safe in. The Givens Communities' portion of the plan is to build 120 apartments for low to moderate income senior living. WCU's goal is to lease 4-5 acres of the property to a developer for a minimal fee, that they would build 1-3 bedroom apartments for staff, faculty, and other working class individuals. Mr. Price said that WCU is not building additional student housing here, he noted that the university currently requires Freshmen and Sophomores to live on campus and that there is currently an overage of student housing near campus. There are also tentative plans to build a childcare center and an emergency services substation. Mr. Price noted that they are currently working to obtain investors for the project, they are in the preliminary engineering

phase. The water/sewer infrastructure and site preparation will cost between \$7-8 million. He said that WCU would probably be in position to start their project first, followed by Givens Communities.

Mayor Rodes asked about whether any traffic impact studies would be conducted as part of the project. Mr. Price said he wasn't sure but if so, the results would be shared with the town. He said that they desire to be good neighbors. Commissioner Young asked about sidewalk connectivity and Mr. Price said that they hope to have connectivity through Webster.

CONSENT AGENDA

Financial Report: Financial statements for February were emailed prior to the meeting for review. March transactions currently include income of \$14,873.51 and expenses of \$9,584.63. Account balances as of March 31 are:

\$135,468.92 - First Bank Business Essentials

\$315,941.83 - First Bank Money Market

The Financial Reports for January, February and March were reviewed at the April meeting.

MOTION: Commissioner Moses moved to approve Financial Reports for January, February and March as presented. Commissioner Core seconded. Motion carried unanimously

NEW BUSINESS

1. Traffic Committee Recommendations: Commissioner Collins provided a handout outlining immediate recommendations and long-term visions of the committee for the town. The Traffic Safety Committee was formed by the Webster Town Board in 2022, they meet monthly to discuss issues surrounding overall traffic safety in Webster. Motor vehicle speeds on Webster roadways jeopardize our safety. Through the review of data, stakeholder input, and transportation experts, the committee has developed the following recommendations. Immediate recommendations are to first establish a relationship with the Jackson County Sheriff's office to address the expected increase and needed services. Continued growth is expected in traffic through Webster due to upcoming Hwy 107 project construction and housing projects. The committee recommends an increase in hours for paid patrols, traffic services at community events, and additional officers. They request that the NCDOT paint a white shoulder stripe along Webster road where curbs and/or sidewalks exist and recommend installing a stop light in the curve at Buchanan Loop/Webster Road Intersection, creating a "T" Intersection - 3 way stop. The last immediate recommendation is to enhance Pedestrian Safety, particularly between the Post Office and the Old School. They recommend enhancing the existing crosswalk by adding a Hawk Signal or Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacon and installing a new crosswalk near the entrance to the Old School, also equipped with a Hawk Signal or Flashing Beacon. In addition to the immediate recommendations, the committee respectfully urges the Webster Town Board to explore long-term solutions. To accomplish this, the committee suggested that the Town designate a Traffic Safety Committee as a standing committee to meet when needed to discuss evolving needs and technologies and to also participate in long-term planning with Southwest Commission, DOT, and other parties.

2. Proposed Draft Budget FY 2024-25 Discussion: The Board reviewed and discussed the draft budget. Consensus was to keep the tax rate, board stipends, monthly apartment rent, and

staff wages the same as the current year, while allowing more funding for addressing traffic as recommended by the traffic committee.

Legal services were also discussed and that line item projection was increased by triple the current year's amount. Duke Energy's planned rate increases (23.8% for 2024, and an additional increase of 5.3% for 2025) were noted by Mayor Rodes. No large capital improvement projects such as TWSA service expansions or sidewalk repairs were identified.

The proposed FY 2024-'25 Draft Budget total is \$143,700. The date set for the budget public hearing is May 1, 2024, with advertising to be placed in The Sylva Herald by April 15. The Budget letter and proposed Draft Budget will be posted on the town website, and bulletin board at Town Hall.

***MOTION:** Commissioner Core moved to approve the draft budget for FY 2024-25 as presented. Commissioner Young seconded. Motion carried unanimously.*

3. Proposed Draft FY 2024-25 Fee Schedule: The Draft Fee Schedule was discussed and reviewed. Commissioners decided to change the fees for Special Use, Variance Requests, and Zoning Text or Map Amendment Requests to \$300 each to help defray the associated administrative and legal costs involved.

OLD BUSINESS

1. Pavilion Dedication: Commissioner Young said that the dedication event committee had discussed ideas for the event and decided to have light foods and drinks available for purchase but not to provide a full meal because the event is being held from 2:00-4:00 in the afternoon. The committee is planning several activities and to have games set up near the pavilion. Mayor Rodes said that she ordered two additional white canopy tents to match the one previously purchased.

2. Webster Signage: Mayor Rodes said the signs and kits for installation will be ready in 1-2 weeks, she and Commissioner Young met with Tyler to look at the site for the new entrance sign near DOT. Justin Woodard with Elite Landscaping will provide the concrete and installation for the signs for the amount previously approved in March.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

Mayor's Report:

- **Public Hearing:** A Public hearing for the proposed budget for FY 2024-25 will be held at the May meeting, Stephanie will advertise the hearing in the Sylva Herald and post the draft Budget on the bulletin board.
- **Town Hall Apartment:** Southern Seamless Guttering will assess the apartment windows for repair or replacement. Mountain Fire & Safety called to set up a time to service the fire extinguishers and was given Adrienne's email contact to schedule. Ward's was also referred to Adrienne for spring service of the HVAC system.
- **SWC RPO-TAC:** Dale Collins was emailed the information he needs to file with the State Ethics Commission by April 15th. Their next meeting is in April..
- **Webster Park:** Commissioner Young sent photos of the electrical outlets and light fixtures at the pavilion. Michael Hopkins is aware of our plans on 5/5 and will orient trash receptacles before the event.

- **Community Event:** Input is needed from the board about items needed or wanted for the event. Tyler has given permission to use his design for T-shirts, nametags, or other accessories. The board agreed that T-shirts would be a good way to help identify Town and Planning Board members if there is enough time to order and have them ready.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Commissioner Collins moved to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

Next Meetings: Business Meeting: Wednesday May 1, 2024, at 5:30 pm, Webster Town Hall, 1411 Webster Rd.

Tracy Rodes, Mayor

Stephanie Gibson, Town Clerk