

**MINUTES OF A PUBLIC HEARING**  
Town of Sylva Board of Commissioners  
August 06, 2018

The Town of Sylva Board of Commissioners held a special meeting on August 6, 2018 at 5:30 p.m. in the Board Room of Municipal Hall, 83 Allen Street, Sylva, N.C for the purpose of conducting a public hearing in regards to the NC Highway 107 Project.

<b>PRESENT:</b>	Lynda Sossamon, Mayor	Paige Dowling, Town Manager
	Barbara Hamilton, Vice-Mayor	Amanda Murajda, Town Clerk
	Mary Gelbaugh, Commissioner	Eric Ridenour, Town Attorney
	Harold Hensley, Commissioner	
	Greg McPherson, Commissioner	
	David Nestler, Commissioner	

**ABSENT:**

Mayor Sossamon called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. and stated the purpose was to hear presentations from transportation officials and receive public input concerning the Highway 107 reconstruction project.

**STAFF PRESENT:** Chanz Fritz (Police Officer), Rick Bryson (Asst. Police Chief) and Tammy Hooper (Police Chief).

**AGENDA:** *Commissioner Gelbaugh made a motion to approve the agenda. The motion carries with a unanimous vote.*

**INFORMATIONAL PRESENTATIONS:**

**Sarah Thompson, Southwestern Commission Executive Director:** Thompson gave the history of Highway 107 and how the road had grown over the years. It was originally built as a connector between Sylva and Cullowhee. As development occurred, driveways were just installed without thought of future growth.

**Rose Bauguess, Southwestern Commission Transportation Planner:** Bauguess gave an update on the funding process for highway projects. She discussed factors that are considered during the planning process of any project. She also reviewed the long-term transportation plans for Jackson County and the Town of Sylva.

**Brian Burch, NCDOT Division 14 Engineer:** Burch addressed attendees and explained that his office with the Department of Transportation is responsible for the development and delivery of highway projects. He gave updates on the Highway 107 project timeline and explained that currently right-of-way acquisition is expected to start in January 2020, contract let date in December 2021 and a construction begin date of January 2022. The road plans are 25% complete. Burch said that the purpose of the project is to relieve congestion and increase safety by taking out the center turn lane. There were 4 alternatives studied and all of them had medians not turning lanes.

**Jay Coward, Smart Roads Alliance:** Coward spoke in opposition of the DOT plans and believes a better plan can be created. He noted several areas of Highway 107 where DOT could change their design to help traffic flow. Coward would like the community to step up and speak out against the project in hopes that changes will be made.

**Chris Joyell, Asheville Design Center:** Joyell is the Director of the Asheville Design Center. They are a group of engineers who formed a company to help towns, cities, and others who cannot afford expensive design experts. They operate by invitation only and offer services at no charge. Joyell said they would be more than happy to work with the Town of Sylva on the Highway 107 project.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

- (a) Robert Kelly, son of Kel-Save owner Bob Kelly, stated his family had owned the drug store since 1966. They also own Kountry Kuppood and Krismart Fashions. Kelly said they have yet to be contacted by DOT or the Town of Sylva. He understands Highway 107 needs improvements but wonders at what cost. Kelly quoted comments from Town meetings several years ago where the Town Board said that they desired Highway 107 remain the same. He is concerned about the poor communication and believes it is the Town's responsibility to look at every option.

- (b) Rick Bryson, owner of Bryson's Car Wash, explained that families are being affected by this project and are concerned about how to financially plan for their future. He has heard nothing from DOT. Bryson appreciates the work of Jay Coward.
- (c) Kent Cranford, owner of Motion Makers, explained the importance of involving bicyclists. He does not want to see businesses closed.
- (d) Kelly Robinson said he thought roundabouts would really work. He believes the biggest issue on the road the speed of traffic. He would like to see the Town of Sylva enforce speeding more. He also said a bypass road around Sylva would help.
- (e) Gene Middleton suggested a road with a median and two 12-foot lanes with a 4-foot bike lane. This would keep businesses from being affected. He stated there was no amount of property available to accommodate the current tax base.
- (f) Jay Spiro also agrees with the use of roundabouts. He believes there are opportunities for compromise. He appreciates the work DOT has done and stated that from his past experience, DOT will work with the community.
- (g) Carol Smith, owner of Smith Insurance Agency, has worked on Highway 107 for 30 years. He would like the bypass between Locust Creek and Blanton Branch reconsidered. He believes this project will never work.
- (h) Jason Queen, co-owner of O'Malley's, would like more communication between DOT, the Town of Sylva, and business/property owners. He stated people would like answers.
- (i) Joe Lenders, owner of University Vape Shop, stated that he believes the center of Town as moved out Highway 107. He would like to see businesses able to keep their livelihood.
- (j) Charlie Schmidt, co-owner of Speedy's Pizza, thanked Jay Coward on behalf of Jean Ensley. Schmidt said that he has a petition going to leave West Main Street out of the construction area. He would like it to remain the way it currently is. Schmidt would like to start the bypass around Sylva to get traffic off of Highway 107 then look at what's left to see if changes are necessary. He currently has over 1200 signatures on his petition. On recent travels, Schmidt added that he noticed the bike lanes and sidewalks in the middle of the road in a median and believes this might work.
- (k) Pat Purdy, a resident for 35 years, said that the businesses being affected were like family and the plan on the table right now doesn't seem like the right one to support the future of these families.
- (l) Kevin Murphy stated his suggestion to DOT was to move the railroad tracks in front of Speedys.
- (m) Toni Murphy asked why the board members had not talked to constituents.
- (n) Betty Dishman stated she had been a resident of Sylva for 15 years and something needs to be done. She likes the idea of roundabouts but is also a supporter of the preservation of businesses.
- (o) Adam Bigelow commented he appreciated everyone coming out to the meeting. However, he asked everyone where they were when NCDOT had held previous meetings? Bigelow believes traffic safety is a big issue as he noted he was in one of the previous wrecks on Highway 107. He thinks that NCDOT should address certain areas of Highway 107 separately.
- (p) Sae Smyrl, a cyclist, stated he is an advocate for cycling and walking.
- (q) Scott Wollings stated he believes the plan is full of holes and that DOT is not needed to fix Highway 107. He would like to see a group made up of citizens, business owners, etc. work on changing Highway 107.
- (r) Sarah Conway spoke against the project and complained about the communication.
- (s) Trish Chambers, a resident of Glenville, noted that the community needed to be involved more to prevent what was not wanted.
- (t) Representative Mike Clampitt spoke against the project.
- (u) Aaron Lee Littlefield, a teacher in Cashiers, said research needed to be done on ways to decrease volume on Highway 107.

Mayor Sossamon thanked everyone for their attendance and reiterated contact information.

**ADJOURNMENT:** *Being no further comment, Commissioner Hensley made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:30 p.m. The motion carries with a unanimous vote.*