

**REGULAR BOARD MEETING**  
Town of Sylva Board of Commissioners  
July 9, 2020

The Town of Sylva Board of Commissioners held a regular meeting on July 9, 2020 at 5:30 p.m. hosted in the Board Room of Municipal Hall, 83 Allen Street, Sylva, N.C. and held electronically by Zoom meeting.

**PRESENT:** Lynda Sossamon, Mayor  
Barbara Hamilton, Vice-Mayor  
Mary Gelbaugh, Commissioner  
Ben Guiney, Commissioner  
Greg McPherson, Commissioner  
David Nestler, Commissioner

Michael Morgan, Town Manager  
Amanda Murajda, Town Clerk  
Eric Ridenour, Town Attorney

**ABSENT:**

Mayor Sossamon called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

**STAFF PRESENT:** Chris Hatton (Police Chief) and Jake Scott (Public Works Director).

**VISITORS:** Kelly Brown, Holly Kays, Dave Russell, Fleming Sanders and Christine Taber.

**AGENDA:** *Commissioner Nestler made a motion to add an item to the agenda for discuss of a resolution requesting removal of the Confederate Statute located on the Jackson County Historic Courthouse steps. The motion carried with a unanimous vote. Commissioner Hamilton made a motion to approve the agenda as amended. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.*

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

**PUBLIC COMMENTS:** None.

**MAYOR'S REPORT:** Sossamon reported that she had been working on outside dining options for restaurants on Main Street who cannot comply with social distancing requirements during the Coronavirus pandemic. The NC Restaurant and Lodging Association asked that towns find ways to help restaurants since we are in the pandemic. Sossamon has spoken with NCDOT and restaurants who are interested in this.

**COMMISSIONER'S REPORT:** Commissioner Gelbaugh commented that she was concerned about residents on the detour route for the Dillsboro Bridge replacement as well as the businesses affected by the road closures. She also noted that the Tuckasegee River is very discolored and reiterated that building codes needed to be followed. Commissioner Nestler would like to see outdoor dining in the B-1 district as a right by use not a conditional use permit. He reminded everyone to continuing supporting Harold's Supermarket during the road closures. Commissioner Guiney noted that the spread of COVID-19 continues and reminded everyone to continue wearing masks. He also mentioned the Reconcile Sylva march to be held July 11, 2020 at Bridge Park. Commissioner McPherson welcomed Interim Town Manager Michael Morgan. He expressed his disappointment in the Dillsboro Bridge closure due to replacement. Commissioner Hamilton discussed the amount and speed of traffic on Yellowbird Branch Road due to the bridge closure and asked the police department to investigate.

**MANAGERS REPORT:** Manager Dowling was not in attendance.

- Eric Ridenour reported that the Court of Appeals voted unanimously in favor of the Town of Sylva in the Curtis Lambert court trial.

**MAIN STREET REPORT:** None.

**FIRE DEPARTMENT REPORT:** None.

**NEW BUSINESS**

**INTERIM TOWN MANAGER POSITION:** *Commissioner Hamilton made a motion to approve the position of Interim Town Manager. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.*

**INTERIM TOWN MANAGER CONTRACT:** *Commissioner Gelbaugh made a motion approve Michael Morgan as Interim Town Manager and appropriate \$32, 100 from fund balance to cover the cost his contract. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.*

**BANK SIGNATURE CARD UPDATED FOR INTERIM TOWN MANAGER:** *Commissioner Hamilton made a motion to approve adding Interim Town Manager Michael Morgan to the bank signature card. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.*

**APPROVE FIRE DEPARTMENT OFFICERS FOR FY 2020-2021:** Mayor Sossamon read the list of Fire Department officers for approval for FY 2020-2021:

Chief	Mike Beck
1 <sup>st</sup> Assistant Chief	Keith Buchanan
2 <sup>nd</sup> Assistant Chief	Brandon Sutton
Captain	Sam Shuler
Captain	Brian Wellmon
Lieutenant	Ben Clawson
Secretary	Jessie Turner
Safety Officer	Belinda Clawson
Chaplain	Mike Farmer

*Commissioner Guiney made a motion to approve the FY 2020-2021 Fire Department officers. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.*

**SPEED LIMIT REDUCTION: EAST HOMETOWN PLACE:** NCDOT sent a proposal to the Town of Sylva to reduce the speed limit on East Hometown Place. The Police Department recommends accepting the proposal of NCDOT. *Commissioner Nestler made a motion to approve the speed limit reduction on East Hometown Place and authorize Amanda Murajda to request NCDOT lower the speed limit even further. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.*

**USE OF CONFEDERATE IMAGERY:** Commissioner Guiney introduced the following idea:

*Use of Confederate imagery on Town of Sylva vehicles and property will no longer be permitted as of July 10, 2020. In the interest of fiscal responsibility this applies to all future design changes but does not apply to imagery currently on Town of Sylva Property.*

Guiney explained that the intent was not to erase history but to realize what has happened over the years. He feels that the Town of Sylva should be proactively planning for the future and removing this image going forward would do so. The design of the police badges, cars, and fire department trucks contain the statute image. Chief Hatton reported that it would cost the town approximately an additional \$6,000 to redo the images. This would be in addition to the \$6,000 already spent. Guiney added that making the change going forward would be more fiscally responsible.

*Commissioner Guiney made a motion that the use of Confederate imagery on Town of Sylva vehicles and property will no longer be permitted as of July 10, 2020. In the interest of fiscal responsibility this applies to all future design changes but does not apply to imagery currently on Town of Sylva Property.*

Commissioner Nestler questioned how this becomes effective and asked if it would be a resolution, ordinance or policy. Attorney Ridenour commented that whatever change is made would be in effect until a future board changes it. Commissioner Gelbaugh expressed her opinion on the monument and noted that she would like to share an idea that would remove writing from the front as a compromise. Commissioner Hamilton noted that front could be made more appealing and appreciates Gelbaugh. Nestler added that he supported removing the statute from town property. Commissioner McPherson expressed that this was the most controversial piece of art he knew of.

It was clarified with the board that this would be a policy amendment and not an ordinance.

*The motion carried with a 4-1 vote. Voting in the affirmative were Commissioners Nestler, Guiney, McPherson and Hamilton. Voting against the motion was Commissioner Gelbaugh.*

Chief Hatton added that this was not a statement from the police department; they simply added the image as it appears on all photographs not specifically to the statue.

**RESOLUTION TO REMOVE STATUTE:** Commissioner Nestler presented a resolution to the board requesting that Jackson County remove the Confederate statute from any property in the city limits of Sylva. The Mayor asked for discussion, but Attorney Ridenour suggested that discussion should be on next agenda. Commissioner Nestler began the discussion and Gelbaugh questioned what he thought an appropriate location would be if removed. Commissioner suggested that those who feel the statute is important be involved in deciding the location. Commissioner Hamilton reminded the board that Jackson County will have to decide on whether the statute will be removed.

*Commissioner McPherson made a motion to add this resolution to the next meeting, July 23, 2020. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.*

**ADJOURNMENT:** *Commissioner Guiney made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:55 p.m. The motion carried with a unanimous vote.*

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Lynda Sossamon  
Mayor

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Amanda W. Murajda  
Town Clerk