

MINUTES OF THE TOWN OF WAYNESVILLE BOARD OF ALDERMEN
Special Called Meeting
February 4, 2020

THE WAYNESVILLE BOARD OF ALDERMEN held a special called meeting on Tuesday, February 4, 2020 at 5:30 p.m. in the Public Services Training Room, located at 129 Legion Drive, Waynesville, NC.

A. CALL TO ORDER SPECIAL MEETING

Mayor Gary Caldwell called the meeting to order at 5:53 pm with the following members present:

Mayor Gary Caldwell
Mayor Pro Tem Julia Freeman
Alderman Jon Feichter
Alderman Anthony Sutton
Alderman Chuck Dickson

The following staff members were present:

Rob Hites, Town Manager
Amie Owens, Assistant Town Manager
Eddie Ward, Town Clerk
Bill Cannon, Town Attorney
Ben Turnmire, Finance Director

The following media representatives were present:

Becky Johnson, The Mountaineer

B. NEW BUSINESS

1. Discussion related to composition of the Homelessness Taskforce and consideration of potential applicants

- Mayor Gary Caldwell

Mayor Caldwell welcomed everyone and thanked them for the good turnout of interested people. He stated that at the first meeting of the newly elected officials they decided to form the Homelessness Task Force to combat some of the problems of being Homeless in Waynesville and Haywood County. Mayor Caldwell explained that he had chosen nine appointees to be the “core” of the Task Force.

- Alderman Anthony Sutton
- Police Chief David Adams
- Sheriff Greg Christopher or appointee
- Bill Guy – Open Door
- Mandy Haithcox – Pathways
- Patsy Davis – Mountain Projects
- Brandon Wilson – Veterans Services
- Teresa Pierce – Panacea
- Kevin Ensley – County Commissioner

Mayor Caldwell asked Assistant Town Manager Amie Owens to present information for the meeting.

Ms. Owens stated that the first goal was to determine what the composition of the Task Force was going to be. She said that it was great to have 32 applicants, but that was a large group, and she would like to identify who the primary stakeholders are. She added to keep in mind that there are secondary stakeholders that could still be pulled into this process as the primary Task Force gets started. Ms. Owens presented a list of who the primary stakeholders might be as follows:

- The Town of Waynesville
- Law Enforcement – Town and County
- Business owners from Frog Level, Hazelwood, and Waynesville at large
- Homeless/Former Homeless
- DSS/Health Department
- Mental Health/Substance Abuse Professionals
- Citizens

Ms. Owens said that the Homelessness Task Force could utilize resources and persons from all these entities and combined with the core appointees work together towards the goals of the Task Force. She said she would like to ask the Board to determine if there needed to be any other primary stakeholders before we try to develop how many more individuals are needed on the committee.

Ms. Owens explained that Mayor Caldwell would like to have each Alderman to submit two appointees in addition to the nine members he had chosen, which would bring the committee to a total of 17. She asked the Board if there were any other primary stakeholders they would like to be added.

Alderman Chuck Dickson reminded the Board that a grant had been written to the Dogwood Health Trust for the purpose of hiring a facilitator for the Task Force. He said that in that grant there were 4 items listed as the goals and objectives of the committee. He added that the grant would need to be spent in this calendar year.

- Research the demographics of the Homeless and the causes of homelessness
- Examine stigmatization, criminalization and discrimination associated with homelessness
- To conduct a gap analysis to identify existing community capacity and additional resources necessary to prevent temporary and chronic homelessness.
- Develop a collaborative community action plan to fill system gaps and improve existing programs

He said that one of the reasons that we want people from these different areas to on the Task Force, and the people who are chosen, should have the authority or ability to commit resources, money, personnel, and cooperation to the committee. The Task Force will join in an agreement that these are the kinds of things that we will do to help with this problem. Assistant Manager Owens added that different programs and services can be added from these agencies as the committee moves along.

In addition to the seven secondary stakeholders listed, Alderman Dickson suggested the following entities be added as primary stakeholders.

- Reach
- Haywood County Health Care Foundation
- Haywood County Schools
- Faith Based organizations
- Western Carolina Educators

Assistant Manager Owens told the Board that they need to try to keep within the confines of a manageable Task Force size.

Mayor Caldwell told the Board that no one would be appointed at this meeting, but he would like for the Board to choose their applicants and present them at the February 11, 2020 meeting. He said he hoped that the Task Force would be an ongoing committee for the Town.

Alderman Julia Freeman stated that she felt that the Task Force would need to look at all of Haywood County, not just the Town of Waynesville. She said this was a county wide problem that affect so many communities, and we have got to broaden our vision and look past our Town and bring people onboard that can address the situation and move forward.

Alderman Feichter thanked all the applicants. He said he was amazed by the applications that was received, and he hoped that there was a way for all the applicants to be part of the Task Force. He said that he knew this would be a difficult task of finding a solution to the Homelessness situation, but if there was any Town that could do it, Waynesville would be the one.

After much discussion concerning the number of persons serving on the Task Force, the Board decided to increase the number for each Aldermen to submit for appointment from two applicants to three applicants.

Alderman Dickson suggested to the Board that their three appointees be residents of Waynesville. He also stated that two of the applicants had been homeless, and he felt that one of them should serve on the Task Force.

A motion was made by Alderman Anthony Sutton, seconded by Alderman Chuck Dickson to increase the number of appointees to the Homelessness Task Force from seventeen to twenty-one. The motion carried unanimously.

Mayor Caldwell asked if anyone in the audience if they wished to speak.

Ms. Amy Murphy-Nugen – Western Carolina University professor

Ms. Nugen thanked the Board for opening the process of looking for solutions to homelessness in the community. She said she would like to work with the Task Force in any capacity, and because of her work at Western Carolina University, she feels she could be a facilitator and bring people together who have common goals and different perspectives on how to reach those goals. She stated she had 20 years of experience in affordable housing, community economic development, and addressing social determinants of health issues like homelessness.

Brandon Wilson- Director of Veterans Services of the Carolinas Asheville Buncombe Community Christian Ministry

Mr. Wilson said he felt he could bring a lot of different resources to the Task Force. He said he managed \$3 million dollars in grant money, and Haywood County is part of that. He said that a new grant had just been received was specifically for intensive outreach purposes. This grant would provide a case manager and two pier supports, in the streets working with law enforcement to identify homeless and link them to mental health and substance abuse programs. At that point Mr. Wilson said there would be follow ups

with the person for up to 18 months, and this would make it manageable for the homeless person to get back on their feet and be sustainable.

Destri Leger

Ms. Leger stated that she served as the Regional Lead for the WNC Homeless Coalition. She is the founding Board President and case manager of HERE in Jackson County and have served on multiple committees with the North Carolina Coalition to end homelessness. HERE in Jackson County provides low barrier housing assistance regardless of income, sobriety, or mental health state. She is the regional lead of the eight county Western Carolina Homeless Coalition. Ms. Leger told the Board that she has extensive knowledge and access to resources surrounding evidence base practices in serving homeless populations, which includes mental health and substance use struggles.

Amy C. Hendricks

Ms. Hendricks stated that she did not live in Waynesville, but she did live in Haywood County. Her background is in Public Health and paranalatal substance use prevention. She has participated and led health-related focus/action groups in her community. She has worked with volunteer organizations that focus on improving the lives of children. Ms. Hendricks has assisted in the creation of health-related policies for Haywood County. She explained to the Board that there was a lot of misinformation of how far harm reduction does reach. She said it was great to have the opportunity to be a part of the Task Force whether we live inside the city limits or outside the city limits.

Keri Guidry

Ms. Guidry told the Board that she is Senior Case Manager at Haywood Pathways Center. She said that she worked with homeless folks daily, and they know her personally. She said that most homeless did not trust the government. Ms. Guidry said she could advocate for them and she is willing to work with the Task Force and the community to discuss the adverse effects of the homelessness in Haywood County. She said she could offer the one-on-one experience that is needed to work with homelessness.

Lt. Tyler Trantham

Lieutenant Tyler Trantham from the Waynesville Police Department stated that the Police Department has been involved with the LEAD (Law Enforcement Assistant Diversion) program for many years. He explained that the LEAD was a program that instead of going to jail, the charges are diverted and referred to the case worker so that they don't keep reoffending. He said that Gariann Yochym was the LEAD case worker and she would be a good person to have in place for the Task Force. He said there was criteria for the program and certain crimes committed would not be eligible. Lt. Trantham said that Ms. Gariann Yochym could provide some financial resources to help people get off the street. He said that homelessness is just not limited to people on the street It could involve people who have had a house fire and have been displaced. The police deal with the homeless every day, and they have close relationships with a lot of them. He said that what it comes down to is it doesn't matter how much money is put into the Task Force it all comes down to having a relationship the them. Sometimes homeless people are wrapped in the same group as those who commit crimes as repeat offenders. He said there are some people who need resources, and some who will take advantage of the resources. He asked the Board to have an open mind as to what homelessness is.

Joey Reece

Mr. Reece said that the last four years of his employment in law enforcement work in high density drug trafficking areas which covered Kentucky, West Virginia and Tennessee. He said that we are not going to treat or arrest our way out of this. He told the Board that if we don't get the kids early, we cannot stop the drug epidemic. This is a gray area with people, and we cannot lose our compassion, and we cannot let our compassion overrule our good judgement so that it affects the rest of the system. He asked that everyone work together towards the goals of the Task Force.

Dick Young

Mr. Young said he felt that the homeless choose to live that way.

Bob Cummings

Mr. Cummings moved to Waynesville from Asheville and is a Substance Abuse Prevention Specialist. He has worked in mental health, social work, and addiction treatment for over 35 years. He stated that he was assistant director and program director of Knox Area Rescue Ministries in Knoxville, Tennessee, and the Western Carolina Rescue Mission. Mr. Cummings has spent time on the streets and has struggled to find work and pay bills and received appropriate help and support from friends. He said he was involved with a church in Hazelwood that is associated with Pathways. He told the Board that they need to start early in order to stop the problems.

Barbara Stuteville

Ms. Stuteville said she could bring a perspective from the homeless in Waynesville, Hazelwood, and Frog Level. She said that all they really want is love, understanding, and a safe place to be at night. Some place with guidance and where they won't be judged. She said they need someone to be with them, that you cannot put them into rehab and leave them. Ms. Stuteville said she was a recovering addict and homeless with two children. There needs to be tough love to be able to pick someone up from the bottom and get them off the streets.

Vickie Gribble

Ms. Gribble said she wanted the Board to remember that throughout her lifetime she and her family has been caring for neighbors, and a lot of it through the faith-based community. She asked the Board to make sure to look to local churches for the faith-based community.

Shelbia Hyatt

Ms. Hyatt said she had worked with Mountain Projects for 17 years in the self-help housing program. She feels there must be accountability for yourself as well as community support. Ms. Hyatt told the Board to use the laws that are already on the books. She feels that poverty is multi-faceted. You must ask yourself how you are going to manage the goals you have set for yourself. She said she lives in Hazelwood and does not want to see the "Mayberry" image destroyed.

Wanda Brooks

Ms. Brooks said she grew up on the street where Pathways is in Hazelwood, and she owns a building close to Pathways. She has had much damage to her property there. Private citizens are affected, and they deserve to be safe, and keeping kids safe is very important, because they are the beginning. She has tried for five years to speak up on her own, and for five years she has been ignored.

Mayor Caldwell thanked everyone for being at the meeting and encouraged everyone to come to the Task Force meetings.

B. ADJOURN

A motion was made by Alderman Jon Feichter, seconded by Alderman Anthony Sutton to adjourn the meeting at 7:11 pm. The motion carried unanimously.

ATTEST:

Gary Caldwell, Mayor

Robert W. Hites, Jr. Town Manager

Eddie Ward, Town Clerk