

**MINUTES OF THE TOWN OF WAYNESVILLE BOARD OF ALDERMEN**  
**Special Called Meeting**  
**August 11, 2021**

**THE WAYNESVILLE BOARD OF ALDERMEN** held a Special Called meeting on Wednesday August 11, 2021 at 6:00 pm. in the Town of Waynesville Recreation Center located at 550 Vance Street, Waynesville, NC.

**A. CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Gary Caldwell called the meeting to order at 6:05 pm with the following members present:

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

The following staff members were present:

- Rob Hites, Town Manager
- Eddie Ward, Town Clerk

The following media representative was present:

- Vicky Hyatt, The Mountaineer
- Cory Valliancort, Smoky Mountain News

Members of the Downtown Waynesville Association present:

- Chairman, Carolyn Brunk
- Interim Director, Beth Gilmore
- Teresa Pennington
- Tiffany Logan
- LeRoy Roberson
- Gale Roberson
- Jeanette Price
- Alex McKay
- Joey Fuesler
- Joyce Massie
- Lorelei Garnes
- Morgan Beryl

1. Welcome

Mayor Gary Caldwell welcomed everyone to the meeting, and asked Alderman Anthony Sutton to proceed.

Alderman Sutton thanked everyone for coming to the meeting. He told the Board and the members of DWA that he had spent many hours researching minutes, financial statements, and NC State Statues.

The first item discussed was the structure of the multiple Boards within the association, the number of members on each Board, minutes of each meeting, and times when these Boards meet. When asked about the search committee for a new Executive Director, Carolyn Brunk, President, stated there had been a committee formed consisting of herself, Jonathan Key, Teresa Pennington, Alex McKay, Morgan Beryl, and Jeanette Price. She stated she had currently received three applications.

Alderman Sutton questioned as to why it has taken months to get copies of minutes and financial statements. He expressed concern about some of the minutes that things were not being followed up on. Teresa Pennington explained that the previous director was having trouble for a couple of years and the others did not realize these things were happening. Alderman Sutton told the DWA Board that is should not have taken the former Director leaving for these things to come to light.

Alderman Sutton pointed out that in the NC State Statute, Downtown Revitalization portion, the following criteria is required for this organization:

- Specify the purpose for which the city monies are to be used.
- The contract shall require appropriate accounting for the monies at the end of each fiscal year.
- The appropriate accounting shall include the name, location, purpose, and amount paid to any person or persons with whom the private agency contracted to perform or complete any purpose for which the City's money was used for that Service District.

Board Member Lorelei Garnes stated that she felt that the DWA had the right Board now to correct some of the things in question, and to work with Main Street, get some strategic plans in place, work with the Aldermen, and get everybody on the same page to save the DWA.

Alderman Sutton said that he felt that there needed to be something entirely different within the DWA, and he had a solution. He proposed that the DWA be brought back under the purview of the Town of Waynesville. This would mean that the Town would perform the functions indicated in the NC State Statutes. The committee would have to follow all the open meeting laws, follow all accounting procedures, publicize meetings, minutes would be taken by the Town Clerk, and

the Executive Director would become an employee of the Town of Waynesville. The DWA would not receive any funds from the Town, as it would be handled internally, the Main Street program. Members would be appointed to the DWA Board by the Board of Aldermen.

President Brunk and Ms. Pennington asked for the other Aldermen's opinions. Manager Hites said he would prefer not to administer the program, but he works for the Board, and must follow their instructions.

***Alderman Sutton made a motion, seconded by Alderwoman Julia Freeman, to approve the DWA contract being brought back under the purview of the Town of Waynesville.***

President Brunk stated that the Board members of DWA loved Waynesville, and she felt that they should be given the chance to rebuild DWA to what it once was.

Alderman Jon Feichter stated that obviously, there is a problem with DWA, but it is a drastic solution to bring the DWA back under the Town. He said there had been some oversight by the Aldermen as well as the DWA with these problems, and the Aldermen need to be more directly involved in the functions of DWA going forward. The step of bringing this in-house is not warranted at this time. He told both Boards that he would prefer to enable DWA to move forward with changes and a new Director, and in one year see where we are with the idea that the DWA can always be brought into the Town at any time.

Dr. LeRoy Roberson said he felt that this is an organization that can be very effective. He does not feel that the Town should not be hiring and firing a DWA Director. He suggested giving the organization 2 years, and that an Alderman needed to be on the Board to have a hand in the operations.

Mayor Caldwell indicated that he felt like the DWA has been in decline for a while. He gave an example of the recent concert on Main Street. He said the only people there to help Interim Director Beth Gilmore was Brandon Gilmore, and the Town Public Services crew, preparing for the concert. They are usually the only people that help set up for Town functions.

Mayor Caldwell asked about interviews for the Executive Director. Chairman Brunk said she had four applications and has not interviewed anyone. After being questioned by Alderwoman Freeman, President Brunk said she had conducted one interview. At that point, there was a correction that she had interviewed two candidates. Alderwoman Freeman asked who had participated in the interviews. President Brunk told her that she and Board Member Jonathan Key had conducted the interviews.

Alderman Dickson said he had heard several complaints over the years, and one had to do with the advertising. He told everyone that nothing should be done that would dampen the enthusiasm that the DWA Board has, and drive people away. Alderman Dickson said he was not

ready to vote to take the organization in-house. He noted that the DWA had plenty of money in the bank to hire a Director, and in way did the Town want to disband the organization.

Alderman Feichter said he felt that this was what was going to happen. If DWA is taken in by the Town, it would be basically starting over with the program. He commended Interim Director Beth Gilmore for doing a great job and pulling things together, and he realizes no one would take that job for just one year. It seems like it would be a mistake to take such a drastic step as taking DWA in-house knowing what has happened in the last few months. He urged the Board not to take that step but take a much more active role and monitor the DWA. Alderman Feichter stated that he is opposed to take the action now to bring the DWA into the Town.

Ms. Tiffany Logan told the Board that as a business owner on Main Street for two years, she is grateful for DWA and what it has done for Main Street. Clearly there are problems that need to be cleaned up, and there are a new set of horses to run the race. She said that if the Aldermen do the work and hand it over it would be like doing a project and then giving it to the people.

Alderman Sutton explained that this would be a committee like the other committees that operate under the Town. The Aldermen would appoint members from businesses downtown and building it up again to what it was years ago. He expressed his frustration and said there are some institutionalized issues that will not solve themselves such as the question before about conducting interviews and not getting the correct numbers. Trying to get information from the DWA has been very difficult, and it should not be.

There was much discussion about the interview process and who had been involved. Alderwoman Julia Freeman asked specifically who was on the interview committee and who had been interviewed for the Executive Director position. Morgan Beryl said there was clear dysfunctionality in the process .

Teresa Pennington said she felt the problems could be fixed with some help, and the Aldermen need to give the DWA a chance to do that. President Brunk stated that if her being on the Board was a problem for DWA to succeed, then she would step down. She said her business was getting slammed by the media and she did not like that.

Alderman Dickson said he would like to know if there was an organization that could provide professional help with guiding the DWA through the process of reorganization. Alderwoman Julia Freeman commented that the State was a valuable resource to use because they have documents and instructions, and that is the process that should be followed. Alderwoman Freeman said she did not feel that the Aldermen got the answers that they were looking for in this meeting. There is much confusion with the number of Boards and the number of members on each Board. The issues with the minutes and financial statements need to be cleared completely. Alderwoman Freeman said she is grateful for the people in this community who

want to step up and volunteer and completely appreciate all the service and the fact they do love the Town of Waynesville.

At that point Alderwoman Freeman rescinded her second on the prior motion made by Alderman Sutton and amended the motion to give the DWA ninety days to get things in order. Two people cannot run the organization by themselves, so the members of the Board need to start participating in the operation of the organization. She said that if there was another meeting with the DWA, she wanted to see the full Board in attendance, and she wanted answers. Alderwoman Freeman told everyone that the Alderman are stewards of the taxpayer's money in the Town of Waynesville. She said that the Alderman wants to have the DWA also be stewards of the money as well.

The DWA Board asked what should be accomplished in the ninety days. Alderman Sutton stated that they should follow the presentation that was made by Main Street USA. He asked that a strategic budget should be formed showing what the monies they are given be used for, and who is going to be paid for it. He told them to follow the NC Statute, and follow up on things.

Mayor Caldwell appointed Alderman Sutton to the DWA Board as the staff person.

Interim Director Beth Gilmore said it was very clear that there is a long list of items that need to be accomplished. The first step is developing a strategic plan, and the other things will fall into place. Whoever the Director is needs to be part of that process, and she is ready, but she does not want to get to far down that road not knowing if she is staying in the position. Time is of the essence, and she asked for direction on choosing a Director, and input on the structure of the Board. She said it is hard to forecast what will happen within the next five years because we do not have a plan in place.

Alderman Sutton replied that they were given instructions on hiring a Director in the materials they were given at a recent presentation by the State. Alderwoman Freeman told the Board to find the people that are listed as being on each Board within the DWA, because it is very confusing. The bylaw revisions need to be voted on and start the planning process. There must be some good faith effort within the next ninety days to make this vision work and moving forward a reality.

Alderman Dickson added that it was stated in the DWA's bylaws that six directors shall be members by virtue of their association organizations. He named five.

- Waynesville City Government
- Haywood County Government
- Haywood County Chamber of Commerce
- Haywood Arts Council
- Haywood County Economic Development Commission

Alderman Sutton state that Alderman Feichter could represent the Economic Development because of his appointment to the TDA.

Interim Director Beth Gilmore said that the State’s Main Street and Rural Planning Center provide templates for a six to twelve-month plan that is given to new programs who need a plan until they get their long-range plan in place. She would like to have a work session to start the process and follow their lead. This would make the process easier to navigate. We have the tools to be successful.

Ms. Jeanette Price told the Aldermen that she appreciated the work that Alderman Sutton has done. She said that as a Board member, it is very much a red flag when we are talking about the legalities of this Board. She said she is hoping that a solution can be found because we all love Waynesville. We all relied to heavily on the previous director, and we as a Board need to realize our own responsibility in what has happened. She said that we stand corrected, and we need to go forward.

***The motion made by Alderman Sutton did not receive a second on the prior motion, so the motion died.***

Alderman Sutton asked the DWA to make a monthly update to the Board of Aldermen on the progress being made.

Alderman Feichter advised the Board to not hire a Director, but instead use the Director that has been appointed as Interim. She has an opportunity to prove herself as the Executive Director and live up to the praise that everyone has heard.

**I. ADJOURN**

***With no further business, a motion was made by Alderman Anthony Sutton, seconded by Alderman Jon Feichter, to adjourn the meeting at 7:23 pm. The motion was approved unanimously.***

ATTEST:

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Robert W. Hites, Town Manager

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Gary Caldwell, Mayor

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Eddie Ward, Town Clerk