



**TOWN OF WEBSTER**  
**December 1, 2021 Board Meeting Minutes**

The Webster Board of Commissioners met via Zoom on Wednesday, December 1, 2021, at 5:15 p.m. for the regularly scheduled monthly board meeting.

**Members/Staff Present:** Mayor Tracy Rodes; Vice Mayor Leigh Anne Young, Commissioners Allen Davis, Kelly Donaldson (arriving after roll call), Danell Moses; Commissioner-Elect Dale Collins, Town Clerk Debbie Coffey; Town Attorney Will Morgan

**Absent:** None

**Public Present:** Rusty Ellis, Andrew Schuler, Brandon Core

**Call to Order/Ethics Statement:** Mayor Tracy Rodes called the meeting to order at 5:15 p.m. and read the Ethics Statement. No board member expressed any conflict of interest.

*ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING*

1. **Oath of Office:** The clerk issued oaths for the newly elected commissioners, Dale Collins, Leigh Anne Young, and Danell Moses; and newly elected mayor, Tracy Rodes.

2. **Appointment of Mayor Pro Tempore:**

*MOTION: Commissioner Danell Moses moved to open nominations for Mayor Pro Tempore. Commissioner Davis seconded. Motion carried.*

Danell Moses nominated Leigh Anne Young to serve as Mayor Pro Tempore.

*MOTION: Commissioner Moses moved to close nominations. Commissioner Davis seconded. Motion carried.*

Leigh Ann Young was approved to serve as Mayor Pro Tempore in a unanimous vote. She also agreed to continue serving as Commissioner Liaison to the Planning Board.

*BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS MEETING*

**Approval of Agenda:**

*MOTION: Commissioner Collins moved to approve the agenda. Commissioner Young seconded. Motion carried.*

**Approval of Minutes:** The minutes of the November 3, 2021, Board Meeting were emailed prior to the meeting for review.

*MOTION: Commissioner Young moved to approve the minutes, amended to correct the misspelling of Commissioner Donaldson's name on the last paragraph of page 2. Commissioner Moses seconded. Motion carried.*

**Guest Speaker: Rusty Ellis, Jackson County Parks and Recreation Director:** Mr. Ellis addressed the board about the possibility of a community park in Webster, located at the softball field. Mr. Ellis suggested that a meeting between Town officials, Jackson County Attorney Heather Baker, and Jackson County Public School (JCPS) Assistant Superintendent Jake Buchanan would be the next step in moving forward. He noted a similar agreement with JCPS at Fairview Elementary for the county to maintain a park area owned by JCPS. Several layout options were discussed including public restrooms, picnic pavilion, inclusive playground, and a nature-scape area. While the park would not interfere with shared use of the ballfield, a safety net would be needed.



In additional discussion, Mr. Ellis noted that liability would fall under the County's jurisdiction if the county leases the property from the JCPS. Commissioner Young sought clarification on the ownership of the two parcels of land, which according to Mr. Ellis, both belonged to JCPS. Commissioner Young added that she and Trevor Brown Jackson County Parks and Recreation) have walked the wooded property behind the area owned by Jay Coward. Young asked if Mr. Coward may be willing to provide an easement for a trail system or greenway area to connect with the park. Mr. Ellis stated he would continue to work with County leadership to keep the project moving forward.

### *CONSENT AGENDA*

#### **Financial Report:**

October financial statements were provided prior to the meeting. November transactions currently include income of \$5,628.64 and expenses of \$4,716.66. Account Balances as of today are:

\$ 143,401.21 - Elite Checking

\$ 85,512.46 - Elite Plus Money Market

*MOTION: Commissioner Davis moved to approve the Consent Agenda. Commissioner Young seconded. Motion carried.*

### *ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS*

#### **Mayor's Report:**

- Bronwyn Burleson has completed the 2020-2021 fiscal year audit and will present her findings at the January meeting. Fraud Risk Questionnaires are required with each audit. Mayor Rodes suggested that a review of procedures and an update to the Fraud Risk Policy may be needed in the future.
- Mayor Rodes has decorated the Town for the Holiday Season. She picked up several bags of litter while doing so, and suggested that a cleanup/decoration day may be in order next year.
- She attended the November Southwestern Commission RPO/TAC. Sarah Graham has accepted the position as director for Dogwood Health Trust and was honored for her service as Director of Southwestern Commission. Russ Harris will take over as Director for Southwestern Commission. Mayor Rodes noted that new NCDOT projects are not being prioritized (P7) due to funding shortfalls.
- Mayor Rodes has received pictures of erosion in Mill Creek from a Webster resident. She brought that concern to NCDOT officials at the RPO/TCC meeting and was referred to Hwy. 107 Project Engineer Janette White. Ms. White explained that the existing culverts will be replaced as part of the project with a box culvert near Pizza Hut. Bumgarner Branch will be diverted to a culvert, which will empty into Mill Creek. This may be a topic for discussion as the project moves forward.
- The County has received a \$2,000,000 grant from Dogwood Health Trust to build a domestic violence shelter and facility.
- Mountain Projects tapped Mayor Rodes to serve as secretary for their Board of Directors at their November meeting. The Head Start and Early Head Start Programs have had to reduce services due to Covid-19.
- The Planning Board may begin several projects for future discussion, including review of the County UDO amendments, review of civil fines stated in Town ordinances, and Short Term Rental regulations that may need to be adopted in the future.



- Michael Bonen-Clark has reported a soft spot in the kitchen floor, with the vinyl floor covering cracking in that area. Mayor Rodes has contacted Robin Sharrett of Bird's Eye Handyman Service, who will assess the damage Friday.

*MOTION: Commissioner Collins moved to amend the agenda to include Town Hall repairs. Commissioner Young seconded. Motion carried.*

- TWSA will only meet once in December, and the Week 49 Covid wastewater report is about the same as the previous week. Reported cases have declined in the past week, but an increase is expected following holiday gatherings.
- Mayor Rodes has four Fire King fireproof cabinets she would like to sell, and that would meet recommended standards of vital document storage for the town, but logistics may need to be considered prior to such an arrangement to meet ethical standards. Discussion included pricing used fireproof file cabinets for documentation storage as required by the state.

#### **Council Members' and Clerk's Reports:**

- Commissioner Young congratulated Commissioner Collins on his election, noting that the Planning Board is a wonderful incubator for developing future leaders. She attended the November Greenways Committee meeting. The Committee is headed by Trevor Brown and is in the process of reevaluating projects for the county.

#### *OLD BUSINESS*

1. **Land Use Plan:** Webster property owner Jim McGinnis attended the November Planning Board to provide public input on the Land Use Plan. Written feedback was provided from TWSA Director Daniel Manring and Safe Routes to Schools Jackie Moore. A final update will include edits reflecting this feedback. Commissioner Young shared the survey responses, including positive comments and concerns. Summarized comments will be included in the final plan. Mayor Rodes noted that 55% of respondents wish to keep the one acre minimum lot size, which is a closer margin than shown in previous surveys. Commissioner Collins commended Commissioner Young on the tremendous amount of work she has put into this plan.
2. **ARPA Funding:** Southwestern Commission and Land of Sky COG will have a joint workshop on December 8th to discuss funding uses and reporting. Mayor Rodes, Commissioner Young, and the clerk are registered to attend.

#### *NEW BUSINESS*

1. **Disposition (Chairs, Lamp, Cushions, and Office Accessories):** There are several items in the basement that need to be disposed of, including old chairs; however, the process is cumbersome for smaller municipalities under North Carolina dispossession guidelines and will need further investigation.
2. **Appointments to Planning Board:** Several residents have expressed an interest in serving on the Planning Board, including Brandon Core, Brandon McDevitt, and Rachael Pollack. Sara Stahlman is also willing to be reappointed, and Will Whitfield will move from the alternate position to a full board member. Eric Myers and Walter Turner do not wish to be reappointed following the expiration of their terms of service.

*MOTION: Commissioner Young moved to reappoint Sara Stahlman to the Planning Board. Commissioner Donaldson seconded. Motion carried.*



***MOTION:** Commissioner Young moved to appoint Will Whitfield from alternate to full board member. Commissioner Moses seconded. Motion carried.*

***MOTION:** Commissioner Moses moved to open the floor for nominations for the Planning Board.. Commissioner Young seconded. Motion carried.*

Commissioner Moses nominated Brandon Core to serve as Planning Board member.

Commissioner Young nominated Brandon McDevitt to serve as Planning Board member.

Commissioner Young nominated Rachael Pollack to serve as Alternate Member of the Planning Board.

***MOTION:** Commissioner Collins moved to close the floor for nominations.*

*Brandon Core was appointed as Planning Board member by unanimous vote.*

*Brandon McDevitt was appointed as Planning Board member by unanimous vote.*

*Rachael Pollack was appointed as Alternate Member to the Planning Board by unanimous vote.*

- 3. 2021-2022 Jackson County Grant:** The Jackson County Municipal Grant application is due on January 7, 2022. Mayor Rodes noted that last year's grant purchased four picnic tables and a trash can for the ballfield area. Commissioner Young mentioned that a combination of tables and benches would be a nice addition to the ballfield area, and could be used if the area is developed as a community park.

The possibility of digital speed signs was discussed but deemed as not being the best use of the municipal grant funding.

- 4. Town Hall Repairs:** In further discussion of the apartment subflooring, Mayor Rodes expressed her concern for the scope of the repair project, noting that a budget amendment would be necessary. She also said that the floor covering through the kitchen and dining room would most likely need to be replaced once subfloor repairs were completed. Because expenditures over \$500 require board approval, a specially called or emergency meeting may need to be called to approve the cost of the repairs. Commissioner Collins suggested approving repairs up to a certain amount in advance to expedite the process.

***MOTION:** Commissioner Moses moved to approve Mayor Rodes to authorize repairs to the apartment floor in an amount not to exceed \$15,000. Commissioner Collins seconded. Motion carried.*

- 5. Planning Board Topic Research:** Information was provided during the Mayor's Report.
- 6. Meeting Format:** Commissioner Moses stated that as long as Jackson County has high transmission rates of Covid-19, she feels meetings should continue to be held via Zoom. Commissioner Collins stated that he would prefer meeting in person, with masks if necessary. He feels valuable interactions are lost when not meeting in person, and cited several other boards within Jackson County that have resumed in-person meetings. Mayor Rodes agreed that in-person meetings are more cohesive, but commended this board for excellent communication and agrees that virtual meetings will be best until after the first of the year.



Cases are predicted to rise as more people are gathering together over the Christmas holidays. Commissioner Davis suggested reevaluating the format after the January meeting.

*ADJOURNMENT*

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***MOTION:** Commissioner Davis moved to adjourn. Motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 7:15 p.m.*

**Next Meeting:** Wednesday, January 5, 2022, via Zoom Meeting at 5:15 pm.

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Tracy Rodes, Mayor

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Debbie Coffey, Town Clerk