

Town of Maggie Valley
Board of Aldermen Workshop Minutes
December 1, 2020

MINUTES

Members Present: Mayor Mike Eveland, Aldermen: Phillip Wight, Twinkle Patel, Tammy Wight, and Clayton Davis

Staff Present: Manager Nathan Clark, Public Works Director Mike Mehaffey, Town Planner Ron Hancock, Chief of Police Russ Gilliland, Finance Director Shayne Wheeler, and Town Clerk Vickie Best

Others Present: Leigh Forrester with the Haywood County Arts Council and promoter of Memorial Day Americana Concert, Fred Strohm with Sarge's Animal Rescue Foundation, and promoter of WNC Jeep Fest

Call to Order

Mayor Eveland called the meeting/workshop to order at 9:30 am on Tuesday December 1, 2020 in the pavilion adjacent to Town Hall. Along with the Agenda Setting/Monthly Workshop, Council will be conducting their annual Festival Grounds Workshop, and a Mid-year Budget Review Workshop.

Due to having guests/promoters present, Council will conduct the Maggie Valley Festival Grounds Annual Workshop first.

Agenda:

- Year in Review
- Discussion of Known Issues
- Discussion of New Issues
- Final Comments

2020 Festival Grounds: Year in Review

- Festival Season June 18- November 19 (154 Days)
 - 2019 Festival Season April 26- October 27 (184 Days)
- Number of Events = 19
- Number of Event Days = 36
- Number of Cancelled Events = 7 events
 - Thunder in the Smokies (3), Elk Fest, Icons of Hot Roding, NE Mustangs, Blow Up Your TV
- Number of Cancelled Event Days = 16

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- Number of New Events = 6 events
 - Grey Eagle Drive in Concert Series
- Number of New Event Days = 6 event days

Due to the Covid-19 Pandemic, 2020 has been a difficult year for everyone-everywhere. The loss of employment and shut down restrictions, limited capacity, suspension of Temporary ABC Permits has all had an impact on events/festivals. It has been the fortitude of the Board of Aldermen to make the 2020 Festival Season the best possible.

Attorney Justus has assisted with the legal terminology under the Governor's Orders to navigate Council through the Festival Season. Some events had to reschedule, while other events were not able to take place in 2020. The Hillbilly Jam rescheduled from late July to Halloween weekend (October 31). Even with the difference in outside temperatures from July to October, The Hillbilly Jam did well, because of loyal attendees.

Due to the pandemic, there were no bands allowed at The Hillbilly Jam.

It has been with adaptation, resilience and Haywood County working with Maggie Valley that any events have been able to occur in 2020.

It also was a piece of good fortune that Russell Keith, owner of Grey Eagle Entertainment decided to come to Maggie Valley to conduct Drive-in Concerts.

Planner Hancock and his family attended the Jason Isbell and Amanda Shires Drive-in Concert at the Festival Grounds and were extremely impressed with Mr. Keith and his team's professionalism and well-planned methods. The individuals attending the concert were well-behaved.

Council concurred, during dark times, something new was a much-needed occurrence.

5 Year Review 2016 to 2020

Year	Events	Event Days
2016	24	55
2017	22	56

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2018	21	49
2019	20	56
2020	19	36

The 2021 events have already been approved and put on the events calendar. Mr. Keith with Grey Eagle Entertainment desires to possibly do two (2) concerts in April/early spring. Again, this would be good for the commercial district because normally Mini-Truckin is the first event of the season. The commercial district/tourism is typically slow that time of year.

5 Years Revenues V/S Expenditures 2016 to 2020

Although the amount of funding has greatly decreased, the General Fund still contributes funding to the Festival Grounds each year. In 2019 Haywood County Tourism Development Authority (HCTDA) provided funding for several improvements and events at the Festival Grounds, which staff and Council are grateful for.

Noise

- Issues have been discussed at length over past couple of years.
- Better results during 2020 season
- Grey Eagle has demonstrated how professional sound design can improve quality of events
- Mid-Week Concerts have raised some concerns- current policy allows music to be played until 11PM.
- For Sunday-Thursdays Events, Board may want to consider 9PM or 10PM cutoff, out of concern for workers/students.

For three years Ms. Joy Hearn has advocated for less noise radiating from the Festival Grounds; especially up the mountainside into The Knolls (subdivision).

Staff has received zero feedback from the drive-in concerts. Grey Eagle Entertainment have a professional sound design. Manager Clark will try to get the model from Mr. Keith to hopefully use at other events.

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As Ms. Hearn has spoken about several times, the setup of the sound equipment means everything. The cleaner the setup, the better the sound. Often, the less-clean setup, the louder the sound is to cover for errors.

The Town received HCTDA funding in early 2020 for acoustical tile improvements to the stage. Those improvements have been completed.

The Festival Grounds Rules and Regulations currently allows for music to go to 11 pm. Now that there is a possibility of 2021 having additional concerts on weeknights, Council should consider lowering that regulation to 10 pm on weekdays. Grey Eagle Entertainment events are generally finished by 9:30 pm. On Friday and Saturday nights, music cutoff will remain 11 pm.

Manager Clark will modify the Festival Grounds Policy to reflect the changes discussed.

Due to the 2021 events being approved under the existing rules and regulations, any changes made to the policy will not become effective until 2022.

Cost of Doing Business

- The original fee schedule for the FG was created in 2015
 - \$500 per day, \$1,500 deposit
- The fees have gone unchanged since 2015
- For 2021 Festival Season, Festival Grounds electricity category has changed from low demand user to medium demand user, which likely will double the electricity cost.
- Reduced Monetary Value
- In 2015: \$500 (35 event days) = \$17,500
- In 2020: \$455 (35 event days) = \$15,925 (The value of \$500 is now worth \$455 due to inflation)
- Fees increase for 2022 should be considered

Again, energy consumption has led the Festival Grounds to hit the mid-demand tier for electric use. The electric bill for the Festival Grounds will double in the coming year. Council must look at the monetary value of what \$500 buys. Compared to the value of \$500 in 2015, now in 2020 \$500 is worth \$455 in buying power. Once again, as earlier stated, a fee increase would not

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affect the 2021 promoters because their event has already been approved under the existing fee schedule.

Council decided to have this discussion in early 2021, when more data can be gathered. Council also agreed that there is a cost to doing business, but revenues verses expenditures should be within a certain range.

The Festival Grounds is a service provided to the Commercial District to offset the services provided to Residential Districts. It is staff's estimate that between one (1) cent and two (2) cents of the property tax collections go toward the Festival Grounds.

The Haywood County Revaluations numbers will be out in February 2021. Council could make a more informed decision in late March or April due to Covid-19, unknown revaluations, and projected sales tax.

If in late March or April, Council is comfortable with the fees as they are, then more money will be allocated from the General Fund for Festival Grounds expenses.

Manager Clark added that he would not want to raise the Festival Grounds fees annually, but to look at raising the fees \$50 to \$100 every three to five years. This provides promoters time to adjust their shows/events/festivals.

Damage Threshold

- FG is an all-weather facility
- It is common for events to endure seasonal rain/thunderstorms during their rental period
- High traffic events, especially those with many onsite vendors who come and go, create damaged areas
- Promoters are encouraged to limit single track movement at their event to prevent continued damage
- Widen Gravel Surfaces
 - FY20-21 or FY21-22
- Other Ideas to reduce FG Damage
 - Consistent Facility Condition
- Refund Damage/Hold Damage

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This season, although a wet season, several promoters have been charged for damage to the Festival Grounds. The Festival Grounds is an all-weather venue and all events face rain events.

When the grounds are wet, it is not ideal to continue to allow vehicular traffic to drive through the same area.

Examples of the damage that happened this year:



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Rodney Buckner, a long-time promoter, has put up cones trying to adjust traffic patterns. Each time there is damage, staff talks with the promoter prior to them checking out. The Town does not charge for labor, only materials. Staff wants the next promoter to receive the grounds in the same condition as the promoter before them. Mr. Buckner was more comfortable paying for the gravel solution than laying more sod.

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Public Works Department was using sod to repair the damage, but the cost of sod has increased. Now, the employees use gravel and roll it, thus widening the gravel area near the center. Rolling in gravel and sowing grass seed on top thus far has been workable with good drainage.

As stated, several promoters were charged anywhere from \$200 to \$500 for damage to the grounds. Ivor Nathan, assistant promoter of Slingshots in the Smokies is the only promoter that has complained about the charge. Christina and Scott MacIndoe that purchased the event from Mr. Nathan were also upset.

Mr. and Mrs. MacIndoe nor Mr. Nathan were on premise during checkout. The checkout process was left to hired cleaners. At the Slingshot event, vendors placed tarps on the ground that killed the grass.

The Festival Grounds is not the MacIndoe's ideal space. They prefer a covered area.

Council could determine that a gravel field would be the best option. The issue is a gravel field would not be fitting for all events.

Some suggestions from Council:

- ▶ Before the season begins put down gravel and sow grass in problem areas.
- ▶ Increase the width of the gravel in problem areas.
- ▶ Clearly inform promoters that they will have to pay for repairs if high traffic areas are not roped off or traffic is guided in a different direction during rain events.

The promoters love having the grass and the repairs are currently working.

Setup is different for each event which changes the possible damaged areas.

There is a product called "Grass Pave". The Grass Pave provides a hard surface but remains green. Grass Pave is expensive similar to the cost of asphalt. It is estimated that a 1000 square-foot area would cost \$15,000.

Manager Clark will gather information about the life span for the product and the exact costs.

Manager Clark asked, on Ivor Nathan's behalf, if Council was comfortable with the \$500 charge for ground damages to the Slingshots in the Smokies.

Four employees spent an entire day with a backhoe and rakes spreading gravel repairing the grounds.

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Council was comfortable with the charge.

Traffic and Congestion

As the popularity of Festival Grounds events grow, so does their impact on adjacent property owners

Events are not “one size fits all”

Current Policy does not require promoters to submit a parking plan or require parking attendants

- Better Signage at Auxiliary Parking Lots
- Police Crossing Guards

Everyone is aware that one size does not fit all when it comes to events, parking, traffic, etc. Adjacent property owners are impacted by parking, blocking entrances, and people leaving trailers blocking off areas that need to be open.

For larger events, Council may want to consider requiring a parking plan and/or parking attendants. Staff/Council does not want the Police Officers to become the parking police.

An example: A trailer was left blocking the entrance to an adjacent business and it was difficult for the police to find the owner of the trailer to resolve the issue. These issues take up time and resources that would be better served elsewhere.

Staff will make it clear to all promoters where parking is available. The liability would be placed more on the promoter. The promoters need to assign staff for parking in problem areas.

When questioned about the “magic” number for requiring a parking attendant, Manager Clark responded that each event is different. The Slingshots use hotels surrounding the Festival Grounds for parking, while The Hillbilly Jam creates a lot of traffic and a need for parking. The traffic and congestion is totally different for Mini-Truckin’ and the trucks that come to Town, but not to the event.

People are parking along Wade Reese Way, blocking off two-way traffic. Creekwood Village gets a tremendous amount of “turn arounds”. Staff will create a better parking map for promoters and maybe require them to meet with Chief Gilliland to create a parking strategy.

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Council determined that signage was needed, a better parking map drafted, and tell the promoters where parking is not allowed. Manager Clark will put something together for Board approval.

Due to the pandemic, the Mini-Truckin' event was held in October when the "leaf-lookers" are also in town. The valley was packed with people attending the event and people traveling to Maggie Valley to see the fall colors and people with Mini trucks gathering in parking lots that were not going to the event, thus creating a lot of traffic issues.

► Jasay Ketchum, a resident of Lisa Lane, brought up the need for an officer to stop traffic to assist people crossing the road to the Festivals. \$13,000 was budgeted for additional officers to help pedestrians and congestion during high traffic events. This will be discussed during the 2021/2022 budget workshops.

New Issues

► Grey Eagle Entertainment held concerts a few days apart, therefore porta-potties were left on the grounds. Staff received negative feedback from allowing the porta-johns to remain on the grounds because of neighboring properties having to look at the unsightly/smelly porta-johns in an empty field after the event.

There have been times over the years that tents could remain due to wet weather or due to the next event wanting the same tent in the same location.

Council had no issue with the tents remaining on the field but asked that porta-potties be located in the corner of the Festival Grounds, away from adjacent properties.

► Because of the pandemic, staff felt the need to get preliminary feedback from the Fire Marshal regarding capacity for the Festival Grounds.

When trying to do a comparison study, it was determined there is not anything to compare to an open field. Capacity for venues that have seating is easily determined.

Based on number of gates and the widths of the gates, the preliminary estimates are about 8,000 people.

During the time that the Town had a Festival Director, gates were added to bring the number up to 40,000 under a different Fire Marshal. At that time, Council in office felt the number was around 20,000.

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Staff has determined that with gates remaining open and manned, the venue would hold 29,000.

The Governor's Order requiring limited amounts of people gathering in outdoor areas brought on the need to have a capacity number.

There is no parking in Town when 15,000 to 20,000 people attend an event.

The capacity is measured by gross area, leaving out buildings, ingress, and egress.

At some point, gates may be added to get those numbers up.

MID-YEAR BUDGET REVIEW

- When crafting the FY20-21 Budget, projected revenues both in property tax collection and sales tax collection were downshifted to account for economic uncertainties produced by COVID-19
- Two issues; employee raises, and the addition of a new Public Works Technician were purposely omitted from the proposed and adopted FY20-21 Budget until revenue data was available
- In FY20-21 Sales Tax Revenue Projections were downshifted by 18.1%.
 - Through the 1st Quarter of FY20 Town has Collected 54% of Budget
- In FY20-21 Property Tax Collections were downshifted by 3%
 - Through November 30 Town has collected 44% of Budgeted Property Tax
 - Current Estimated Fund Balance is 135% for FY20-21

Proposed FY20-21 Budget Estimate Fund Balance at 110.27%

Employee Raise Chart

	1%	2%	3%
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Effective 1-1-21	\$4,995	\$9,990	\$14,984
Effective 7-1-20	\$9,989	\$19,979	\$29,968

Alderman P. Wight asked to keep things in the middle, go for 2%.

Haywood County and Municipalities responded the following way:

Haywood County Government: 2% COLA + 2% Merit (Effective 1-21)

Town of Waynesville: New Pay Plan Adjustments + \$500 One Time Bonus

Town of Canton: 1% COLA (Effective 7-1-20) + 1% (Effective 1st Q)

Town of Clyde: N/A

The one (1) time bonus is advantageous, because it is not a reoccurring expense.

Manager Clark's recommendation:

2% Merit Effective January 1, 2021 + 1% One Time Bonus

FY20-21 Implementation Cost = \$29,968

FY21-22 Recurring Cost = \$19,979

Some of the Councilmembers wanted to give the bonus before Christmas so employees could use those funds for their family.

A budget amendment will be on the agenda next Tuesday for Board approval.

Alderman Davis stated that he feels Maggie Valley has tremendous employees and this bonus would show the employees our appreciation.

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Mayor Eveland concurred, adding that through the positives and the negatives thus far, the employees have been loyal and are ready to face whatever the challenges.

Anytime the employees are given a raise or receive a bonus, Council receives the same.

Public Works

Discussed at length during Budget Retreat

Public Works Workload + Responsibilities Continue to Increase

Additional Public Works Technician I/II allows Public Works to work more effectively in daily duties i.e. brush, mowing, street/sidewalk maintenance, FG/Park maintenance

- Minimum Public Works Tech I Salary: \$31,728
- Public Works Tech I Hire Number Impact to FY20-21 Budget:
 - January 1, 2021 = \$24,338
 - March 1, 2021 = \$16,225
 - Impact to FY21-22 Budget = \$48,676

The Town of Maggie Valley currently has twenty-three (23) employees. For the last seven years, since Mayor Eveland has been on the Board of Aldermen the Town has had twenty-three (23) employees. The Board and Staff have been progressive in giving taxpayers as many services as possible. Another Public Works employee will help staff to continue to provide those services in a timely manner. Brush tickets, E-waste, and Whitegoods pickups have increased substantially.

Council discussed how people do not see the Public Works Employees standing around; they stay busy. Hiring another Public Works Employee is needed and would provide the Town the biggest “bang for the buck”.

Alderman Davis added that since he has been on the Board, not a single person has come to him saying their taxes are too high. “Taxes are being spent where they should be spent, in services”.

Budget Impacts

- Recommended Salary Increase
- Public Works New Hire (1/1/21)

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- Estimated Fund Balance decreases from 135% to 120%

The Local Government Commission (LGC) will not have concerns with the funds being taken from the Fund Balance.

This item will be added to the agenda.

Agenda Review:

- 2) Consent Agenda
 - a. Minutes to be Approved: November 2 & November 10, 2020
 - b. A/R Report
 - c. Budget to Actual
 - d. Voluntary Annexation Resolution 20-18 (Certificate of Sufficiency) "The Swag"
 - i. Call for Public Hearing: Tuesday January 12, 2021
 - e. Initial Property Zoning – 84 Jujon Drive
 - i. Call for Public Hearing: Tuesday January 12, 2021
- 3) Public Comment
- 4) Consideration of Resolution 20-16: Electronic Attendance Board Meeting Policy
- 5) Other Business
- 6) Department Head Reports
 - a. Ron Hancock, Town Planner
 - b. Russ Gilliland, Chief of Police
 - c. Mike Mehaffey, Public Works
 - d. Nathan Clark, Town Manager
- 7) Closed Session Topics
- 8) Adjournment

The agenda is short and simple. The Electronic Attendance Resolution was tabled from the November meeting.

The Closed Session will include land acquisition and possible legal action.

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The Manager's Report will be longer than usual because of the details and copyright laws regarding the Carpool Cinema.

► Council wanted to encourage businesses in Maggie Valley to put the Carpool Cinema on their message boards.

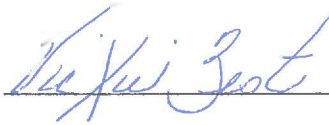
► NCDOT has reauthorized the funds for the US-19 Pedestrian Road Project. More details will be provided as more information is obtained.

► Manager Clark will provide a waterfall update next week.

THE WORKSHOP ENDED AT 11:28 A.M.



Mayor Mike Eveland



Vickie Best, CMC, NCCMC, Town Clerk

