

Town of Walden
Regular Monthly Meeting
November 14, 2023

AGENDA WORKSHOP

The agenda was reviewed and briefly discussed beginning at 5:15 PM. The following interested citizens were present: Catherine Colby, Tony Wheeler, Andy Worker, Joe Robbins, Jr., Linda Collins, Mike Cassidy, and Joe Davis.

CALL TO ORDER OF THE REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING

The regular monthly meeting of the Walden Board of Mayor and Aldermen was called to order by Mayor Lee Davis at 6:30 PM. The following interested citizens were present: Catherine Colby, Tony Wheeler, Andy Worker, Joe Robbins, Jr., Linda Collins, Mike Cassidy, Ed O'Kelley, Debbie Rodwell, Joe and Margha Davis, David Schmidt, Frances Connor, Gary Smith, Sandy Koss, Lawrence Sparks, Ted Tumelaire, W. L. Goodman, Joye and Art Wessells, Mickey Robbins, Winston Robbins, Tim Hancock, Lisa Kimsey, Stuart Bush, Bill and Jean Trohanis, Melissa Nimon, Karen Stone, Tim Coleman, Geof and Betty Worker.

PRAYER AND PLEDGE TO THE FLAG

Town Recorder Stacy Stewart opened the meeting with a prayer and Town Attorney Sam Elliott led the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL

Town Recorder Stacy Stewart called the roll and noted the presence of Mayor Lee Davis, Vice Mayor Lizzy Schmidt, and Alderwoman Angela Cassidy. Town Attorney Sam Elliott was also present.

APPROVAL / CORRECTION OF MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETING

VICE MAYOR LIZZY SCHMIDT MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF OCTOBER 17, 2023, SECONDED BY ALDERWOMAN ANGELA CASSIDY, AND UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED BY THE BOARD OF MAYOR AND ALDERMEN.

REPORTS

1. POLICE

Hamilton County Sheriff's Deputy Chad Faulkner gave the Police Report, noting 63 calls for service in the past 30 days. These calls included 20 traffic stops and 33 arrests. Deputy Faulkner noted that these numbers reflect all calls for service in Hamilton County on Walden's Ridge.

2. FINANCIAL

The Financial Report, given by Town Recorder Stacy Stewart, is attached as an exhibit to these minutes.

3. WRES

The WRES report was given by Catherine Colby. Ms. Colby noted that there were 32 calls for service in the past month, which included 18 fire alarms but no active fires. In closing, Ms. Colby reminded those in attendance that the annual fund drive for WRES will begin soon.

4. BUDGET

No Report.

5. ROADS

No Report.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL

The Environmental Committee Report was given by Catherine Colby. The Environment Committee is currently working on several projects, which include:

- There will be a meeting tomorrow (11/15/2023) with Hamilton County to talk about stormwater issues and possible modifications to the current interlocal agreement.
- A “Bee City” tent was present at the “Rock the Ridge” event.
- The Environmental Committee is selling rain barrels to help control stormwater runoff at the household level. There will be a website set up soon through which the barrels can be purchased.
- The Environmental Committee would like for Walden to be part of the National Wildlife Federation Habitat. The committee will complete all necessary work for this recognition to occur, and the cost should not exceed \$200.
- In closing, she would like for Walden to consider participating in the “White Oak Initiative.” There is no cost to the town, and the initiative will focus on saving White Oak trees in the area.

VICE MAYOR LIZZY SCHMIDT MOVED TO APPROVE THE APPROPRIATION OF \$200 FOR THE ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE TO MAKE WALDEN PART OF THE NATIONAL WILDLIFE FEDERATION HABITAT, SECONDED BY ALDERWOMAN ANGELA CASSIDY, AND UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED BY THE BOARD OF MAYOR AND ALDERMEN.

ALDERWOMAN ANGELA CASSIDY MOVED TO APPROVE WALDEN PARTICIPATING IN THE WHITE OAK INITIATIVE, SECONDED BY VICE MAYOR LIZZY SCHMIDT, AND UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED BY THE BOARD OF MAYOR AND ALDERMEN.

7. McCoy

Melissa Nimon reported for McCoy Farm and Gardens (MFG), noting several new and continuing projects. These include a new Docent program. The Docents will give tours of the home and property every Thursday and the 2nd Sunday of each month. The tours will run from 2:00 – 4:00 PM.

MFG is currently undergoing a recertification of the arboretum. This will be a Level II recertification.

The Annual Fund Campaign launched this week, and MFG has also started an endowment for long-term financial stability. The first donation to the endowment occurred today, from an MFG board member.

The 2nd annual tree-lighting will be held on November 30, from 5:00 – 7:30 PM. This event will include a visit from Santa Claus, displays of Emma Bell Miles prints, home tours, crafts, and fine tableware available for sale. Food will be available, and the tree will be lit by Mayors Lee Davis and Charles Poss, from the towns of Walden and Signal Mountain, respectively.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

1. DISCUSSION ON NEW WALDEN PLANNING COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION FOR SQUARE FOOTAGE CAP FOR PROPOSED ORDINANCE #2023-359, AMENDING EXISTING WALDEN ZONING ORDINANCE.

Mayor Lee Davis opened this agenda item by noting that we had unfinished business in relation to Ordinance 2023-359. The Ordinance was sent back to the Walden Planning Commission (WPC) for another review at their meeting on November 26, 2023. At that meeting, the WPC voted 3-2 to recommend a 30,000 square-foot cap and limit construction to two (2) buildings of this size on any property zoned as Town Center. Mayor Davis asked Vice Mayor Lizzy Schmidt if she wanted to have further discussion on the WPC recommendation or make other comments. Vice Mayor Lizzy Schmidt said she was open for discussion but wanted to reiterate her position on her motion with the amendment from October. Discussion among the Board members ensued.

Vice Mayor Lizzy Schmidt reiterated her concerns about buildings over 15,000 square feet. These include environmental issues, sewage concerns, and the fact that a majority of resident comments received were in favor of a square-footage cap. Vice Mayor Schmidt further noted that the Land Use Plan (LUP) focuses on “small to medium-size buildings” in Walden, and she does not feel that a 30,000 square-foot building is small or medium.

Alderwoman Angela Cassidy noted her agreement with Vice Mayor Schmidt’s comments, and that she feels the LUP must be followed. Since last month, Alderwoman Cassidy has counted 76 emails on this topic, and 47 of those emails (62%) want a 15,000 square-foot cap. In closing, she noted that Keith Covington, Walden’s planner / consultant for the LUP, stressed the word “small” through the plan.

Mayor Lee Davis stated that he understands the stated concerns, but he also feels that the WPC’s recommendation should be followed. Mayor Davis fears that Walden may see unintended consequences of restricting responsible growth in this way.

Town Attorney Sam Elliott made a procedural observation that the two items are an either / or and don’t need to have separate consideration. He stated that the Board had a discussion on which way it wanted to go and to let the record reflect that the consensus of the Board (which had a discussion on both items) allows the Board to move forward with this motion.

Vice Mayor Lizzy Schmidt clarified that the 15,000 square-foot cap meant a 15,000 square-foot cap and NOT footprint. She then went on to make the motion for Ordinance 2023-359 with the amendment including the 15,000 square-foot cap on this second reading.

VICE MAYOR LIZZY SCHMIDT MOVED TO REJECT THE RECOMMENDATION OF THE WALDEN PLANNING COMMISSION FOR A 30,000 SQUARE-FOOTAGE CAP, SECONDED BY ALDERWOMAN ANGELA CASSIDY. VOTING WAS AS FOLLOWS:

MAYOR LEE DAVIS – NAY

VICE MAYOR LIZZY SCHMIDT – AYE

ALDERWOMAN ANGELA CASSIDY – AYE

2. CONSIDERATION OF FINAL READING OF PROPOSED ORDINANCE #2023-359, AMENDING THE EXISTING WALDEN ZONING ORDINANCE FOR THE PURPOSE OF DEFINING ADDITIONAL TERMS, AMENDING THE SPECIAL USES PERMITTED IN THE R-1 RESIDENTIAL ZONE, AMENDING THE USES PERMITTED AND ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES FOR THE C-1 COMMERCIAL ZONE,

**ESTABLISHING THE TOWN CENTER BOUNDARY AND ESTABLISHING REGULATIONS FOR THE
NEW TOWN CENTER-RESIDENTIAL (TC-R) AND TOWN CENTER-MIXED USE (TC-MU) ZONES.**

VICE MAYOR LIZZY SCHMIDT MOVED TO ADOPT ORDINANCE #2023-359 WITH A 15,000 SQUARE-FOOTAGE CAP FOR COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS, SECONDED BY ALDERWOMAN ANGELA CASSIDY. VOTING WAS AS FOLLOWS:

MAYOR LEE DAVIS – NAY

VICE MAYOR LIZZY SCHMIDT – AYE

ALDERWOMAN ANGELA CASSIDY – AYE

Town Attorney Sam Elliot stated that, once this Ordinance is published, people can apply to re-zone their property to the new Town Center zoning.

NEW BUSINESS

1. CONSIDERATION OF PROPOSED RESOLUTION #2023-602, DONATION OF \$85,000 TO WRES.

ALDERWOMAN ANGELA CASSIDY MOVED TO APPROVE RESOLUTION #2023-602, SECONDED BY VICE MAYOR LIZZY SCHMIDT, AND UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED BY THE BOARD OF MAYOR AND ALDERMEN.

2. CONSIDERATION OF PROPOSED RESOLUTION #2023-603, DONATION OF \$15,000 TO BACHMAN COMMUNITY CENTER.

VICE MAYOR LIZZY SCHMIDT MOVED TO APPROVE RESOLUTION #2023-603, SECONDED BY ALDERWOMAN ANGELA CASSIDY, AND UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED BY THE BOARD OF MAYOR AND ALDERMEN.

3. CONSIDERATION OF PROPOSED RESOLUTION #2023-604, DONATION OF \$26,500 TO MCCOY FARM AND GARDENS.

ALDERWOMAN ANGELA CASSIDY MOVED TO APPROVE RESOLUTION #2023-604, SECONDED BY VICE MAYOR LIZZY SCHMIDT, AND UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED BY THE BOARD OF MAYOR AND ALDERMEN.

4. CONSIDERATION OF PROPOSED RESOLUTION #2023-605, DONATION OF \$5,000 TO WALDEN'S RIDGE CIVIC LEAGUE.

VICE MAYOR LIZZY SCHMIDT MOVED TO APPROVE RESOLUTION #2023-605, SECONDED BY ALDERWOMAN ANGELA CASSIDY, AND UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED BY THE BOARD OF MAYOR AND ALDERMEN.

COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE CITIZENS

Tim Hancock noted that property previously zoned as C-1 could have a grocery, but as of tonight's vote approving the zoning amendments, this was no longer true. Now, the property would have to be re-zoned to TC-MU in order to build a grocery store, but the square footage is capped at 15,000 square feet. Mr. Hancock noted that a typical Aldi is 16,000 square feet and most Trader Joe's start at 15,000 and go up from there. He is concerned that this new Ordinance will limit growth.

Ed O'Kelley asked what would stop a Dollar General Store from building on the LOP site. Town Attorney Sam Elliott answered that all plans for commercial buildings must be approved by both the WPC and the Board of Mayor and Aldermen. Mr. O'Kelley also stated that it feels as if the Board has sent a message that Walden doesn't want any businesses. He also feels that the Board just said "no" to 300,000 to 400,000 in tax revenue, and asked what the plan was to keep the Town of Walden running without raising property taxes.

Jean Smith stated that everyone she has talked to in Walden wants a grocery store.

Ted Tumelaire noted that those who wanted a grocery store should have spoken up or reached out to elected officials or the Town Hall staff.

Debbie Rodwell stated her belief that the push for a grocery store is "driven by greed, not need." She suggested moving the proposed development to Sequatchie County.

W. L. Goodman said he understood that Publix had mitigated all environmental concerns. He stated that he has never heard anyone say that they don't want the grocery store.

The meeting was adjourned by Mayor Davis.



Respectfully submitted:
Stacy Stewart



Approved:
Mariah Prescott, Town Administrator



Approved:
Lee Davis, Mayor