

Town of Walden
Meeting Minutes
October 11, 2022

CALL TO ORDER OF THE PUBLIC HEARING ON PROPOSED ORDINANCE #2022-350 CREATING A WALDEN PLANNING COMMISSION

Mayor Lee Davis called to order the Public Hearing on proposed Ordinance #2022-350. Mayor Davis summarized the reason for this proposed ordinance – specifically, to remove the Regional Planning Agency (RPA) and Regional Planning Commission (RPC) from the planning process for Walden. While the work done in the past by the RPA / RPC is appreciated by the board, Mayor Davis would like to have Walden planning completed by individuals who have Walden's best interest at heart.

Town Attorney Sam Elliott noted that the members of the RPC are appointed equally by the Hamilton County and Chattanooga Mayors, with the exception of one member, appointed by the commission as a whole. There may be little or even zero Walden representation on the RPC at any given time.

Mr. Goodhew, a Walden resident, asked how the members of the Walden Planning Commission (WPC) would be chosen. Mayor Davis said that the WPC would consist of seven members: the mayor, an alderman or alderwoman, and five citizens. Mayor Davis invited interested parties to submit their request for consideration via email to: info@waldentn.gov, and also stated that there would be a concerted effort to seat citizens with different views and opinions on development in Walden. Mr. Goodhew commented that this sounded like a political move, and asked why citizens couldn't be voted onto the WPC. Attorney Elliott clarified that the process described by Mayor Davis is required by state law.

Mayor Davis further noted that the RPA / RPC cannot get to Walden cases in a timely manner. For example, in 2016 the Walden Board asked for the RPA / RPC to complete a land use plan for the town, and they were told it would be at least ten years before completion. This is why the Walden Board hired a consultant group (Common Ground) to complete the Land Use plan more expediently. Mr. Thomas Gallant asked if this meant that the town was "starting over from 2016," and Mayor Davis clarified that this was not the case.

Mayor Davis stated that the developer of the proposed grocery store, the LOP owners, and are supportive of the creation of the WPC, as is Mayor Davis himself. Mr. W. Goodman asked if Mayor Davis supported the grocery store proposal. Mayor Davis responded that he supports responsible growth in Walden. Mr. Goodman pressed Mayor Davis for an answer on whether or not he supports the proposed grocery, and Attorney Elliott reminded that audience that this hearing was about the creation of a WPC.

Mr. Goodhew asked if the commission members would be selected before or after the November election. Mayor Davis responded that the intent is for the selection to be in November, with terms beginning on December 1, 2022. Mr. Gallant then asked if the WPC would also manage zoning changes. Mayor Davis noted that the WPC would be a "recommendation only" group. The final decision on any zoning changes would be made by the Board of Mayor and Aldermen.

ADJOURN PUBLIC HEARING

CALL TO ORDER OF THE REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING

Mayor Lee Davis called the regular monthly meeting of the Town of Walden to order.

The following interested citizens were present at the Walden Town Hall: Joe Durek, John Nelson, W. Goodman, Kristin Allen, Betty Julian, Winston Robbins, Angela Cassidy, Lynn Anderson, Casey Powell, Thomas Gallant, Linda Collins, Lee Behar, Cierra Paulson, and Mr. Goodhew.

Mariah Prescott opened the meeting with a prayer, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance, led by Town Attorney Sam Elliott.

ROLL CALL

Mariah Prescott called the roll and noted the presence of Mayor Lee Davis and Alderwoman Sarah McKenzie. Town Attorney Sam Elliott was also present. Vice Mayor Lizzy Schmidt was absent.

APPROVAL / CORRECTION OF MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETING

MAYOR LEE DAVIS MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF SEPTEMBER 13, 2022, SECONDED BY ALDERWOMAN SARAH MCKENZIE, AND UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED BY THE BOARD OF MAYOR AND ALDERMEN.

REPORTS

1. POLICE

Officer Gregg Carson noted a relatively quiet month, but also reminded citizens to please lock their cars. Officer Carson stated that the majority of auto thefts and break-ins occurred in vehicles that were left unlocked.

2. FINANCIAL

The financial report, given by Mariah Prescott, is attached as an exhibit to these minutes

3. CODES ENFORCEMENT

There is no Codes Enforcement report.

4. ENGINEERING

Mack McCarley, Town of Walden Engineer, reported that the current paving project for the Town of Walden has been completed. The next step is patching several areas, and then striping will begin. A larger project is the repair of the intersection at Key Hulse, Lake and Wilson – which may require a closure of that area for two-to-three days. All scheduled work should be completed in the next 30 days.

5. WRES

There is no WRES report.

6. ROADS & SAFETY

Kristin Allen reported on behalf of the Roads and Safety Committee, focusing on several traffic-calming recommendations. First, it is proposed that striping be completed from the top of the W to Anderson Pike, which will give a visual for those crossing East Brow. It has also been proposed to install a stop sign on the downhill portion of Anderson, at the top of the W. New stop signs have been recommended at the intersections of Wilson / Anderson and Forest Park / Falling Water Trail. These new signs would make both of these intersections 3-way stops.

Mayor Davis noted some concern about rear-end collisions at the foot of Anderson with a new stop sign. He suggested that Kirstin talk to Hamilton County for their opinion as well. Officer Carson suggested the possible installation of a temporary stop sign in that location, and he also recommended police presence at the intersection if / when this first sign is installed.

Town Attorney Sam Elliott referenced the “Manual of Uniform Traffic Devices,” and further noted that a traffic study would need to be completed on this matter. In closing, Ms. Allen stated that the entire traffic-calming proposal document could be found at: www.waldentn.gov

7. LAND USE COMMITTEE

Alderwoman Sarah McKenzie reported for the Land Use Committee, noting a presentation from the LOP developer. The next Land Use Committee Meeting will be held on October 18. A special called meeting will occur on October 25, for the second reading of the ordinance to create a Walden Planning Commission. Both meetings are open to the public and will be held at 5:30 PM at Walden Town Hall.

8. MCCOY FARM AND GARDENS

Mr. Mickey Robbins reported for McCoy Farm and Gardens, noting two recent successes. First, on September 25th, there was an exhibition of 18 pieces of Emma Bell Miles’ artwork – loaned to MFG by Joe and Kay Gaston. Also, on October 9th, there was a well-attended barn-restoration celebration.

Ongoing projects include the completion of the “Welcome Station” kiosk, eight new apple trees being planted in the orchard, and utility lines being moved underground. In closing, Mr. Robbins noted another successful “Bird Walk” on October 8th, and the completion of 25 weddings to date.

NEW BUSINESS

1. FIRST READING OF PROPOSED ORDINANCE #2022-350, AN ORDINANCE OF THE TOWN OF WALDEN, TENNESSEE CREATING A WALDEN PLANNING COMMISSION.

Mayor Lee Davis read the caption for the ordinance, and reminded the citizens that the public hearing was held immediately prior to the call to order of the regular monthly meeting.

ALDERWOMAN SARAH MCKENZIE MOVED TO APPROVE THE FIRST READING OF ORDINANCE #2022-350, SECONDED BY MAYOR LEE DAVIS, AND UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED BY THE BOARD OF MAYOR AND ALDERMEN.

Mr. W. Goodman raised his hand and requested that the second reading of this ordinance be tabled until November or December so citizens could learn more about it. Mayor Davis reminded all of the special called meeting scheduled for October 25th, at which time Mr. Goodman asked if that decision would just be a “rubber stamp” like this one. Mayor Davis invited Mr. Goodman to save his comments until the end of the meeting until the “Communications from Citizens” portion. Attorney Elliott also reminded the audience that a second reading was required prior to approval of any ordinance.

2. CONSIDERATION / APPROVAL OF RESOLUTION #2022-570 APPOINTMENT OF HERBERT THORNBERRY AS WALDEN JUDGE.

Mayor Lee Davis stated that Herbert Thornbury as served as Walden’s Judge for many years, and asks for a motion of approval for this resolution. Resolution #2022-570 would extend Judge Thornberry’s term from December 8, 2022 to December 8, 2024.

ALDERWOMAN SARAH MCKENZIE MOVED TO APPROVE RESOLUTION #3033-570, SECONDED BY MAYOR LEE DAVIS, AND UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED BY THE BOARD OF MAYOR AND ALDERMEN.

3. CONSIDERATION / APPROVAL RESOLUTION #2022-571 TCRS TO PROVIDE 401K FOR WALDEN EMPLOYEE CONTRIBUTIONS.

This item was tabled to the November meeting.

4. REVIEW OF SIGNAL MOUNTAIN SHORT-TERM VACATION RENTAL ORDINANCE AS EXAMPLE.

Mayor Lee Davis introduced Mr. Lee Behar to discuss his research on several Short-Term Vacation Rental (STVR) ordinances. Mr. Behar stated that he has read several STVR policies, and he is in favor of adopting one similar to the Town of Signal Mountain's. Mayor Davis and Alderwoman McKenzie agree. Attorney Sam Elliott noted that he is also in favor of Signal Mountain's style of STVR ordinance, especially because it has a clause requiring only owner-occupied homes to be considered for approval.

It was noted by Mr. Behar that he is aware of several STVR properties already operating in Walden, and Mayor Davis assured him that – once a resolution of this nature has been adopted for Walden – those homeowners would be required to come into compliance with the ordinance.

5. DISCUSSION ON NOVEMBER TOWN HALL MEETING DATE.

Mayor Lee Davis announced that the regular monthly November meeting falls on Election Day, November 8th. Since Walden Town Hall serves as a polling place for mountain-top residents, the meeting date will need to be changed. He further noted that all members of the board were able to be in attendance on November 15th.

ALDERWOMAN SARAH MCKENZIE MOVED TO CHANGE THE DATE OF THE REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING TO NOVEMBER 15, 2022, SECONDED BY MAYOR LEE DAVIS, AND UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED BY THE BOARD OF MAYOR AND ALDERMEN.

6. ANY OTHER NEW BUSINESS.

There is no other new business.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

1. SECOND AND FINAL READING OF ORDINANCE #2022-349, AN ORDINANCE OF THE TOWN OF WALDEN, TENNESSEE EXTENDING THE MORATORIUM ON THE ISSUANCE OF BUILDING PERMITS AND ESTABLISHING A MORATORIUM ON ACTION ON NEW REZONING REQUESTS IN A DESIGNATED AREA OF THE TOWN OF WALDEN ESTABLISHED BY ORDINANCE #2022-346.

Mayor Lee Davis introduced this item, noting that it would not be voted on for a second reading. The current moratorium will be allowed to expire.

2. INTRODUCTION OF CIERRA PAULSON FOR FIRST LOCAL ARTIST PROGRAM.

Town Administrator Mariah Prescott introduced the first local artist to be spotlighted at Town Hall. Ms. Cierra Paulson, a sculptor, introduced her artwork: "Raising the Land that Raised Me." It represents a conversation between her own mother – who died when Cierra was 18 – and "Mother Earth." The sculpture, which will be on display in the lobby of the Walden Town Hall for the next two months, is an

actual topographical replication of the farm on which she grew up. Rocks, grass, and milled black walnut logs – each from the farm itself – are all incorporated into the sculpture.

3. W-ROAD CLEAN-UP OCTOBER 23, FROM 8:00 AM TO NOON.

Mayor Lee Davis reminded the citizens of the W-Road clean-up on Sunday, October 23rd. Volunteers are needed and encouraged. Please meet at McCoy Farm and Gardens at 8:00 AM if you are available to help. Hamilton County Sheriff Deputies will close the road and aid in keeping all volunteers safe.

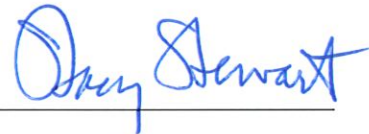
Town Administrator, Mariah Prescott, also noted that the Environmental Committee and Cierra Paulson would also be working on this day. They will be installing native plantings in the curves at the top of the W where the trees were removed.

4. ANY OTHER UNFINISHED BUSINESS.

There is no other unfinished business.

COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE CITIZENS

Mr. W. Goodman asked Mayor Davis to apologize to him for what he felt were “rude and insensitive statements” made to him during the August meeting. Mayor Davis asked if Mr. Goodman had any other comments, and he asked if the mayor was “refusing to apologize.” Mayor Davis asked again if Mr. Goodman had any other comments. Upon no change in the nature of his comments, Mayor Davis adjourned the meeting. Mr. Goodman continued to an attempt to engage with the mayor, and Mr. Davis told him the meeting was over and to have a good night. When he refused to leave, he was escorted out of Town Hall by Officer Gregg Carson.



Respectfully submitted:
Stacy Stewart



Approved:
Mariah Prescott, Town Administrator



Approved:
Lee Davis, Mayor