**Town of Walden**

Meeting Minutes

March 9, 2021

**Call to Order of the Regular Meeting**

Mayor Lee Davis called the regular monthly meeting of the Town of Walden to order utilizing the Zoom online platform. Town Attorney Sam Elliott announced that the Governor had extended his authorization of meetings via electronic means through the month of April, and that the meeting was being held electronically in consideration for the public’s safety amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

Fern Lockhart opened the meeting with a prayer, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Roll Call**

Fern Lockhart called the roll and noted the presence of Mayor Lee Davis, Alderwomen Sarah McKenzie, Vice Mayor Lizzy Schmidt, and Town Attorney Sam Elliott.

**Approval / Correction of Minutes from Previous Meeting**

ALDERWOMAN SARAH MCKENZIE MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 9, 2021, SECONDED BY VICE MAYOR LIZZY SCHMIDT, AND UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED BY THE BOARD OF MAYOR AND ALDERMEN BY ROLL CALL VOTE.

**Roads Report**

Mayor Lee Davis announced a second W-Road clean-up day on Sunday, March 21, 2021, from 8:00 AM until 11:00 AM. COVID protocols will be followed and all volunteers are welcome. All interested participants should plan to drive through the back of the McCoy property to the main house at 8:00 AM, at which point supplies and assignments will be distributed. The W-Road will be closed, with the assistance of three Hamilton County Sheriff Deputies. There will also be a recycling dumpster and refreshment concession at the home of Dax Turner, approximately half-way down the W.

**Police Report**

No report.

**Financial Report**

The financial report is completed and attached as an exhibit to these minutes. Town Recorder Fern Lockhart confirmed that the fiscal years ends on June 30 annually. The first budget workshop will be in April. The first reading of the budget will occur in May, and the second reading will occur before the end of June.

**Codes Enforcement**

Town Recorder Lockhart reported that one courtesy letter had been issued this month, and one issue with a sign obstructing the roadway had been resolved.

**WRES Report**

Mr. Bill Thornton reported for WRES, noting a total of 24 emergency calls for the previous month: 7 medical, 15 fire, and 2 mutual aid fire calls outside of the normal jurisdiction. Mr. Thornton reminded all citizens to change the battery in their smoke alarms this weekend in conjunction with the time change. The WRES is proud to have returned to training on Thursday nights, with all COVID protocols in place. All team members have received the vaccination as well. The WRES is still planning an open house for the new fire station, and that will occur as soon as it is safe for the community to come together.

**Bachman Council**

No report.

**Pumpkin Patch**

No report.

**McCoy Farm & Gardens**

Mickey Robbins reported for McCoy Farm and Gardens, stating that the quest for listing on the National Registry of Historic Places is back on track, and the board is optimistic. The board is also planning a ground survey, or “dig,” with the UTC Archeological Institute, to discover what evidence, if any, there is relative to Native American artifacts, Civil War artifacts, past moonshining, and anything else. After that, work will continue on the McCoy Master Plan.

Architect Bob Franklin is drawing plans for a new “Welcome Station” at the border of the original horse-rein parking lot and the apple orchard. This station would provide visitor info and also a drop-off / pick-up area for visitors and guests. Sallie Ford is moving ahead with the design and construction of the Child’s Sensory Garden, which will feature a fairy garden, a kitchen herb spiral, a green child’s tunnel, native plants’ corner, a willow play dome, and a cutting garden to pay tribute to Martha McCoy’s original cutting garden.

The McCoy sign on Anderson Pike is being constructed to resemble the attractive sign at the Taft Hwy entrance. Clean-up of the grounds continues to be organized and carried out, and a maintenance shed is being planned that will house the growing stock of equipment. Executive Director, Melissa Nimon, has established her office upstairs in the main house. She is already bringing more order to the multi-faceted McCoy organization.

Due to the COVID pandemic, there are no plans for a Memorial Day picnic this year. Event-bookings are also being carefully considered. The McCoy Board is also looking at the best way to handle grounds’ maintenance, which has previously been handled by the town. Earl Hereford has been exploring way to honor the Mayor’s “Dark Skies” initiative, while still providing safety and security on the McCoy grounds. In closing, Mr. Robbins thanked the Town of Walden for its continued support, and reminded the citizens of Walden to continue utilizing the outdoor trails and activities that McCoy offers.

**Dog Park**

Alderwoman Sarah McKenzie noted that the “big-dog” area has been suffering from the large dogs damaging the grass. Research is ongoing regarding a different and more durable ground-covering.

**Land Use Study Committee**

Dawson Wheeler reported that a “kick-off meeting” was held with Common Ground on February 11, 2021, primarily to discuss timelines. A city tour was also completed. The initial meeting for the citizens was also held on this date, and a very small attendance was noted from Walden. Because of this, Mr. Wheeler stated that the next meetings would be posted at [www.waldentn.gov](http://www.waldentn.gov) and on social media, and also advertised via direct mailings throughout the town.

Mr. Wheeler also noted that the committee is working on the formation of six focus groups, and they hope to have these recommendations completed no later than March 12, 2021.

**Walden’s Ridge Civic League**

Ms. Karen Stone reported for the Civic League had recently discovered meticulous minutes that been recorded, beginning in 1927. These had been preserved in a box in a locked closet, and are now being scanned for posterity. She noted that a major concern of the mountain residents in the 1930’s was dumping on the W-Road, which mirrors our modern-day need for trash pick-up days. Another similar issue in the 1930’s and 40’s was trucks on the W – specifically, heavy coal trucks.

Ms. Stone also announced that the Civic League will be offering a smoked “Boston Butt” barbecue for the Memorial Day Holiday. Pick-up day will be the Saturday before Memorial Day. Please order in advance – details will be on the League’s website very soon.

Ms. Stone noted that the League will be asking for assistance in planning a 100-year birthday celebration this summer for the Civic League’s auditorium. The type of party will be determined by the League’s members, so she encouraged citizens to join for the reasonable cost of $1 per year, per person. In closing, Ms. Stone invited all citizens to join the League at their next meeting – Thursday, April 15 @ 7:00 PM.

Mayor Lee Davis stated that one of his employees, Christina, has offered her assistance to the Civic League and is also assisting the town with the website and Google Calendar coordination.

**NEW BUSINESS**

1. **Proposed resolution #2021-547, a resolution of agreement by and between Johnson, Murphey and Wright and the Town of Walden to perform a financial compliance audit for the period beginning July 2, 2020 and ending June 30, 2021.**

ALDERWOMAN SARAH MCKENZIE MOVED TO APPROVE RESOLUTION #2021-547, AGREEING TO ALLOW THE FIRM OF JOHNSON, MURPHEY, AND WRIGHT TO PERFORM A FINANCIAL COMPLIANCE AUDIT FOR THE PERIOD FROM JULY 2, 2020, TO JUNE 30, 2021, SECONDED BY VICE MAYOR LIZZY SCHMIDT, AND UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED BY THE BOARD OF MAYOR AND ALDERMEN BY ROLL CALL VOTE.

1. **Discussion on a lawn service the Town Hall property**

Mayor Lee Davis began the discussion, stating that our long-time lawn service, provided by Jeff Davis, is ending. This information will be published at the Town Hall, and bids to perform these services for a monthly fee will be accepted at the Town Hall. Town Attorney Sam Elliott reminded the board that if the annual fee exceeded $10,000 that sealed bids would need to be requested.

1. **any other new business**.

There is no other new business.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

1. **Discussion on appointments for membership of the citizens’ advisory sub-committees.**

Mayor Lee Davis began this discussion by noting that there are now three sub-committees: Budget, Parks and Recreation, and Roads and Public Safety. While the overall number of members for each sub-committee is not limited, the Ordinance does limit the number of voting members to seven.

ALDERWOMAN SARAH MCKENZIE MOVED TO APPOINT JON COOK, JOHN BARRY, MICHAEL LEARY AND GABE WHITMER TO THE BUDGET COMMITTEE. VICE MAYOR LIZZY SCHMIDT MOVED TO APPOINT KRISTIN ALLEN, ELLEN YOUNG, TAL COHEN, KIRBY JOHNSON, ANTHONY WILLINGHAM, AND RYAN DAVIS TO THE ROADS AND PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE. MAYOR LEE DAVIS MOVED TO APPOINT LARRY SKAGGS, JEREMY LOGAN, HIRAM CHAMERLAIN, MARIAH PRESCOTT, AND LANCE POPE TO THE PARKS AND RECREATION COMMITTEE. MAYOR DAVIS ALSO NOTED THAT SOME ADDITIONAL NAMES CAME IN TO TWO DIFFERENT WEBSITES, AND THESE NAMES WILL BE ADDED TO THE MINUTES.

VICE MAYOR LIZZY SCHMIDT MOVED THAT THE SUB-COMMITTEES BE APPROVED, SECONDED BY ALDERWOMAN SARAH MCKENZIE, AND UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED BY THE BOARD OF MAYOR AND ALDERMEN BY ROLL CALL VOTE.

Town Recorder Fern Lockhart confirmed that a new resolution would need to be approved in order to create any additional committees, such as Health, Safety, and Environment.

1. **any other unfinished business**

There is no other unfinished business.

**COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE CITIZENS**

1. Mr. Anthony Wheeler updated that board and citizens of Walden on some things that are happening at the State House regarding three bills that could have direct impact on the Town of Walden. HB:0707 is asking the government to remove T-DEC from any approval and inspection process over the installation of any self-contained sewage system. While this represents a significant problem for citizens of the ridge, this bill appears to have been withdrawn for the time being, but could reappear in the future.

Mr. Wheeler also summarized a second bill, which would allow rules to be passed with only criticisms by groups of ten or more. Since this bill ran into problems with the First Amendment (Freedom of Speech), it has also been withdrawn.

Finally, a third bill was introduced which asked that developers who installed stormwater control systems be allowed to avoid fees until the stormwater control systems had been put in place. This would place the burden of these systems on the Town. Several state organizations have objected to these changes in the law, and Mr. Wheeler asks all citizens to remain aware of these movements at the state level.

Mayor Davis asked Mr. Wheeler to please email the summaries of these bills to the Board of Mayor and Aldermen, and also to Chip Baker, County Commissioner.

1. Mr. Joe Robbins asked Town Recorder Fern Lockhart if bids were received from any other accounting firm regarding the compliance audit. Recorder Lockhart noted that the State of Tennessee does not allow municipalities to accept bids for professional services. RFPs may be submitted, but bids may not be requested. Mr. Robbins asked if the fees had changes much over the past three years, and Recorder Lockhart verified an increase of $390 this year.

Attorney Sam Elliott shared that this firm, Johnson, Murphey, and Wright, provide these services for most of the smaller municipalities in Hamilton County.

1. Mr. John Berry asked Alderwoman Sarah McKenzie if a date had been set for the first Budget Committee meeting. Alderwoman McKenzie suggest meeting first with Town Recorder Fern Lockhart before meeting independently as a committee.
2. Mayor Lee Davis closed out the Communications from Citizens by noting the opening of a part-time clerk’s position at Town Hall. Any interested persons should contact Town Hall or any of the board members for more information.

The meeting adjourned by motion.

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Respectfully submitted:

Fern Lockhart, Recorder

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Approved:

Lee Davis, Mayor