

Town of Walden
Regular Monthly Meeting
February 13, 2024
6:30 PM

AGENDA WORKSHOP

The agenda was reviewed and briefly discussed beginning at 5:15 PM. There were no Walden citizens present at the agenda review.

Prior to the beginning of the Public Hearing, Mayor Lee Davis announced the recent passing of Mr. Joe Gaston. Mr. Gaston was the first attorney for and one of the founding members of the Town of Walden. Mickey Robbins addressed the audience regarding this, noting that Mr. Gaston and his wife were both very active with the Town of Walden. In the summer of 2022, the Gastons shared their entire Emma Bell Miles painting collection with McCoy Farm and Gardens, gifting 18 of those paintings to McCoy and the Town.

CALL TO ORDER OF THE PUBLIC HEARING ON ORDINANCE 2023-360, SHORT-TERM VACATION RENTALS

Mayor Lee Davis called the Public Hearing on Ordinance 2023-360 to order. He reminded the audience that this Public Hearing is a continuation of the December hearing, to ensure that anyone who wanted to comment publicly regarding this issue had the opportunity. He noted that every opinion will be recorded in the minutes and then be sent to the Walden Planning Commission (WPC) for consideration as they work on finalizing this ordinance. Mayor Davis then opened the floor to comments from citizens.

Janie McNabb, a Walden resident, stated that she has collected more than 50 signatures in support of allowing supervised Short-Term Vacation Rentals (STVR) in Walden. Ms. McNabb further stated that she spoke to no one who was in opposition to this. Ms. McNabb left the petition with Communications Director, Ellen Young, for others to sign if they so desired.

Philip Strang, a Walden resident, noted that he and his wife converted an old summer house on their property into a rental home. He is in support of supervised STVRs and stated that options were needed for visitors to have places to stay atop Signal Mountain.

Brian Powell, a Walden resident, stated that he and his wife love to travel and visit places nobody else does, like Signal Mountain, for example. He noted that Signal Mountain holds many activities for outdoor enthusiasts, and places like the Little Brown Church are also tourist friendly. Mr. Powell noted that he would love to rent his home while traveling. In closing, he shared his belief that – even if the property was unsupervised – neighbors in Walden in report any issues to the Town.

Sissy Powell, a Walden resident, stated that she has previously rented long-term on her property, but now is more flexible with short-term rentals. She noted that she has welcomed amazing people to her rental home as they visited family at Alexian, attended weddings at McCoy, joined family for the holidays, or during transition while building a new home.

Peggy LaRochelle, a Walden resident, and her husband added a detached garage on their property with an apartment above it. They have used this apartment to house friends and family visitors, and also for ministry and respite care. She is in favor of approving an STVR ordinance.

Jerry Market, a Walden resident, served as the Pinecrest Baptist Church pastor for 13 years. He has previously rented a remodeled house on his property and has had no problems at all. He stated that 90%

of the people he has rented to have family on the mountain. He further stated that, when people stay at his rental home, he never sees them. They are either inside the cottage or out visiting family or the sights on Signal Mountain. He supports an STVR ordinance allowing rentals on less than five acres.

Don Drumm, a Walden resident, stated that he and his wife travel often and that they prefer to stay in a STVR, as they are typically superior to hotels. He supports STVR for Walden and feels that the five-acre requirement is excessive. He feels that the key word from Ms. McNabb's petition is "supervised."

Mr. Brian Powell shared his belief that requiring five acres or more for an approved STVR will only serve to attract large groups and large parties. Since smaller lots tend to have neighbors in close proximity, this will help with supervision as well.

ADJOURNMENT OF THE PUBLIC HEARING

There being no further comments or questions from citizens, Mayor Lee Davis adjourned the hearing. He reminded the audience that there would be no vote on this issue tonight. Instead, all comments and concerns will be sent to the WPC for review. He invites any citizens of Walden to continue to share comments via the Walden Town Hall email, info@waldentn.gov

Alderwoman Angela Cassidy wanted to add a discussion on administrative details (fees, permitting, etc...) to the WPC agenda. Mayor Davis noted that, if this ordinance is passed, an additional office employee will be needed in order to manage STVR permitting and fees. In closing, the mayor reiterated that the property must be owner-occupied to be granted approval for an STVR.

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. The following interested citizens were present: Catherine Colby, Linda Collins, Joe Robbins, Jr., Peggy LaRoche, Kristin Allen, Mickey Robbins, Winston Robbins, David Schmidt, Sissy Powell, Mike Cassidy, G. Workinger, Betty Workinger, Mary Aho, Janie McNabb, Margha Davis, Karen Stone, Ted Tumerlaire, Betty Julian, Lance Pope, Jerry Market, Debi Market, Lou Ziebold, Melissa Nimon, Tara Strang, Philip Strang, Jane Drumm, Don Drumm, Brian Powell, Bill Thornton, and Thomas Gallant.

PRAYER AND PLEDGE TO THE FLAG

Town Administrator Mariah Prescott opened the meeting with a prayer, and Town Attorney Sam Elliott led all in attendance in the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL

Town Administrator Mariah Prescott 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 OF DECEMBER 12, 2023.

ALDERWOMAN ANGELA CASSIDY MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF DECEMBER 12, 2023, NOTING THAT THERE WAS NO JANUARY MEETING DUE TO ILLNESS AND INCLEMENT WEATHER, SECONDED BY VICE MAYOR LIZZY SCHMIDT, AND UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED BY THE BOARD OF MAYOR AND ALDERMEN.

Prior to beginning the reports, Mayor Lee Davis asked Communications Director Ellen Young to give an update on progress towards live-streaming of meetings. Ms. Young reported that all Regular Monthly

Meetings and Walden Planning Commission Meetings are currently being recorded for playback, and she hopes that the first live-stream meetings can occur in March, 2024.

REPORTS

1. POLICE

Hamilton County Sheriff's Deputy Chad Faulkner gave the Police Report, noting 58 traffic stops, 22 arrests and 164 calls for service in the past 30 days. There were also eight requested district patrols for citizens who out of town or on vacation. Deputy Faulkner noted that these numbers reflect all calls for service in Hamilton County on Walden's Ridge.

2. FINANCIAL

Prior to giving the Financial Report, Town Administrator Mariah Prescott noted that emergency snow removal and road treatments were necessary during the January ice storm. These emergency services required \$18,075 – not including staff time – from the Town budget. The Financial Report is attached as an exhibit to these minutes.

3. WRES

The WRES report was given by Catherine Colby on behalf of Bill Thornton. Ms. Colby noted that there were 33 (34) calls in the last month: 17 emergency medical, seven fire – no major structure fires – and 10 assist to citizen calls.

4. ENVIRONMENTAL

Ms. Catherine Colby gave the report for the Environmental Committee. She stated that the new rain barrel program is up-and-running. They are working with the company "Rainwater Solutions," out of Raleigh, NC. Walden residents can purchase a 50-gallon rain barrel for use at their home for only \$77, nearly half of what they cost if bought on other online sites. To order a rain barrel, go to the website: www.rainwaterprogram.org/waldentn and pre-pay online. Rain barrels can be picked up at Walden Town Hall on "March 4th, Saturday" (sic) between 9:00 AM and 11:00 AM.

Mary Aho then spoke on Walden's "Dark Sky" initiative. The organization "Dark Sky International" gives great example of how to reduce slight pollution at www.darksky.org. Further, they note five standards for proper lighting.

- (1) Use outdoor lights only when needed.
- (2) Make sure all street lighting is targeted lighting.
- (3) Use only low-level streetlights.
- (4) Utilize controlled lighting, such as automatic ON / OFF, whenever possible.
- (5) Use warm lighting.

Ms. Aho asked permission to speak to EPB account executive David Van Zandt on behalf of the Town of Walden. She would like to get a light pole inventory for the Town from Mr. Van Zandt, as well as details for each light. She would also like for the Board of Mayor and Aldermen (or Walden office staff) to agree to submit requested changes for non-conforming lights in order to bring them into compliance.

MAYOR LEE DAVIS MOVED TO ALLOW THE ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE TO REPRESENT THE TOWN OF WALDEN WITH THE EPB IN ORDER TO SEEK DARK SKY COMPLIANCE, SECONDED BY ALDERWOMAN ANGELA CASSIDY, AND UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED BY THE BOARD OF MAYOR AND ALDERMEN.

Attorney Sam Elliott noted that there is not yet an ordinance in place for a Dark Sky initiative. Mayor Lee Davis clarified that these are just the beginning steps as we move towards such an ordinance.

1. PARKS AND RECREATION

Lance Pope reported for the Parks and Recreation Committee. Mr. Pope noted that two main focuses have been addressing parking situations at the trailheads for Mabbitt Springs and also Falling Water Falls. While the Committee has worked to “square up” some of the landscape timbers and also lay gravel in the parking areas, the problem is that it is still unclear as to where and how cars should actually park.

Mr. Pope requested approval for an expenditure of \$1,250 from the committee’s \$5,000 budget. This money would go towards the purchase and installation of concrete parking bumpers from “Chattanooga Striping” to make parking spaces more clear.

MAYOR LEE DAVIS MOVED TO APPROVE AN EXPENDITURE OF \$1,200 BY THE PARKS AND RECREATION COMMITTEE FOR CONCRETE PARKING BUMPERS, SECONDED BY VICE MAYOR LIZZY SCHMIDT, AND UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED BY THE BOARD OF MAYOR AND ALDERMEN.

Mr. Pope also requested approval for an expenditure of \$200 to purchase mulch, landscape timbers, and the accompanying hardware from Ace Hardware for Griffiss Park. This area is at the corner of East Brow and Altura. Alderwoman Angela Cassidy noted that there is a beautiful stone monument there with a plaque on it, highlighting the citizens who the property for this purpose. She asked that the monument be well-maintained and the plants around it trimmed accordingly.

MAYOR LEE DAVIS MOVED TO APPROVE AN EXPENDITURE OF \$200 BY THE PARKS AND RECREATION COMMITTEE FOR GROUNDS UPKEEP AT GRIFFISS PARK, SECONDED BY VICE MAYOR LIZZY SCHMIDT, AND UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED BY THE BOARD OF MAYOR AND ALDERMEN.

In closing, Mr. Pope noted that the committee is aware of some recurring graffiti at the trailhead of Falling Water Falls, The Parks and Recreation Committee is working to clean this graffiti and paint the sign as well.

2. McCoy

Melissa Nimon gave the report for McCoy Farm and Gardens (MFG). Ms. Nimon noted the continuation of the Docent Program at MFG. The Docents lead an Open House on the 2nd Sunday of every month from 2:00 PM to 4:00 PM. Thus far, over 100 people have taken advantage of this program. April’s Open House will focus on Emma Bell Miles’ work, and at 3:00 PM a walking tour to her home on the property will take place.

The MFG Docents are also working on some field trip curriculum, aligning state standards with educational opportunities at McCoy. From a historical perspective, the curriculum will focus on what children’s chores may have looked like on an early 20th-century farm, such as beating rugs, churning butter, and pressing apples. From a science perspective, the curriculum will focus on plant and animal classification. The goal is to have the first field trip occur in the fall of this year.

The 2nd Annual Egg Roll will be on Sunday, March 24th, from 2:00 PM to 4:00 PM. MFG is partnering with the same company that provided the eggs for the White House egg roll. The price of admission is \$10, which will include a commemorative egg for all guests. There will be games, food, crafts, and other

activities. The Easter Bunny will be available for pictures, and the first “McCoy Mutts” Easter Parade will be held. Please gather with your dog(s) at 3:30 PM by the Carriage House if you’d like to participate.

In closing, Ms. Nimon noted workdays at MFG on the upcoming three Saturdays:

- February 17, 2024 Orchard Restoration
- February 24, 2024 Re-planting the front driveway with 80 Oak Leaf Hydrangeas
- March 2, 2024 “Weed Wrangle,” a state-wide push to remove invasive plants

These workdays begin at 9:00 AM and all volunteers are welcome.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

There is no unfinished business.

NEW BUSINESS

1. **CONSIDERATION OF FIRST READING OF ORDINANCE 2023-360, SHORT-TERM VACATION RENTALS AS RECOMMENDED BY THE WALDEN PLANNING COMMISSION.**

See below.

2. **CONSIDERATION OF FIRST READING OF ORDINANCE 2023-361 TO AMEND TITLE 9 OF THE WALDEN MUNICIPAL CODE RELATING TO SHORT-TERM VACATION RENTALS AS RECOMMENDED BY THE WALDEN PLANNING COMMISSION.**

Mayor Lee Davis asked for a motion to move the first reading of Ordinances 2023-360 and Ordinance 2023-361 to the April meeting, allowing review by and recommendation from the Walden Planning Commission.

VICE MAYOR LIZZY SCHMIDT MOVED TO DEFER THE FIRST READINGS OF BOTH ORDINANCES 2023-360 AND 2023-361 TO THE APRIL MEETING, SECONDED BY ALDERWOMAN ANGELA CASSIDY, AND UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED BY THE BOARD OF MAYOR AND ALDERMEN.

3. **CONSIDERATION OF RESOLUTION 2024-606 TDOT TRANSPORTATION PLANNING GRANT.**

Alderdwoman Angela Cassidy summarized this grant opportunity, noting that the \$200,000 from the State of Tennessee must only be matched by \$22,000 from the Town of Walden. Alderdwoman Cassidy, along with Town Administrator Mariah Prescott, Roads and Safety Chairperson Kristin Allen, and Town Planning Ashley Gates, have been working on the application. If awarded, the money received will be utilized to focus on safety in Walden, including but not limited to crosswalks, roundabouts (Fairmount and Taft / Anderson and Taft @ the top of the W), and speed limit reduction.

MAYOR LEE DAVIS MOVED TO APPROVE THIS RESOLUTION AS WRITTEN, SECONDED BY VICE MAYOR LIZZY SCHMIDT, AND UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED BY THE BOARD OF MAYOR AND ALDERMEN.

4. **CONSIDERATION OF WALDEN PLANNING COMMISSION MEMBER APPOINTMENT.**

Mayor Lee Davis introduced this agenda item, noting that this appointment of the 7th member to the WPC was at the mayor’s discretion. Mayor Davis noted his selection of Mr. Tim Hilvers, who is currently also serving on the Budget Committee. Mr. Hilvers will begin working with the WPC at their February meeting.

5. CONSIDERATION OF WALDEN CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS.

Mayor Lee Davis opened this agenda item by noting that over 40 Walden residents have volunteered their time to take part in the Citizen Advisory Committees. Two new voting members have been appointed to the Environmental Committee – May Aho and Sarah Bedo, along with non-voting members Darcy Welch, Carolyn Guild, Elizabeth Longphre, Margha Davis, and Sandy Koss. Mitchell Meek will join the Parks and Recreation Committee as a voting member, with Kent Kirsten joining as a non-voting member. The Citizen Advisory Committee total members are as follows:

Budget – 6

Environmental – 16

Parks and Recreation – 16

Roads and Safety – 6

6. CONSIDERATION OF CURB CUT PERMIT FOR 303 LAKE AVENUE.

Town Administrator Mariah Prescott introduced this item, noting that it is not necessary for a curb-cut application to go before the WPC. Engineers for the Town of Walden have reviewed the application and the site, and they recommend approval.

ALDERWOMAN ANGELA CASSIDY MOVED TO APPROVE THE CURB CUT APPLICATION FOR 303 LAKE AVENUE SECONDED BY VICE MAYOR LIZZY SCHMIDT, AND UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED BY THE BOARD OF MAYOR AND ALDERMEN.

COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE CITIZENS

Kristin Allen requested that comments from citizens not be put at the end of the meeting. She wants the board to consider allowing citizen comments prior to the vote during each meeting. Mayor Lee Davis noted that this could certainly be considered. Town Attorney Sam Elliott stated that many towns hold a brief public hearing before voting at the first reading of an agenda item, but that this could also be held prior to the second reading. Town Administrator Mariah Prescott noted that if the agenda order was going to be changed, a new ordinance would be necessary.

Brian Powell asked how to send comments or questions to the town and / or board. Mayor Lee Davis encouraged all citizens to use the general email – info@waldentn.gov

The meeting was adjourned by Mayor Davis.



Respectfully submitted:
Stacy Stewart

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Mariah Prescott", written over a horizontal line.

Approved:
Mariah Prescott, Town Administrator

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Lee Davis", written over a horizontal line.

Approved:
Lee Davis, Mayor