Town of Walden
Regular Monthly Meeting
January 14, 2025

AGENDA WORKSHOP

The agenda was reviewed and briefly discussed beginning at 5:45 PM. The following interested citizens were in attendance: Joe Robbins, Jr., Margha and Joe Davis, Melissa Nimon, and Tony Wheeler.

CALL TO ORDER OF THE REGULAR MEETING

The regular monthly meeting of the Walden Board of Mayor and Aldermen (BMA) was called to order by Mayor Lee Davis. The following interested citizens were in attendance: Joe Robbins, Jr., Margha and Joe Davis, Melissa Nimon, Tony Wheeler, Linda Collins, Winston Robbins, Mickey Robbins, Bill Thornton, Steven Salkeld, Grace Mynatt, Tim Coleman, Karen Stone, John Barlew, Tom Cofer, Kristinn Allen, and Dave Chouinard.

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 Administrator Mariah Prescott called the roll, noting the presence of Mayor Lee Davis, Vice Mayor Lizzy Schmidt, and Alderwoman Angela Cassidy. Town Attorney Sam Elliott was also present.

APPROVAL / CORRECTION OF THE MINUTES OF DECEMBER 10, 2024

ALDERWOMAN ANGELA CASSIDY MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF DECEMBER 10, 2024, SECONDED BY VICE MAYOR LIZZY SCHMIDT, AND UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED BY THE BOARD OF MAYOR AND ALDERMEN.

REPORTS

POLICE

Hamilton County Sheriff's Deputy Chad Faulkner gave the Police Report, noting the following statistics from the past 30 days: five arrests, 34 calls for service4, 65 other calls, ten district patrols, 25 traffic stopes with 21 verbal waring and four warning citations. These statistics reflect all of District 2, which includes the towns of Walden and Signal Mountain, as well as the unincorporated portion of Hamilton County on the mountain.

FINANCIAL

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

WRES

Mr. Bill Thornton gave the report for Walden's Ridge Emergency Service, noting 32 calls in the past 30 days: ten for emergency medical services, 14 fire-related calls, five assist-to-citizen calls, and three motor vehicle crashes. WRES also responded to three mutual-aid fire calls.

ROADS AND SAFETY

Kristin Allen, committee chairperson, gave the report. Ms. Allen opened by thanking the Walden's public works crew for their tireless efforts to clear the roads during the recent snow event.

Ms. Allen also noted that two new speed monitors are due to be delivered in two weeks. These monitors are less visible and also more easily moved. They will track traffic data (speeds) in both directions. Mr. Tony Wheeler asked if these cameras will be connected to Hamilton County's system, and they will not.

The Roads and Safety Committee met today regarding the TDOT grant. The committee's proposal, which includes three roundabouts, will be presented at the regular February meeting.

In closing, Ms. Allen noted that the committee is currently exploring grants to help improve lighting and striping on the W while still maintaining the historic nature of the road.

MCCOY

Melissa Nimon gave the report for McCoy Farm and Gardens (MFG), opening with a word of thanks for the continued support from Walden's Board. MFG completed several projects in 2024, including but not limited to the following:

- Installed 80 oak leaf hydrangeas
- Added a stage for outdoor performances
- Added a chestnut orchard of 39 trees
- Added five new species to the existing arboretum, which now has 71 total species
- Added beehives and now offers local honey for sale
- Created a field trip program

Ms. Nimon noted that several new programs are planned for 2025 as well. These include expanding corporate sponsorships and adding several education events, such as dry-stone wall-building. In addition, a vegetative screen will be constructed along Taft Highway, in front of the Puppy Patch dog park. Finally, the buildings behind the barn ("Shed Row") will be restored and fundraising efforts will continue. Ms. Nimon noted that an estimated 34,000 visits were recorded to MFG in 2024.

PUMPKIN PATCH PLAYGROUND

Mr. John Barlew reported for the Pumpkin Patch Playground, noting that he has served as chairman for ten years. He emphasized the uniqueness and popularity of the playground, noting that donations and financial support have come in from around the country. There are QR codes located throughout the playground which can be used for donations. In closing, Mr. Barlew noted that 75 new handprint pickets, containing approximately 200 handprints, have been completed and are ready for installation.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

There is no unfinished business.

NEW BUSINESS

1. EMPLOYEE APPRECIATION

OFFICE STAFF:
ELLEN YOUNG
STACY STEWART

Communications Director Ellen Young and Town Recorder Stacy Stewart were publicly recognized for their service to the Town of Walden. Both employees received a framed Emma Bell Miles' print and a card of appreciation from the Board of Mayor and Aldermen.

MARIAH PRESCOTT SALARY ADJUSTMENT BY MAYOR

Mayor Lee Davis introduced this agenda item, noting that he had worked with MTAS to do a salary study of Town Administrators' annual compensation in municipalities of similar size to Walden. He found that these salaries ranged from approximately $80,000 to $106,000. Based on this, Mayor Davis recommended an immediate $10,000 raise for Town Administrator Mariah Prescott, which will place her in the middle of this range. Vice Mayor Lizzy Schmidt and Alderwoman Angela Cassidy agreed with the mayor's proposal.

MAYOR LEE DAVIS MOVED FOR AN IMMEDIATE $10,000 RAISE FOR MARIAH PRESCOTT, SECONDED BY VICE MAYOR LIZZY SCHMIDT, AND UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED BY THE BOARD OF MAYOR AND ALDERMEN.

2. **DISCUSSION ON SPECIAL EVENTS PERMIT PROCESS – ADDED BY EMERGENCY**

Mayor Lee Davis introduced Mr. Tom Cofer, who requested to speak on this issue. Mr. Cofer noted that on January 01, 2025, an estate sale began on East Brow Road and continued for four days. Upward of 1,000 visitors created gridlock on the road. Mr. Cofer noted dangerous issues with traffic and parking for the duration of the estate sale, which neighboring residents knew nothing about until it started. While Mr. Cofer did note that Hamilton County Deputies did a commendable job with traffic control efforts, he stressed his belief that the Town of Walden needs a special-permit process for an event such as this.

3. **CONSIDERATION OF FIRST READING OF PROPOSED ORDINANCE #2025-374 CORRECTING ORDINANCE #2024-371 ADOPTING BY REFERENCE THE UPDATED PROVISIONS OF THE BUILDING, RESIDENTIAL, PLUMBING, MECHANICAL, FUEL GAS, FIRE, SWIMMING POOL AND SPA, ELECTRIC, ENERGY CONSERVATION, ANSI ACCESSIBILITY, NFPA LIFE SAFETY CODES, AND THE HAMILTON COUNTY ELECTRICAL, PLUMBING, GAS, MECHANICAL CONTRACTOR LICENSE SURETY BOND**

MAYOR LEE DAVIS READ THE CAPTION OF THE ORDINANCE AND MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE THE FIRST READING, SECONDED BY ALDERWOMAN ANGELA CASSIDY, AND UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED BY THE BOARD OF MAYOR AND ALDERMEN.

4. **CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS TO ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE**
   a. **MARGHA DAVIS**
   b. **DEBBIE FISER**
   c. **CHRIS SCHWING**

Mayor Lee Davis noted that all three recommended appointments are Walden residents and were recommended by the outgoing chairperson. Mayor Davis approved all three appointments.

5. **CONSIDERATION OF 3 QUOTES FOR GEOTECH FOR TDEC GRANT – FAIRMOUNT CULVERT**

MAYOR LEE DAVIS MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE THE LOW BID (UES) FOR REPAIR OF THE FAIRMOUNT CULVERT, SECONDED BY ALDERWOMAN ANGELA CASSIDY, AND UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED BY THE BOARD OF MAYOR AND ALDERMEN.

6. **DISCUSSION ON CURB CUT PERMIT PROCESS**

Mayor Lee Davis tabled this discussion to a later date.

7. **DISCUSSION ON TOWN PROJECTS AND PROCESSES WORKSHOP DATE**

Vice Mayor Lizzy Schmidt introduced this discussion, noting that current processes and procedures for the Town of Walden and its committees need to be reviewed and updated. This workshop date is set for January 30 @ 3:00 PM, to be held at Walden Town Hall.

COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE CITIZENS

Mr. Dave Chouinard, a resident of Forest Park Drive, thanked the board for the placement of reflectors on the roads – but also noted that when the snow plows come through, they remove the reflectors. Mr. Chouinard asked what the long-term plan might be for annual reflector placement. Mayor Lee Davis noted that the town plans to research the installation of counter-sunk reflectors when paving resumes in the spring. Town Administrator Mariah Prescott noted that used reflectors cannot be placed on the roads again, but also that the town has plenty of new reflectors at this time.

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Lee Davis adjourned the meeting.

Respectfully submitted:
Stacy Stewart, Town Recorder

Approved:
Mariah Prescott, Town Administrator

Approved:
Lee Davis, Mayor