

REGULAR MEETING
BOARD OF ALDERMEN
TOWN OF WAYNESVILLE
DECEMBER 8, 1998
TUESDAY - 7:00 P.M.
TOWN HALL

The Board of Aldermen held a regular meeting on Tuesday, December 8, 1998. Members present were Mayor Henry Foy, Aldermen Kenneth Moore, Sam Wiggins and James Williamson. Also present were Town Manager A. Lee Galloway, Town Clerk Phyllis McClure and Town Attorney Michael Bonfoey. Mayor Foy called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Ordinance to Demolish Property - 117 Frazier Street

Building Inspector Jack Morgan has conducted the necessary hearings to address violations in the housing code with the property located at 117 Frazier Street. After the appropriate hearings, the structure remains out of compliance and is unfit for human habitation. It is requested that the Board authorize the removal or demolition of the structure and file the cost of the work as a lien against the property.

Alderman Wiggins moved, seconded by Mayor Foy, to adopt the ordinance authorizing the removal or demolition of the structure and outbuilding located at 117 Frazier Street. The motion carried unanimously. (Ord. No. 36-98)

Minor Subdivision - Stephen B. Kidd, Waynesville Industrial Park

Mr. Stephen B. Kidd owns a 5-acre tract of land in the Waynesville Industrial Park. The property is zoned I-2, Heavy Industrial District, and Mr. Kidd is dividing the tract into five (5), one-acre lots. Junaluska Sanitary District provides water and sewer systems for the tract. Town staff recommends approval subject to the following conditions:

- 1) Obtain state permits for water and sewer line extension and erosion control.
- 2) Provide adequate surety bond for water, sewer and drainage systems and for road construction.

Alderman Williamson moved, seconded by Alderman Moore, to approve the five-lot minor subdivision located in the Waynesville Industrial Park for Mr. Stephen B. Kidd, subject to the conditions recommended by town staff. The motion carried unanimously.

Minor Subdivision Plat - Country Club Real Estate of WNC, Inc.

Mr. Bob Davis, representing Country Club Real Estate of WNC, Inc., said that he is creating a four-lot subdivision (lots 15, 16, 17 & 18) along Hickory Drive. The property is zoned "R-1" and Town

water and sewer is available to the lots. Town staff recommends approval with the following conditions:

1. Submit a revised plat and increase the size of lot 18 so the average size of the four lots will be one acre per lot;
2. Add water pressure disclaimer regarding Lot #15;
3. Submit additional surety bond to cover the costs of the water pump repairs for the Phase II water system.

Mr. Davis submitted a revised plat which satisfies the first two conditions.

Alderman Williamson moved, seconded by Alderman Moore, to approve the minor subdivision plat for Country Club Real Estate of WNC, Inc., subject to the submission of additional surety bond to cover the costs of the water pump repairs for the Phase II water system. The motion carried unanimously.

Discussion Regarding the Proposed Widening of the Asheville Highway

Several people attended the meeting requesting to speak regarding the proposed widening of the Asheville Highway (Business 23).

Bill McDonald, President of Haywood Electric Membership Corporation (HEMC) presented a resolution, adopted by their Board of Directors, stating that the original five-lane highway (proposal) presented at a public hearing at Junaluska Elementary School earlier would be the safest and most beneficial plan for the citizens of Haywood County. Mr. McDonald said that the resolution was sent to the Haywood County Board of Commissioners on Monday, December 7, 1998. Mr. McDonald said that he was formerly a Trooper with Moore County and has dealt with many traffic issues. He said that the traffic circle proposed for the Asheville Highway was the only one that he was aware of in the State of North Carolina which would be located outside city limits. Mr. McDonald said that a traffic circle located in Pinehurst, North Carolina has caused problems and the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) is currently in the process of spending 1.2 million dollars to correct these problems. Mr. McDonald felt that the roundabout would not have adequate access to HEMC and he expressed concern that older persons may become confused when driving in the traffic circles. Mr. McDonald asked that the Board of Aldermen give the proposed roundabout their consideration before recommending that it be included in the widening of the Asheville Highway.

John Queen, resident and business owner in Waynesville and Haywood County, presented a sample petition addressing safety and traffic congestion. He said that the original petition is circulating and contains approximately 1,200 signatures at this time. Mr. Queen expressed opposition to the proposed roundabout, adding that the June issue of NCDOT's newsletter states that they will be spending 1.2 million dollars to correct a roundabout in Pinehurst, North Carolina. Mr. Queen said that the Asheville Highway is called Business 23 for a reason, and that is because it is a business highway and therefore should be five-lanes. He said that sidewalks and bike paths could be added regardless of whether the road is three-lane, four-lane or five-lane. Mr. Queen said that a study done in 1997 estimated that 17,000 cars per day traveled Ratcliff Cove and 13,000 per day traveled the

Asheville Highway. Mr. Queen said that the majority of this road is inside Haywood County's jurisdiction with only 200 feet being inside the Town and he asked for the Board of Aldermen to state their position regarding the widening of the road.

Mike Plemmons said that he agreed with John Queen and felt that the road would need to be a five-lane highway to best serve the community. Mr. Plemmons felt that a roundabout would be confusing to him and to other people and that a safe and attractive highway is what is needed. Mr. Plemmons said that people do not want to wait for 23 more years for this project to be completed.

Alan Shelton said that he appreciated the Town's interest in the Asheville Highway. He made reference to an article in the Enterprise Mountaineer in October of 1996 which quoted Mayor Henry Foy as saying that the road should also be widened from the traffic light at the Old Hospital to Walnut Street. He said that at that time 18,000 vehicles per day traveled Russ Avenue, with a 20% increase in population during the summer months. With such large volumes of traffic, Mr. Shelton felt that the roundabout would be to capacity when completed.

Jim Francis said that he had pictures taken of this road when it was dirt around 1905. He said that his Grandfather helped to build this road in the early 1900's, and that the road served Waynesville until the By-Pass was built. Mr. Francis felt that the Asheville Highway should be a five-lane highway.

Nancy Francis said that she has worked at her business along the Asheville Highway for thirty-three (33) years. She said that a three-lane divided highway is recommended in front of her business which would prohibit access to her business. Ms. Francis said that there is a lot of farm equipment on this road which could cause traffic congestion to be backed up to Junaluska Elementary School. Ms. Francis said that when five lanes narrow to three lanes, it is like putting traffic into a funnel and she felt that more lanes are needed from Ratcliff Cove Road to Lowe's. Ms. Francis suggested that a roundabout be placed at the Old Pet Dairy building rather than at Ratcliff Cove Road.

Mayor Henry Foy clarified that the portion proposed for a three-lane highway is not a divided highway, but rather a two-lane with a turn lane.

Philan Medford said that she has researched this issue. Ms. Medford presented information from Dan Burden, a traffic calming consultant with the Florida Department of Transportation. Ms. Medford also presented research of a highly developed highway in Florida which began as a five-lane highway. Ms. Medford said that the middle scramble lane was removed, and sidewalks and bicycle lanes were then added, improving the highway. Ms. Medford said that Michael Walwork with Alternate Street Design is the consultant for the Asheville Highway project. Ms. Medford said that the traffic circle in Pinehurst, North Carolina does not fit the description and is not the model which is being planned for the proposed roundabout at Ratcliff Cove Road. Ms. Medford said that the proposed roundabout can handle higher volumes of traffic and is 60-70% safer than traffic signals, reducing the number of accidents. She added that the roundabout is cheaper to maintain over a twenty-year period than traffic signals, costing \$150,000 compared to \$340,000 + the cost of serious crashes involving traffic signals. After consulting with Michael Paylor with NCDOT, Ms. Medford said that a four-lane highway with landscaping is less expensive than pavement to maintain.

Ms. Medford, in consultation with Michael Paylor, Asheville Highway project manager, ascertained that HEMC, Farm Bureau and Mountain Farm Credit, would not have to relocate if three-lane construction from Ratcliff Cove into Town is used - only ½ of their road frontage would be taken by NCDOT. Ms. Medford said that sidewalks should be a priority, especially with the location of the Junaluska Elementary School. She added that bike lanes are important because companies look for recreation when searching for a site to locate.

Roscoe Wells said that the meeting reminded him of the movie “Groundhog Day” because he heard the same comments at the Haywood County Commissioners’s meeting on December 7, 1998. Mr. Wells asked that the Board of Aldermen not take any action regarding the Asheville Highway at tonight’s meeting. Mr. Wells said that he has seen traffic circles in other places, especially in Colorado, and that they function very well. Mr. Wells asked representatives from Haywood Electric Membership Corporation (HEMC) if they purchased additional property for the relocation of their business before the five-lane highway was proposed. Mr. Larry Clark, Board Member with HEMC, said that HEMC felt that there would not be adequate access to their business with the highway as it is now being proposed.

Mrs. Mib Medford, a resident of Clifton Street in Waynesville said that she has volunteered her work in the Downtown area and the Town of Waynesville over the past forty (40) years. She said that speed bumps can be added in some areas for safety; however, this highway is a different situation and that other methods are needed to slow traffic down. Mrs. Medford said that she, Mayor Henry Foy, Ron Huelster and Town Engineer Fred Baker attended a workshop with NCDOT representatives on November 5, 1998. Mrs. Medford said that Mr. Tom Sherin, Head Designer with NCDOT for twenty-seven years, was a speaker at the workshop and he said that NCDOT now looks at things “beyond the pavement” and they are more context sensitive. Mrs. Medford added that in a publication by NCDOT they refer to traffic circles as “calming devices” and they cause people to slow down. Mrs. Medford said that one of her greatest fears is that a school bus, gasoline delivery truck and an irritated driver could collide close to the Junaluska Elementary School, and that safety should be a major consideration in the design of the highway.

Mr. David Eberhardt, downtown business owner, stated that people should work together toward a compromise.

Dr. Stephen Wall, said that even though a considerable amount of discussion has occurred regarding the Asheville Highway it always comes back to a five-lane highway. Dr. Wall said people feel that Russ Avenue is an ugly and dangerous street and they do not want to see the same situation on the Asheville Highway. He said that the Asheville Highway should be a monitored road, however, he expressed his dislike of traffic circles. Dr. Wall said that a lot of people have written letters to NCDOT and he felt that those letters have been ignored.

Mark Javen said that he lives on County Road and he felt that everyone in the community is concerned with this project. Mr. Javen said that the people who attended the public hearings conducted by NCDOT did not want a five-lane highway and he thought that a compromise had been made. Mr. Javen said that the proposed traffic circle is a concern to him.

Voni D'Angio said that she was disappointed that they felt that there was a compromise which would work for everyone. Sidewalks and medians would work very well with a five-lane which she felt would have less traffic. However, Ms. D'Angio felt that the fifth lane, or "suicide lane", is a dangerous lane to be in. Ms. D'Angio said that a roundabout will slow traffic, handles volumes of traffic and that merging is safer than stopping at a traffic light.

Mayor Henry Foy said since the issue of the Asheville Highway was not scheduled on the Board's agenda for this meeting the Board would not take action taken at this time. Mayor Foy said that the Board has requested that the NCDOT send plans for the proposed widening of the Asheville Highway for them to review. A plan for the proposed roundabout has been received, but plans for the highway have not.

Alderman Wiggins said at the last meeting he made it clear that he was not in favor of a five-lane highway because he did not feel that it would be safe in front of Junaluska Elementary School. Alderman Wiggins said that it was important that three issues should be addressed in the following order: 1) Safety, 2) Accessibility to the public, and 3) Aesthetics. Alderman Wiggins was concerned that people have access to the Asheville Highway without driving ½ mile to get back. Alderman Wiggins said that he did not know how to design a highway, however he does know that a five-lane highway in front of an elementary school is not the best type of road to have. Alderman Wiggins said that he did not have an opinion regarding the proposed traffic circle but he did not want to see a five-lane highway coming into Waynesville like Russ Avenue. He added that it was up to the State to design a road which is safe and will handle traffic adequately. Alderman Wiggins said that the only action which the Board has taken as a group is that when asked by Mr. Tolson with the NCDOT what the recommendation of the Town would be regarding the road from the Old Hospital to Walnut Street, the Board did recommend that this portion be a three-lane road.

Alderman Williamson said that the widening of the Asheville Highway has been talked about for the past twenty years and if it is knocked around there may not even be a road. Alderman Williamson said that he did not know what would be the best design for this road, but he will consider what is best for the Town of Waynesville. He said that he attended the public hearings held by the State, but he did not feel that this Board should make any decision. Alderman Williamson said that there should be sidewalks on both sides of the road, especially to the elementary school and that a traffic light should be located at the school because safety should be first.

Alderman Moore said that he has attended meetings regarding the proposed road and he felt that this Board did not need to be in this "dog fight". Alderman Moore said that Haywood County should be making the decisions regarding the design of the Asheville Highway. Alderman Moore said that he has been in favor of a five-lane highway and continues to be in favor of a five-lane highway until someone convinces him that he is wrong. Alderman Moore said that safety is the biggest issue with this highway.

Closed Session - Legal Matter and Property Matter

Alderman Williamson moved, seconded by Alderman Moore, to adjourn to closed session at 8:40 p.m.

Alderman Williamson moved, seconded by Alderman Moore, to return to regular session at 9:27 p.m. Both motions carried unanimously.

Authority to Proceed to Purchase Watershed Property

Alderman Wiggins moved, seconded by Alderman Williamson, to authorize Attorney Bonfoey to make an offer to purchase two tracts of property adjoining the Town's watershed property from Haywood Lumber and Mining and the Lanning family, giving a January 4, 1999 deadline for response to the offer. If after that time there has been no response, Town Attorney Bonfoey is authorized to approach with condemnation procedures. The motion carried unanimously. (Res.24A & 24B-98)

Adjournment

With no further business, Alderman Moore moved, seconded by Alderman Williamson, to adjourn the meeting at 9:30 p.m. The motion carried unanimously.

Phyllis R. McClure
Town Clerk

Henry B. Foy
Mayor