

**Board of Commissioners Work
Session (Virtual)**

**Thursday, May 28, 2020
5:30 p.m.**

Zoom Online Platform: Meeting ID# 829 7927 7459

Members present via ZOOM: Mayor Robert Johnson, Mayor Pro-tem Andrew Palmer, Commissioner Angela Day, Commissioner Debbie Ferguson, Commissioner Bert Hall, Commissioner Michael Parsons.

Absent: None

Staff present via ZOOM: Town Manager Wilson Hooper, Clerk Debra Pearson, Town Attorney Daniel Johnson, NW Police Chief Joe Rankin.

Also Present via ZOOM: Planning Director Meredith Detsch, Public Service Director Dale Shumate, NW Fire Chief Jimmy Martin, Recreation Director Nelson Martin, Tourism Director Crystal Keener, and Finance Officer Connie Bauguess.

- Call to Order- Mayor Robert Johnson
- Invocation- Mayor Robert Johnson
- Pledge of Allegiance- NW Police Chief Joe Rankin

IV. Additions/Deletions to the Agenda- Mayor Robert Johnson asked the Board if there were to be any additions or deletions to the May 28, 2020 Work Session agenda. There were none.

V. Approval of the agenda- Mayor Johnson called for a motion to approve the agenda at this time. **Motion to approve the May 28, 2020 Town of North Wilkesboro Commissioners' Work Session was made by Commissioner Parsons and seconded by Commissioner Ferguson. Motion unanimously carries by roll call vote of each Commissioner.**

VI. Work Items:

A. CORONAVIRUS/COVID-19 RESPONSE UPDATE AND REOPENING DISCUSSION-

Wilkes Health Director Rachel Willard was present for the meeting and presented information regarding the current COVID 19 situation in Wilkes County. She reports to date there are 488 current cases and 459 recoveries at this time. There have been six (6) deaths to date. Outbreaks for the county are Rose Glen Village with three cases and one death in this count, Wilkes Rehab Home (nursing and long term) reports six cases, with no visitors having been allowed from the start of the stay at home order. Any person in the nursing facility showing symptoms were moved to isolation halls of 4 to 14 beds to monitor symptoms. Wilkes County Prison facility reported three cases, which includes two inmates and one officer. The two inmates have been moved from Wilkes to another facility. No information regarding the balance of the mortality number was given. A small number of cases were reported at a local daycare, Double Trouble with this being called a "cluster" situation. The reported cases have since quarantined and the daycare is scheduled to reopen Friday May 29, 2020. Regarding the Tyson outbreak situation, there have been 570 cases confirmed with 49% of that number being Wilkes County residents living in the 28697 zip code area.

Ms. Willard reported the United States Health and Human Services is funding the Wilkesboro Wal-Mart screening for Wilkes County Monday through Friday from 7:00 a.m. until 9:00 p.m. they hope to test 90% of the population of Wilkes living within a 10-mile radius of this area in the county. Ms. Willard took questions from the board after her report. Commissioner Palmer asked about the quarantine time as Ms. Willard had said that ten days after any symptoms may present if the person is not showing any signs of infection such as fever they may return from isolation. She strongly advised waiting 10 days past the onset of symptoms and waiting 72 hours post fever. Commissioner Palmer also strongly encouraged care in sending COVID patients to nursing facilities. Commissioner Palmer also asked about contact tracing and what the Health Department was doing about this. Ms. Willard reported 250 new contact tracers had been put in place to help the county. Commissioner Day asked about the possibility of an increase over the next two to three weeks due to businesses reopening. Ms. Willard says she anticipates a small rise- a bump of maybe 20 to 50 cases over the next 14 days. Mayor Johnson said he wanted to thank everyone for all they do to make things safe at Tyson and the report is that Wilkes County's Tyson plant had the most permanent solutions of any Tyson in the state. The Mayor and Board thanked Ms. Willard for attending the meeting and giving her report.

Manager Hooper discussed the current situation of the town. Since the stay at home order, non-essential employees, about 40% of the workforce, have been ordered to stay-at-home. They've been paid 2/3 of their normal wage. Some have applied for unemployment benefits. He said that he and Department heads have been working on a plan for reopening that needs Mayor and Commissioner input. Manager Hooper recommends 1/3 of the work force come back to work Monday, June 1, 2020. This would include the Green Thumb workers and the work force that take care of the current brush pile up and large refuse pickup. Meantime Town Hall will remain closed to the public with anyone needing services being asked to make an appointment. Safety measures will be taken during appointments with town staff wearing appropriate safety coverings and requesting that visitors utilize them as well. Town events were discussed with the consensus being that due to the social distancing mandates and capacity limits imposed, there will be no Concerts on the Deck for June, July, and August. The 4th of July festivities, which is not Town controlled have been cancelled. The Brushy Mountain AppleFest, sponsored by the Brushy Mtn. Ruritan Club will be contacted by the Town of North Wilkesboro regarding committing to vendors. With the numbers of attendees and the wide logistics of people traveling to the festival, it is too premature to decide now according to Rachel Willard with the Health Department. This festival is held in Downtown North Wilkesboro the first Saturday in October. The Town Manager summarized his recommendations in the attached document. *See Attachment A.*

B. VIRTUAL PUBLIC HEARING POLICY VIRTUAL PUBLIC HEARING POLICY-

Manager Hooper wished to inform the Board of the policies and conditions of holding virtual public hearings. New legislation requires virtual public hearings be followed by a 24-hour period where the public may submit written comments of the subject. The staff followed Wilkes County attorney Tony Triplett's recommendation that the meeting be recessed for 24 hours the reconvened for final action. This process prevents the need of having to re-advertise the second meeting. Actions on the items in the public hearing could be postponed until the next scheduled meeting which would allow more time for notifying the public of the town's impending actions on the subject. The board's decision on this matter will be applied to the upcoming public hearing on the Town's budget and can be used by the Planning Board for their upcoming hearings. Manager Hooper asked the board for their input or preferences on the matter. The Board was mostly in agreement of reconvening the recessed meeting the day after the recess in order to take a vote. The next Town Board regular meeting is scheduled for June 2, 2020 with the continuance of ZOOM virtual meetings.

However, the Board also agreed to let the Planning Board and Board of Adjustment hold in-person meetings

with safety measures in place. There are additional legal requirements surrounding these meetings that make virtual meetings challenging.

Manager Hooper asked the Mayor and the Board members if they had any topics they'd like to touch on. Commissioner Ferguson asked about the progress on the Smoot Park Splash Pad. Manager Hooper stated work was currently being done although at a slow pace. Commissioner Palmer stated that since the pool will remain closed for the season the work pace could be picked up. Commissioner Ferguson also commended Commissioner Palmer for his efforts to get the word out to our local businesses concerning the EDC Small Business Recovery Plan. Commissioner Palmer went door to door leaving the newsletter with guidelines for applying for these grants to some 75 businesses. At this time there are 39 applications for grant money from local businesses. Commissioner Ferguson informed the Board the EDC would hold their meeting Friday, May 29, 2020 and she would have more information then.

With no other items or concerns to be discussed, Mayor Johnson called for a motion to adjourn. Motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Palmer and seconded by Commissioner Ferguson. Meeting was adjourned at 6:58 p.m.

Debra W. Pearson, CLERK

Robert L. Johnson, Mayor

APPROVED: _____

