

**TOWN OF HILDEBRAN  
TOWN HALL**

**JANUARY 26, 2015  
7:00 p.m.**

**REGULAR MEETING  
MINUTES**

- CALL TO ORDER** Mayor Cook called the Regular Meeting of the Town Council to order at 7:02 p.m.
- COUNCIL PRESENT** The following members of the Board were present: Mayor Virginia Cook, Council Members Brenda Banks, Wendell Hildebrand, Jamie Hollowell, Barbara Lowman and Lee Lowman.
- STAFF PRESENT** The following staff members were present: Attorney Redmond Dill, Town Clerk Alice Sanders and Finance Officer Fredrick Rankins.
- CITIZENS PRESENT** See attached list for other citizens.
- MEDIA** Evan Matsumoto, from the *Hickory Daily Record* was in attendance.
- INVOCATION** Mayor Cook called for a moment of silence.
- PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE** The Pledge of Allegiance to the United States flag was led by Town Clerk Sanders.
- ADOPTION OF AGENDA** Council Member L. Lowman made a motion to amend the agenda from “Original School Building Discussion” to “Original School Building Discussion/Vote” under Old Business. Council Member Hildebrand asked why the public wasn’t notified that a vote will take place. Council Member L. Lowman stated that he agreed to the presentation from Preservation North Carolina at Council Member Hildebrand’s request and he agreed to the focus group meeting at Council Member Hollowell’s request and that his own request to the Board was to make a decision at the January meeting. Mr. Hildebrand stated that he had not spoken on the matter. Council Members Banks, Hollowell, B. Lowman and L. Lowman voted in favor of the motion. Council Member Hildebrand voted in opposition of the motion. The motion carried.
- APPROVAL OF MINUTES** Council Member Hollowell made a motion to approve the December 15, 2014 Regular Meeting Minutes and the January 8, 2015 Special Meeting Minutes. All voted in favor.
- PUBLIC COMMENT** Carroll Shull stated that he had voted for those elected during the 2014 election. He stated he would like for the building to be gone and to build a library or another entity to be proud of instead of an eyesore. He further stated that he hoped Council will keep the Town citizens in mind when making its decision.
- Michael Huffman, a historian for Burke and Catawba counties, stated that the Town was built around the school and if the building is

demolished, the Town will fall. He emphasized that the building can be renovated and asked to keep it as a centerpiece in order to bring more people to the Town to shop and eat at the Town's businesses.

Troy Smart, a member of HHDA, pointed out the majority of speakers at the January 8, 2015 focus group were in favor of keeping the building. He reminded Council that the building can be restored at no cost to the taxpayers. He asked Council what their legacy will be and emphasized that the residents of the Town are depending on the Board.

Mark R. Lackey stated that he felt there were far better options for the building than to tear it down and that it would not be a burden to taxpayers. He discussed the elimination of the Pavilion at Myrtle Beach, SC that now sits mostly vacant.

Elsie Childres stated that Hildebran is one of two fastest expanding towns in Burke County. She praised the East Burke Senior Center, including the director, its activities for the seniors and stated she does not want the senior center to go away. She asked Council to remember the history and past and to vote to keep the building.

Richard Bell stated that due to high turnover, there are a lot of inexperienced security guards checking the property that might take shortcuts. He also expressed his displeasure with Council Member L. Lowman who interrupted him at a prior meeting.

Rex Lail stated that he was working on a plan to benefit all of Burke County. He reported that he met with two County Commissioners and the County Manager and presented the plan and it was reported that the plan is workable, but the County needs more information. He asked for more time to complete the plan.

Johnny Childers read a statement from Howard Butch Duckworth stating that Mr. Duckworth is President of the East Burke Senior Center Association, Inc. and would like to go on record in favor of moving forward to see if the old school building is a workable solution for renovation to use for a new senior center and library. Mr. Duckworth asked for additional time to work out details.

Theresa Messer suggested that Council communicate to the citizens the reasoning of its decision. She stated she understood the building is a health hazard. She reported there was misinformation among the citizens and suggested Council clarify via a sign to get a better response.

Beverly Nichols stated she agrees with Mr. Huffman and Mr. Lackey's comments. She stated she is representing her mother, Betty

Martin, and her brother, Brian Martin. She reported that Ms. Martin has received a third notice from the Town regarding pallets that are being used as a fence line between the property line between her mother and her mother's neighbor, Tammy Hollifield, and stated her mother is not in any violation. She reported about an open sewer pit at Ms. Hollifield's house and that she has contacted Burke County and Environmental Services about the open sewer pit. She stated that if anybody wanted to enforce R20 zoning that Tammy Hollifield signed it but Betty Martin did not sign it. She stated that the pallets are a buffer zone and two attorneys are discussing this issue now.

Dawn Shelton stated that history and the building mean something to the Town citizens and their families.

Ben Honeycutt read comments from Drew Bridges about restoring history. Mr. Honeycutt reported that there was more time, according to the minutes, spent on the purchase and placement of the digital sign than the preservation of the building, which is a symbol of the Town. He emphasized his desire to deed the property to Preservation North Carolina and to listen to the citizen's wishes.

**OLD BUSINESS:  
ZION INDUSTRIES  
SEWER PROJECT  
CHANGE ORDER –  
SHERRY LONG,  
WPCOG**

Sherry Long, from the Western Piedmont Council of Governments (WPCOG) reported that phase I of the Zion project was completed. The track line has been installed and being prepared for the business to be able to tie into the line. She explained that a Community Development Block Grant was awarded in the amount of \$48,250.00 for the project. When the WPCOG originally bid the project, the bids came in over budget. The WPCOG contacted the Appalachian Regional Commission and they awarded a grant in the amount of \$59,500.00. Zion contributed an additional \$18,750.00. When the project was bid the second time, there was additional money left over. She reported that Zion asked the WPCOG if the money they contributed to the project could be put towards connecting the sewer from the building to the town sewer line. She stated that WPCOG is asking the Board to approve a change order to allow Zion Industries to use the money it has already contributed for this additional work. Ms. Long emphasized that there would be no expense to the Town. She stated this change will increase the contract price from \$58,899.52 by \$26,645.00 to make the total project cost \$85,844.52.

Council Member Hollowell made a motion to approve the change order to allow Zion Industries to use the funds it has contributed to connect the sewer lines. All voted in favor.

**ORIGINAL  
SCHOOL**

Mayor Cook opened the floor for discussion regarding the old school building. Council Member Hildebrand asked the Board to consider the proposal from Rex Lail and Johnny Childers to work with the

BUILDING  
DISCUSSION/VOTE

County for the building to be used as both a new senior center and library. He asked to table the vote until the March 23, 2015 meeting. He stated it was an honor and burden to be on the Town Council. Council is burdened to be public servants, to serve the citizens, and not to rule over them. He stated that the vast majority of the people want to save the building. He also stated that he does have respect for the minority to demolish the building who do not want the tax dollars wasted which is why he has looked for an alternative to spending any tax dollars. First, with Preservation North Carolina, which seems to not be an alternative, and currently with the County. He asked what the rush is to tear the building down since the Town has owned the building for 25 years and performed upkeep, such as replacing windows and repairs on the roof. He reported that the tenant pays \$250 a month which almost covers the cost to insure the building. He stated that the building is the heart and symbol of the Town and appealed to the Board to consider the decision and thanked Council members for allowing him to serve on the Board with them.

Council Member L. Lowman stated that the upcoming vote has not been a rash decision but has been discussed off and on during closed sessions for months that could not be revealed to the public until recently. He stated that he and Council Member B. Lowman toured the building and that what people do not realize is that other than the first floor, the building is decimated even though the outside looks great. He emphasized that he was in the last class to attend school in the building. He reported that the school had been vandalized and that when he toured the building, there were cigarette butts on the floor when the building was supposed to be locked and requested more locks be installed. He emphasized that one small cigarette butt could catch the building on fire and would most likely spread to the Town Hall building.

Mr. Lowman addressed the timing of the digital sign, stating that Duke Power cannot complete the installation until March. He repeated that he had fulfilled Council Member Hildebrand's wishes by listening to Ted Alexander's presentation on Preservation North Carolina and agreed to hold a focus group meeting with the citizens and that his request was to make a final decision at the first of the year. He stated that when the original windows were removed and replaced with new windows, the historical value of the building was destroyed. He reported that Burke County Schools tore the walls out and the replacement windows had spaces that you could almost see outside. He also reported that the downstairs has extensive mold and mildew and described it as horrific. He emphasized that all of these issues become a liability to the Town.

Mr. Lowman also addressed Preservation North Carolina. He emphasized that even though there may not be a monetary cost

involved, there could still be liabilities to the Town. He explained that deeding the land to them would split the Town complex in between the gym and the Town Hall. He gave a scenario that if a patron of a business in the building accidentally hit a pedestrian walking to the gym, the Town would be liable. He further pointed out that the inside of the building has no heat or running water. He reported that the tenant has to heat his room with space heaters and has no running water.

Mr. Lowman stated that during his campaign, he asked several people about their thoughts on the building and that he did get different opinions, but the majority of the people he spoke to were for tearing the building down.

Mr. Lowman strongly expressed his views and reasoning for not deeding the property over to anyone unless the citizens approved it and the majority of the people he has spoken to are not in favor.

Council Member Hildebrand stated that he knew Mr. Lowman was not in favor of Preservation North Carolina and that is why he and other citizens are working with the County for another alternative. Mr. Hildebrand stated that any preservation to the building would require gutting the inside and the windows could be replaced to look like the original windows and could be double paned which would be more energy efficient.

Mr. Lowman asked what would be saved since the inside would need gutting and the windows would be replaced. He stated that the joists will need to be replaced with metal. He stated the only thing left is the structure, old bricks. He stated that the building is not the heart of this Town, the people are the heart of this Town. He emphasized that he has lived in Hildebran his entire life and his business is in Town.

Mr. Hildebrand stated that he did not know why the Board had the focus group because it appeared to him that some people had already made their decision. Mr. Lowman stated that he did listen to everyone. He emphasized that if the people giving opinions were not a Town resident and do not pay taxes to the Town, he does not care what they say because the Town citizens are the ones that pay for the building.

Council Member Hollowell stated that if the property was deeded over, any future business would have parking issues due to the fact that the gymnasium uses a great amount of parking spaces and that it would not be fair to the business. Mr. Hollowell expressed that the turnout of the Town residents at the focus group was extremely low and some people did not want to speak in front of their peers. He emphasized that the Board needs to make a decision on this building

because the Town has been sitting on the decision for years. He also stated that as a fireman, he would not like for any fireman to go into that building if there was a fire, even if it was preserved, due to the construction. He stated that his issues with the building are safety aspects and he doesn't want to risk any fireman's life for that building.

Mr. Hildebrand asked what the Board's plan was if the building is demolished. Mr. Lowman stated that it was open to anything. He stated that the County is waiting to see what the Town is going to do before making a move on the senior center project.

Council Member B. Lowman stated that every topic has been covered.

Council Member Banks stated that when she ran for office, she campaigned to work hard to save the citizens their hard-earned money and she cannot see squandering the taxpayers' money.

Mayor Cook called for a motion. Council Member L. Lowman made a motion to demolish the old school building from the breezeway over to the left, towards the gymnasium.

Council Member Hildebrand made a motion to table this issue until the March 23, 2015 meeting. Council Member Hildebrand voted in favor of the motion. Council Members Banks, Hollowell, B. Lowman and L. Lowman voted in opposition to the motion. The motion did not carry.

Council Member L. Lowman restated his motion to demolish the old school building from the breezeway over to the left, towards the gymnasium. Council Members Banks, Hollowell, B. Lowman and L. Lowman voted in favor of the motion. Council Member Hildebrand voted in opposition to the motion. The motion carried.

Mayor Cook called for a five minute recess at 8:05 p.m.

Mayor Cook called the meeting back into session at 8:10 p.m.

Council Member B. Lowman made a motion to amend the agenda to add "Old School Building Demolition Quotes" under Old Business. All voted in favor.

OLD SCHOOL  
BUILDING  
DEMOLITION  
QUOTES

Council reviewed the two quotes to demolish the building. Mayor Cook explained that Foothills Recycling & Demolition Services will recycle everything that is available. D. H. Griffin Wrecking Co., Inc. will not recycle when the building is demolished. Council Member Hollowell requested that some bricks be available for citizens per

their requests. Mr. Hollowell suggested the money collected should be earmarked as a donation to the food bank.

Mayor Cook stated that the windows will not be recycled and the Town can surplus and sell them. The Board requested the two water fountains and the cornerstone be donated to the HHDA museum. Attorney Dill recommended that these specific items be negotiated prior to signing the contract.

Mayor Cook reviewed the specifications of the quotes with the Board.

Deputy Towery reminded Council about the time capsule. Mayor Cook will research the specifications for the capsule.

Council Member Banks made a motion to accept the quote to demolish the old school building from Foothills Recycling & Demolition Services in the amount of \$90,000.00 contingent upon the Town being able to keep the two water fountains and some bricks. All voted in favor. The second bid from D. H. Griffin Wrecking Co., Inc. was \$138,500.00.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

**KELLE HUFFMAN  
– KATE B.  
REYNOLDS  
DISCUSSION**

Kelle Huffman reported that Healthy Places NC is an initiative of Kate B. Reynolds trust and is a new approach to improve health in rural North Carolina and the trust is making efforts to help a few communities that have limited resources. She suggested that as Council plans its goals to consider funds from this grant. She distributed a handout and reported feedback from citizens in this area. She reported that the organization will be spending \$100 million over the next 10 years and Burke County is one of the eligible counties.

**DECLARE  
PROPERTY  
SURPLUS:  
DESKS/CHAIRS,  
TYPEWRITERS  
AND TUBAS**

Mayor Cook reported to the Board that there are old desk/chairs, typewriters and two tubas to surplus so that they can be sold. It was mentioned to donate what is needed to the HHDA museum.

Council Member B. Lowman made a motion to surplus the desk/chairs, typewriters and tubas. All voted in favor.

**FACILITIES  
REPORT**

Mayor Cook reported that the digital sign will not be available until March 1, 2015 due to Duke Power's availability.

Mayor Cook informed the Board that there is a leak in the auditorium near the back where the stage is located. One quote from Conover Construction & Roofing, Inc. was presented. Mayor Cook stated that after the roof is fixed, the ceiling will need to be replaced. Mr. Rankins stated that the front of the roof was replaced in 2012. Mayor Cook suggested money be allocated in next year's budget for a new roof. Mr. Lowman suggested the chimney be removed since it is

causing the leak and it is not needed. Council requested quotes to remove the chimney, cap and seal it, and remove the flashing. Mayor Cook stated she will call a Special Meeting once she gets the quotes.

DECEMBER TAX  
REPORT

Ms. Sanders provided the tax report for the month of December 2014. She reported that she will send a delinquent letter on February 1, 2015. The tax report is hereby incorporated by reference and made a part of these minutes (Attachment A.)

DEPUTY REPORT  
GARY TOWERY

Deputy Towery gave his report for the month of December 2014. The Board requested Deputy Towery to patrol the Town Hall facilities frequently. Deputy Towery reported that a part-time Deputy will begin work in one to two weeks that will assist the Town.

COMMITTEE  
REPORTS &  
UPDATES

Transportation Advisory Committee (COG) – Mayor Cook reported that the next meeting is Wednesday.

Western Piedmont Council of Governments Policy Board - Council Member B. Lowman will attend the February meeting. Mayor Cook reported that the annual meeting has been moved to April 2015.

Burke Economic Development – Mayor Cook reported that there were three meetings held in closed sessions.

Recreation & Tourism Committee – No report at this time.

Water Resource Committee – No report at this time.

VEDIC (Valdese) – Mayor Cook reported that there was a business that was interested in coming to the Town but it has shifted and is considering another area.

OTHER BUSINESS

None at this time.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

None at this time.

ADJOURNMENT

All business being concluded, Council Member Banks made a motion to adjourn at 9:01 p.m. All voted in favor.

I attest these are the approved minutes of the Board.

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Alice Sanders, Town Clerk

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Virginia Cook, Mayor