

**THE ERWIN BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
SPECIAL CALLED SESSION
MONDAY, APRIL 8, 2024 @ 9:00 A.M.
ERWIN MUNICIPAL BUILDING BOARD ROOM**

AGENDA

- 1. MEETING CALLED TO ORDER**
 - A. Invocation
 - B. Pledge of Allegiance
- 2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**
- 3. DISCUSSION OF ERWIN DEPOT**
- 4. ADJOURNMENT**



TOWN OF ERWIN

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Mayor
Randy L. Baker
Mayor Pro Tem
Ricky W. Blackmon
Commissioners
Alvester L. McKoy
Timothy D. Marbell
Charles L. Byrd
David L. Nelson
William R. Turnage

Notice of Town of Erwin Board Special Called Workshop

The Erwin Board of Commissioners will hold a Special Called Workshop on Monday, April 8th, at 9:00 AM in the Erwin Municipal Building Board Room located at 100 West F. Street.

- The Workshop will be held to discuss the Erwin Depot.

ERWIN BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

SPECIAL CALLED MINUTES

APRIL 8, 2024

ERWIN, NORTH CAROLINA

The Board of Commissioners for the Town of Erwin with Mayor Baker presiding held a Special Called Meeting in the Erwin Municipal Building Board Room on Monday, April 8, 2024, at 9:00 A.M. in Erwin, North Carolina.

Board Members present were Mayor Randy Baker, Mayor Pro Tem Ricky Blackmon, and Commissioners Timothy Marbell, Charles Byrd, David Nelson, Billy Turnage, and Alvester McKoy.

Town Manager Snow Bowden, Town Clerk Lauren Evans, Town Attorney Tim Morris, Public Works Director Mark Byrd, and Police Chief Jonathan Johnson were present.

Mayor Baker called the meeting to order at 9:00 A.M.

Commissioner Nelson gave the invocation.

Commissioner Blackmon led the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Commissioner Turnage made a motion to approve the agenda as presented and was seconded by Commissioner Blackmon. **The Board voted unanimously.**

DISCUSSION OF ERWIN DEPOT

Mayor Baker thanked everyone for attending the meeting. He stated this issue had been going on for a long time and it was the hope of the Board to leave this meeting with clear goals and directives for this project. Staff provided the Board with a timeline summary of the history of the Erwin Depot from the time the Board took ownership. He asked Town Manager Snow Bowden to please review the timeline for everyone present.

Town Manager Snow Bowden read through the following timeline:

- January 2012- The Depot was first mentioned
- August 2012- Discussion began about taking ownership of the Depot
- November 2013- Bill of Sale/Transfer of Ownership of the Depot
- February 2013- "Friends of the Depot" raised over \$14,000 according to the meeting minutes.
- Bricks were donated for the foundation of the Depot from Coats Elementary which was set up by Henry Elmore.
- November 2013- Transfer of ownership for the Depot was approved.
- February 2014- Hager Smith was selected to complete a feasibility study with funds provided by the Erwin Historical Society totaling \$5,500.

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- September 2014- Resolution supporting a partnership with the Erwin Historical Society to renovate the Depot.
- June 2014- Initial cost estimates were presented to the Board for the Depot Project- \$655,777 to complete the project.
- July 2015- The Board authorized \$21,270 to be paid from the remaining Textile Museum Funds and existing Community Enhancement Funds to complete phase 1 of the project by Hager Smith.
 - Hames Brewington was authorized to move the Depot once phase 1 of the project was completed to the site of the Depot- \$15,000.
- January 2016- the foundation was ready to have the Depot placed on it
 - American Earthworks in-kind donation of \$5,800-\$9,800: replaced damaged soils at the previous site of the Depot.
 - Cost estimate presented to move the Depot due to having to move cables and powerlines. The Board authorized the move of the Depot for a price not to exceed \$15,678.
- 2017- \$50,000 grant from the State of NC
 - Paid \$75,500 for design drawings of the building completed by CSI
- March 5, 2020- CSI presented potential costs of the Depot Project- \$865,609

Mayor Baker opened the floor for discussion amongst the Board

Commissioner Turnage stated Erwin was the first to have a Depot. The History Room had a lot of artifacts with no room to put them. He stated that the Lester Group agreed to give us the Depot on the condition that we put a plaque with their name on it into the Depot. He asked Town Attorney Tim Morris if that could be a potential lawsuit in the future.

Town Attorney Tim Morris asked could they sue? The answer is always yes but the real question would be if they would have the grounds to eliminate the entire project. It would be an easy problem to fix.

Commissioner Turnage stated the Board has taken many quotes to fix the Depot. Years ago, Henry Elmore told the Board that the Depot was salvageable but the Board never put a tarp on it. If we could find the funds to fix the Depot, we needed to fix the roof and put new siding on the building to make it look presentable. Rome was not built in a day. Maybe if we make some progress on the Project, we could apply for grant funding.

Commissioner Nelson stated he and Commissioner Marbell were the newest members and had not voted to have any money spent on the Depot. It would cost a lot of money to fix the Depot and if that building was sitting in anyone else's yard in the Town of Erwin, we would have condemned it. It was wrong on our part to allow the Depot to sit in our backyard in the condition it was in. He could not see asking Taxpayers to spend the amount of money it would take to fix the Depot. We could tear it down, build a metal building, and be much better off. If the Town could find the funding without the Taxpayers having to pay for it, he would be all for it. He had spoken to residents of all ages and no one wanted to save the Depot.

Commissioner Byrd stated it was a tough situation. He knew if the Board could go back and we had the funding, different decisions would have been made. He was a big supporter of preserving the history of Erwin and was proud of Erwin. Henry Elmore donated a lot of time and energy to the project and when Commissioner Byrd was elected to the Board, he visited the site with Mr. Elmore to see if the building

MINUTES CONTINUED FROM APRIL 8, 2024

was salvageable and was informed it was no longer salvageable. Certain parts of the building could be taken to preserve history but the building itself was not salvageable. It was sad but he had to look at the Town of Erwin as a whole, not just the Depot. There were other issues in the Town and Erwin was not a metropolis with a ton of tax revenue. We had to look at what our wants were versus our needs. The Board was currently facing a need to fix a broken road and fix the Stormwater issues in Town. If we had fixed the Depot years ago, we could have but as of today, looking at our budgets, he did not see where the revenue was going to come from. The longer we allow the Depot to sit there, the worse it will get. He would much rather salvage the parts that we could, tear the building down to the foundation, and start over.

Commissioner Marbell stated most people he had spoken with were not for rebuilding the Depot. It was too much money and he could not see spending tax money on that building. We could take parts of the building to preserve history just like we took bricks from the school but he could not see fixing the building. It needed to be torn down, hauled off, and start all over again, or find a building downtown. This discussion had been a thorn in our side, it comes up at every meeting. It was hard and no one wanted to do anything about it but we had to do something.

Commissioner Blackmon stated we originally did have funds but if you go back and look at the history, our goal was and still is to preserve the history of Erwin. The museum was a viable project but how we did that was the Board's decision. We had discussed taking the Depot down to the foundation a year ago and funds were available in the Community Enhancement Fund. First, we needed to have the Depot analyzed to see what could be saved, it was obviously not the same Depot that was uptown. Part was the building was removed when moving the building but it was still the Depot. He stated depending on how much money the Board wanted to spend would depend on what we do moving forward. He suggested having designs drawn up of a replica of the Depot to preserve that part of it. He felt we should continue with the project and where the Depot is currently located was the perfect place for it. This project would add to the Downtown and bring other things as well. He stated we first needed to know the cost, a discussion was had last year to take it down to the foundation and it had been drug out and that was part of the problem. His opinion was to take it down to the foundation and have a replica of the Depot.

Commissioner McKoy arrived at 9:20 A.M.

Commissioner McKoy stated the Depot was a part of Erwin's history and we needed to preserve something, even if it was just a brick or two. We had been kicking this can down the road for a long time and we needed to act.

Mayor Baker asked Si Harrington to indulge the Board by answering some questions for them. He asked if the structure was the original Depot.

Mr. Harrington stated that the original Depot was built 1902-1903, it burned down in the summer of 1907, and the current structure was built in the fall of 1907.

Mayor Baker inquired about the material on the building. He asked what was left out there after the move was part of the original building.

Mr. Harrington stated any material on the building other than plywood was original. He would guess about 90% of the building was the original structure.

Mayor Baker stated when the Board visited the Depot a year ago, many of the members were not structurally sound. We would have to replace the bad material with new material but at what point would it be considered a dismantling and a rebuild vs. a renovation? We cannot change what has happened in the past, that building has been neglected. We could only learn from the past and move forward. He wanted

MINUTES CONTINUED FROM APRIL 8, 2024

to get an idea of what we had and the history behind it. He along with his fellow Board members felt that history was important, and Erwin was founded on history. If it were not for our ancestors, none of us would have been there that day. If it were not for the Mill and what it did for the Town of Erwin, Erwin would not be what it is today. He envisioned the Depot as part of a bigger plan to be used for multi-facet things to be used for Downtown events. He had tried to solicit grant funding. The Town recently received an Economic Development grant of \$500,000 and he had asked Town Manager Snow Bowden to look into whether that funding could be used for this project. He would like to see what could be saved to keep the integrity of the building, anything not structurally sound would be removed and replaced. If we could incorporate the doors and tops of the building, he would like to do so and build a replica of the building. We had retired some debt with the consolidation of the Library, Community Enhancement Funds could be utilized and grant funding was available. Incurred debt may be required in order to fund this project. He asked the Board for direction.

Commissioner Blackmon stated we needed to tear the Depot down to the foundation and salvage the parts that we could. He felt it was a worthwhile project and sooner or later, we were gonna have to take the plunge to get people to Erwin. He recommended having a designed replica of what it was. He also recommended looking into removing the Depot from the primary fire limits.

Commissioner McKoy agreed with Commissioner Blackmon.

Commissioner Turnage stated we had roughly \$250,000 in the Depot. He recommended using the money we received from the Cell Tower.

Mayor Baker asked Public Works Director Mark Byrd if he had room at the Public Works Building to store the parts of the Depot we wanted to salvage.

Public Works Director Mark Byrd stated it depended on how much needed to be stored.

Commissioner Byrd stated he appreciated the Historical Society. He asked what would satisfy the Historical Society.

Mr. Harrington answered Commissioner Byrd's question with a question. The Board is discussing tearing the building down and building it back up. The Board could not find the funding to preserve the Depot, where did the Board plan to find the funding to build a new building?

Commissioner Byrd stated the Board did not know. The budgetary part of the project was a big part of it. Town Manager Snow Bowden was constantly looking for grant funding and the cell tower money mentioned by Commissioner Turnage was a third of what it would take.

Joey Powell stated he hated to see the Depot go but he understood the current building was too far gone. His questions were if the Depot was torn down, could the Board guarantee it would be rebuilt and also guarantee that it would be used as a History Museum? If the progress began on rebuilding the Depot, could the Board not then reach out the our State Representatives for funding the help finish the project?

Commissioner Byrd stated it was hard from a budgetary standpoint and he thought the Board could not guarantee everything would be funded and completed in a year. The only thing the Board could guarantee would be if we decided to go down a path, we were committed to that project.

Discussion continued among the Board.

Town Attorney Tim Morris left at 9:49 A.M.

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Mayor Baker asked the Board to entertain the idea of enduring an expense to hire an Engineer to provide the Board with an analysis of the Depot.

Commissioner Blackmon inquired about the whereabouts of the rendering of the original building.

The Historical Society had a copy in the History Room.

Commissioner Blackmon recommended hiring an independent agency to come in and look at the Depot so we can answer the questions of whether the building can be renovated the way it is and what the estimated cost would be to tear it down and rebuild it again.

Commissioner Byrd recommended looking at the cost of just rebuilding the structure vs. adding the ticket booth and stage.

Mayor Baker stated once the Engineer comes back with the estimated costs, the Board will make a decision on how to move forward.

Discussion continued amongst the Board.

Commissioner Blackmon made a motion to instruct Town Manager Snow Bowden to hire an Engineer or Architectural Firm with a timeline of 60 days to hire the firm and come back to the Board with the results. The maximum allowable amount to be spent was \$10,000. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Marbell and passed 5 to 1 (Commissioner Nelson).

Mayor Baker asked Staff to ensure the Historical Society was invited back when the results were presented.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Byrd made a motion to adjourn at 10:20 A.M. and was seconded by Turnage. **The Board voted unanimously.**

MINUTES RECORDED AND TYPED BY

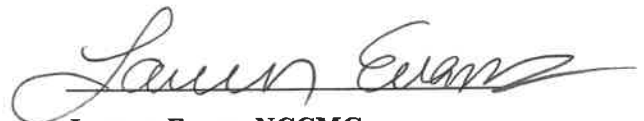
LAUREN EVANS TOWN CLERK

ATTEST:



Randy Baker

Mayor



Lauren Evans, NCCMC

Town Clerk