



Keep Carter County Beautiful (KCCB) Board Meeting Minutes

Chamber Conference Room, 615 W. Elk Avenue, Elizabethton & Zoom

February 16, 2023, at Noon

Board Members Present: Don Hlavaty, Ed Basconi, Lisa Vezzosi, Ed Jordan, Mike Mains, Ross Garland, Melinda Maddock

Board Members Absent: Simon Maddock, , Mike Simerly

Guests Present: Carolyn Landis, Wesley Bradley, Sheriff Mike Fraley, Captain Mike Patterson

Call to Order: Don Hlavaty opened the meeting at 11:58pm. A quorum was present.

Approval of the Agenda: Board approved the agenda prior to the opening of the meeting via email.

Approval of Minutes: A motion to **approve the minutes from January 12, 2023**, prior to the meeting via email. **Board unanimously approved.**

Public Comments: No comments were made.

Guest Speakers: Sheriff Mike Fraley and Captain Mike Patterson

- Prior to the meeting, the Board decided to defer the regular meeting agenda and start with our guest speakers. The meeting was opened with guest speakers, Sheriff Mike Fraley, and Captain Mike Patterson, who invited to attend.
- Don Hlavaty gave a brief summary of the origin of KCCB, our affiliation with Keep TN Beautiful, and problem areas locally with dumping/trash. He also gave a brief explanation of the new TN law changes. Don then introduced the Sheriff, Captain, and members attending the meeting, and our public guests.
- Don asked the question of what can be done for enforcement and prevention of littering within the county? In reply, Don indicated that there are nine (9) identified hot spots in the county. Chris Schuettler is handling multiple individual property violations through the court system. Because county funding in the budget has a line item on enforcement appropriations via the County Mayor delegation to the Sheriff Department, funds have to be allocated. Don indicated that Carol Landis had made a prior suggestion to KCCB to place traffic cameras in key areas to catch violations, which can be passed along to law enforcement. Carol was present via zoom to join in this conversation. Don also identified Lora Gilbreath's idea of adding a dashcam to catch violators. Ed Jordan indicated that littering also occurs from uncovered loads, which led to a tarp event to distribute tarps at the landfill to violations as a warning. ED asked the Sheriff to enforce these violators by pulling uncovered trucks over and giving them warning/ticket.
- Don then asked Sheriff Fraley for his thoughts. Sheriff Fraley started the conversation by offering past successes within the school system. As a school resource officer about 12-14 years ago, he taught a program on littering. Resources were more plentiful back then and improved about 25%. With fewer officers on staff than expected, he is now focusing more officer on regular patrol. He is well aware of the enforcement line item within the budget and now utilizing those funds. In

January, the Sheriff Department provided inmate labor to pick up 23,740 pounds of litter from dump sites along 21 county roadways. A summary document of that activity was given to KCCB to include with the minutes. He hopes to get more officers on the street by year's end to educate the public. His vision is to get more patrol in each district area. He appreciates the opportunity to share his vision.

- Carol Landis shared that she had received a moving violation ticket in Johnson City, but in Carter County, via a private camera surveillance. It occurred in December 2022, but was received via mail in January 2023. While she just paid the ticket, Carol thought the surveillance camera idea could be utilized for littering violations in a similar fashion. The Sheriff responded that he thought the camera tickets were determined to be unconstitutional by the county and no longer used. He said he would verify this and investigate the use of camera surveillance for that purpose.
- Don emphasized the new law of \$500 fine. While people could just pay the violation and avoid court costs, the county still gets the funding. If the violator challenges the ticket in court, they pay the fine, court costs, and up to 40 hours of community service. Either way, the county still gets the funding allocation. Don asked if KCCB could help get out that message?
- Don asked the Sheriff if County Constables could participate on enforcement? The Sheriff responded no because they are elected officials and not under the umbrella of the Sheriff Department. If they chose to participate, their assistance would not be declined. He said they have a good relationship, but don't force it.
- Melinda stated that part of Sycamore Shoals is a dump zone. She asked If we could get video evidence, could we submit to the Sheriff Department to cite offenders? Sheriff Fraley responded they would review any evidence to react as probable cause and take the appropriate action.
- Ed Jordan asked if the Chancery Court violators, which are published in the local newspaper, should be posted on our website? Discussion was to get more people involved and to identify to their commissioners.
- Ed Basconi cited a recent clean up on Toll Branch Road and thanked the Sheriff for it. Ed stated that Tennessee has some of the worst pollution in the world. Ed confirmed that a citizen can provide video evidence and Sheriff Department will review for citing a ticket. We could post signage on the roadway stating "video surveillance is in use" as a preventative to littering. Don stated signage had been installed at the Lyons Field Recycle Center prior to its closing.
- Discussion about all the littering making it way from the roadways into the rivers is a problem. Sheriff Fraley relayed a experience he has had with a camp site for fishing used by his family and he noticed more litter in the rivers during his family trips. He says he sees the big picture.
- Sheriff Fraley stated he would like to restart the school program with Resource Officers to address littering in the community. Past successes have resulted in a state award. He will meet with the new Carter County School Superintendent.
- Carol Landis suggested a motion at the meeting to encourage residents to promote efforts for surveillance and enforcement. She was asking for a formal statement of endorsement from the Sheriff Department asking citizens to use surveillance and report. She says the citizens participation should be a source of pride in the community. Sheriff Fraley stated he would create a contact person within the department to report problem areas.
- Don asked if the Sheriff Department has funding for the fiscal year 2024-2025? Sheriff Fraley stated at the March 13th meeting, he was asking for \$7,000 to the Budget Committee due to his extensive

budget cuts. He also suggested a Ride-Along for KCCB members to see what occurs on a shift. You would sign a waiver, and really see what officers do on their shift.

- Don asked if he should go to the Budget Committee to endorse the Sheriff Department efforts? The Sheriff said to ask for an additional litter officer. Sheriff Fraley said he was concerned about the Tweetsie Trail extension and the issue of addressing homeless people living along the trail. He would like to create a new patrol unit for the Tweetsie Trail to address and prevent crime. Because Carter County coverage from the Forestry Service has been reduced to one person due to the other person retiring, there is more activity. They have been told to keep off homeless people from the State level. Chad Ingle has only one Forestry agency person left, and he lives in Newport. A new agent will not come until about October. The Sheriff feels Johnson City has placed pressure on shifting homeless onto the Tweetsie Trail rather than in their downtown areas. He has reports of many camps and citizens are asking for help to address that and new crimes. Melinda shared her experience with homeless people in San Francisco and Don shared his experience that homelessness is often a result of mental illness and/or PTSD. Don also said the Milligan Highway area is known for drug use and litter from drugs. The Sheriff stated he believes to protect and serve is his job. He is starting with the Resource Officers. He feels the culture needs to become a citizen task, and not just police action to correct. His officers need to engage the public to help them on issues. If they see something, say something to address it. Ed Basconi asked how we can support the Sheriff Department? Fraley says to keep word of mouth on support. We need to stay positive, it's a marathon, not a sprint.
- Ed Jordan asked if our KCCB stickers could be placed on the patrol cars? The Sheriff agreed and KCCB also provided our brochure on the new law changes for him to use for education of officers. Don explained that KCCB does a yearly Index Report for KTNB to monitor changes. Sargent Patterson asked Don to provide him with a copy of the KCCB report, to which Don agreed to.
- Don mentioned that TDOT were instructed to not place signs on state roads with the law change. While they can replace damaged signs, the TDOT leadership feels there is sign fatigue. However, local county and city officials can place signage on their roadways, as they please, even at state road intersections. Don said he sees fewer Carter County signs compared to surrounding counties. Sheriff Fraley suggested KCCB address the Budget Committee via the Highway Department to make an allotment for new signage on our roads.
- Mike Mains complimented Sheriff Fraley and his staff for the hard work. It is recognized and of a great help to the community. He shared that his staff often deals with homelessness in the parks using restrooms for living quarters.
- In closing, Don thanked everyone for their attendance and participation in today's discussion.

Next Board Meeting:

The next Board meeting will be on Thursday, March 16, 2023, at noon in the Chamber of Commerce Conference Room, 615 West Elk Avenue, Elizabethton, and available by Zoom.

KCCB Treasurer Report:

- Lisa Vezzosi gave the report in Mike Simerly's absence. The bank statement closed 12/31/2022 with a balance of \$11,136.33.

- The expenses of \$14.27 for the Mail Chimp account automatically taken from the debit card for January. However, shortly after that payment, the Mail Chimp account was closed, so no further expenses are expected for the remaining fiscal year.
- There was the third installment payment of \$1,250.00 from the City of Elizabethton deposited.
- The receipt for the recent seed purchase by Ed Basconi was given to Mike Simerly to issue a check to Ed. It ran a bit over the original allotment, but KCCB would reimburse Ed in full.
- Don confirmed that both the City of Elizabethton and Carter County submission for new fiscal year funding had been submitted.

Conflict of Interest Annual Statement:

- Lisa indicated the annual Conflict of Interest statements were due in January by each Board member. Compliance has almost reached. Two individuals are sending their statements today.

Greenbridge Landing Wayfinding Signage Event:

- The event is scheduled for Saturday, February 25th at 10:00am at Greenbridge Landing. Ross indicated he was working with Wesley Bradley on the project. Wesley joined our meeting today via zoom. Ross indicated he and Wesley finalized a map of where to place each sign. Ross stated that there are four signs to post and will need to be set with 16 concrete bags.
- Don indicated that he will bring the 2x4 braces and purchase the concrete. Water is available via the Doe River, so we just need to bring a few buckets. Ross will deliver the signs. Mike Mains is providing two employees to help. Wesley will also attend and help.
- Ed Basconi stated he and Ross would plan the next area to tackle.
- Mike Mains will get with Ross to plan the next areas within the Parks & Recreation property.

Elizabethton Parks & Recreation Tree Planting:

- Mike Mains and Ed Basconi met to plan new sites for flower planting. Mike has already started tilling areas. They identified an additional area along West Elk Avenue, across from Sycamore Shoals Hospital near Williams Street, has a large triangular grassy area. Another site is at the corner of Milligan Hwy and West Elk Avenue, next to the storage facility. Both sites were acceptable. Endorsement by Danny Hilbert was granted, which will save him mowing. This are additional sites beyond our already allocated sites in the city. Mike thought there may be funding already available for this project. We should also use his auger to dig the holes.
- Don asked about mulching along the planted trees. Mulch is now gone, but weeds are still there. Should we mulch these areas? We have a problem with getting yearly maintenance done and need to address with the City Budget Committee.
- Mike Mains stated that he had discussed the need in his department for landscaping employee and requested consideration of that additional staff with City Manager, Daniel Estes. His person could address the many park sites and their needs for regular maintenance.
- Mike Mains also suggested we use our allocation of new trees to place 3 trees at the Mill Race Park location this year. Mike will speak with Hannon about tree purchase, as we should be able to get about 30 trees with our budget. It was discussed that KCCB should plant the trees rather than just using Hannon because more volunteers want to plant than just do litter pickups.

Update on February Events:

- Watauga Lake clean was a great success with 29 volunteers working with Kathleen Gibi's crew. It was twice the turnout as last year. Melinda stated she would send Don photos taken to post on the website. About 5,500 pounds of trash was collected.
- Kathleen Gibi stated due to the volume of trash collected for the last few years, she may skip this area in 2024. Don reported An event in Nashville on Percy Lake by a fishing group had collected 21,000 pounds of litter. It was sponsored by the fishing group with a \$500 first prize, and \$250 second place prize. So, the group spent \$750 creating a litter tournament using 5-man teams.
- Ed Basconi reported on the Seed Swap event in Johnson City. It was well attended and KCCB gave out 100 seed packets. We need to make an annual event. KCCB also provided a door prize of a leaf bin. He suggested we make more seed packets up to use at KCCB booth events all summer.
- Ed Basconi and Melinda Maddock reported on the school project with artwork for a 2024 calendar. It was suggested that the winner and artwork should be displayed on a local billboard. We could also post on our website and the Carter County website. Don stated we could make a downloadable document. We could also print up to display in Chamber of Commerce and give to local papers. They are starting with one school and suggested moving to another school, next year.
- Melinda said she met a 14-year old girl at the Watauga cleanup and asked her if she would volunteer to speak on litter at her school. She attends TA Duggar Middle School and could do a slideshow presentation. Melinda also suggested KCCB make a school donation toward art supplies to help support student participation. Melinda will contact school about the program. It was suggested we give school wildflower seeds to plant on their property.
- Ed Basconi discussed an idea for a new campaign with a beautiful Carter County picture with a simple slogan of "Our County is amazing", "Carter County is stunning – let's keep it that way", or "#Bin your litter or take it home". This could tap into the TN campaigns that already exist, like the TN Wildlife Federation campaign. We could also investigate billboard campaigns that may already exist for Carter County through Tourism. It was suggested that he contact Ivan Sanders, director of Carter County tourism. We could also highlight a photo of the month campaign. We need positive affirmation about our county. Perhaps tap into the Main Street group to help with campaigns. Don stated he recently revamped the KCCB website to show more beautiful photos rather than just litter cleanup events.

Scheduled Events for Spring:

- The Roan Mountain Rhododendron Festival is June 17-18. Lisa made a motion to get a \$75 booth for KCCB. The motion was seconded by Ed Jordan, and Board approved. Lisa will get a check from Mike Simerly to sign up.
- The Spring cleanup for Milligan Adopt-A-Highway is scheduled for March 11th, at 10:00am.
- The Northeast Community Credit Union business spotlight at their branches is set for April through July. Lisa made a motion to purchase a tablecloth runner for the table costing less than \$100. The motion was seconded by Melinda, and the Board approved.
- Don told the group about a new campaign with a KTNB. It includes purchase of a new banner, 5 yard signs, and 50 safety vests for \$70. Don made a motion to purchase. Discussion did not get consensus, so Don will relay more information via email for a vote.

- The Great American Cleanup on the Tweetsie Trail is scheduled for April 8st at 10:00am. Don suggested we ask the local Boy Scout troop to help out.
- Our Spring tree planting is being planned. It could be March 25. Discussion was made to discuss the availability with Hannon on tree delivery.

Recycling Update:

The city has permanently shut down the centers on Mill Street and Lyons Field. The County has determined that it spend about \$8,000 to create an area at the Cherokee Park site. It will be a 24/7 center with bins available to the public. They will move the fencing, and install cameras, and lighting. It saves the county money because the bins do not need to be driven from another site to empty. Don talked to Benny about the roadway to the recycle center. It needs to be cleaned up, but the County does not own that property.

New Business:

Ed Basconi made a motion to purchase seed packet envelopes and seeds to make for future events, not to exceed \$75. The motion was seconded by Ed Jordan, and the Board approved.

Adjournment:

- A motion was made to adjourn by Ed Jordan, seconded by Lisa Vezzosi, and **board unanimously approved**. The meeting was adjourned at 2:00pm.

Submitted by: Lisa Vezzosi, Secretary