

Town had a busy 2007

Walkertown issues included bequest, development, roads

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JOURNAL REPORTER

Thursday, December 27, 2007

WALKERTOWN

Walkertown officials spent a lot of time this year wrestling with how to spend a \$100,000 recreation bequest, but finished the year by passing a resolution to spend the money on a proposed town park.

The town and its residents debated how to develop the corner of N.C. 66 and U.S. 158, Walkertown's busiest intersection. The town manager resigned, and two new members were elected to the four-member town council in the November election.

The year began with the council considering how to handle street-paving requests from residents on Jackie Lane and Chris Drive. The streets were private lanes, but garbage trucks under contract with the town were using them and causing potholes, residents said.

The council approved a policy that called for property owners to pay half the cost of paving a street when bringing private streets into the town system and converting them to public streets. That didn't sit well with some residents on the two streets, who said that the cost was too high.

The town had a provision that allowed it to pay up to 75 percent in hardship cases. In July, the council decided to give the residents that price break.

A plan to put a McDonald's restaurant and a Walgreens pharmacy at the corner of N.C. 66 and U.S. 158 came to nothing despite a developer's efforts to convince the council otherwise.

In December 2006, the town planning board recommended that the council reject the request, which would have placed the businesses on the southwest corner of the intersection across U.S. 158 from Walkertown Commons shopping center.

Developer Michael Kelley held a public meeting to allay residents' concerns that focused on the effect the development would have on a nearby residential neighborhood and on traffic safety at the intersection.

Kelley promised an extra \$400,000 in road improvements beyond what the state was requiring in an effort to improve traffic flow at the intersection. In April, the council voted 3-1 to reject the rezoning request, and Kelley decided to give up on the site.

In December, a proposal for a McDonald's restaurant came forward, one that would put it on property that is part of Walkertown Landing, a shopping center proposed for the northeast corner of the intersection. Some residents who had opposed the earlier proposal supported this one.

The council approved the request.

The town lost its manager, Ron Bell, who resigned in June after a closed session with the town council. Bell had worked as the manager a little more than a year, but council members said that he hadn't followed through on some tasks.

The council also was accused of not following through, when it came to a \$100,000 recreation bequest from the estate of the late Spencer Waggoner to the town in 2005.

On Aug. 20, the executor of Waggoner's estate filed a lawsuit against the town, asking the court to order the town to return the money so it could be spent on Walkertown recreation by another group, the Winston-Salem Foundation Inc.

Town officials and the town's attorney didn't think the lawsuit had merit because the will gave no deadline on spending the money. But the town and the estate worked together to come up with a compromise that would save court costs and get a plan for spending the money put in place.

In December, the council voted to recommend spending the money on helping to develop a new town park near the town hall. Council members said that the Waggoner money could be used to pay matching costs associated with grants the town hopes to get to develop the park.

A Pop-Warner cheerleading team, the Walkertown Wolfpack, asked the town in November for \$8,000 to make a championship trip to Florida. The team appeared to be disappointed when the town gave it only \$1,000, but residents and some businesses chipped in and sent the cheerleaders on their way.

During the November election, Marilyn Martin and Randy Mendenhall were elected to their first public office as council members. Council Member Brenda Mabe was defeated, and Council Member Ralph Landreth did not run again.

The council is switching to four-year terms, with two members elected every two years. To make the transition, council members Wayne Hester and Mendenhall won four-year terms, and Council Members Sarah Welch and Martin won two-year terms.

Doc Davis ran unopposed as mayor to win a four-year term.

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