

Town of Hudson Special Meeting

October 16, 2025

Members Present: Mayor Janet Winkler, Mayor Pro Tem, Rick Shew, Commissioners: Jim Engelman, Barry Mitchell and Ann Smith

Members Absent: Commissioners Larry Chapman and Jeff Link

Others Present: Town Manager, Jonathan Greer, Assist. Town Manager/Finance Officer, Shana Guy, Chief of Police, Brandon Nelson, Town Attorney, Jonathan Green, and Town Clerk, Tammy Swanson

Call to Order:

Mayor Janet Winkler called the special meeting to order at approximately 5:30pm, and stated that the purpose of the meeting was to discuss a Special Event Application. Mayor Pro Tem, Rick Shew, led the audience in the Pledge of Allegiance and opening prayer.

Discussion – Special Event Permit – Rick Wakefield:

Janet stated again that the reason for the meeting was to consider and take action on a Special Event Application submitted to the Town. The permit applicants are Rick and Diana Wakefield, owners of Dead People's Stuff antique store, located at 538 Central Street, Hudson. The applicants have followed the guidelines in submitting their request for the event.

Janet reviewed the rules for the meeting as follows:

- Each person signed up to speak will be given 5 minutes to speak to the Board.
- If representing a group, she requested that there be only one person speaking from the group, preferably a person that is signed up to speak.
- The individuals speaking to the Board are asked to come to the podium, and will address the members of the Board only.
- The Board will listen to all of the comments, and will make a decision on the application.

Speakers:

-Rick Wakefield – 538 Central Street, Hudson (Applicant)

Mr. Wakefield addressed the Board to discuss his plans for the event. He commented that he had read a lot of false information about him and the event on social media that he would like to clear up. He stated that he does plan to have a tarot card reader at the event, but they will be located on the third floor inside his store, and not as an open vendor on Central Street. He stated that there are no plans to have witches, spell castings, potions, or cults at the event. All of the vendors are local, and he provided a vendor list to the Board.

Mr. Wakefield stated that there were also rumors of him being involved with the Krampus event that was held in Lenoir, but he assured everyone that he was not a part of that event. He

also assured everyone that he was not planning to bring any type of satanic temple to Hudson. Mr. Wakefield commented that he has had several people mention to him that he should have a Halloween Party in Town, and he thought this type of event would be a good idea to bring people to Hudson. He stated that out of respect for the other business owners located on Central Street, he had decided to ask that the street be closed at 5:00pm instead of 4:00pm, with the event starting at 6:00pm. Updated Event Times – 6:00pm – 10:00pm. He added that he will also have two off-duty police officers at the event.

The following individuals spoke in opposition of the event.

-Rian Haire – 185 Cedar Valley Road, Hudson – expressed opposition due to religious convictions.

-Amanda Collins – owner of Caldwell Home Services, 534 Central Street, Hudson, located 2 doors down from Dead People's Stuff – expressed opposition due to her religious convictions - she did not believe the event was family oriented due to the vendor list for the festival, i.e., tarot card reader, GHOST Investigators, handmade horror dolls, etc. - mentioned that there was confusion over whether or not these types of events are Town sponsored events.

-Mitch Laws – Chose not to speak.

-James Lopes – resident at 640 Pleasant Hill Road, Hudson, expressed opposition to the festival due to the nature of the event – he is a pastor of a local church, and they hold events in their parking lot – wanted to know if his church would be allowed to hold events uptown, closing the street - does not believe the event will be confined to Mr. Wakefield's business alone.

-April Wilson – resident at 1678 Dakota Drive, Hudson, expressed opposition to the festival due to religious convictions – opposed to having vendors i.e., tarot card reader, potions, etc.

-Donna Laws – small business owner in Town – believes a big issue with the event is allowing a business to close a main street to hold an event, which she believes sets a precedent for other businesses in Town.

Janet stated that the Board has a copy of the vendor list for the event as submitted by Rick Wakefield, and she read the list to the audience as follows:

Halloween Block Party Vendor's List

DJ Kenneth Lawrence (includes music, lighting effects, and free 360-degree photo booth)

Ethereal Winds LLC-3D printed items

Wind Love-glass art and jewelry

Holli Maid-handcrafted book covers and sewn items

GHOST paranormal investigators-display their equipment, have a

meet and greet with Angie from Ghost Finders TV show

Lollipop's Candy Shop-candy, snacks, and crafts

Tattered Wing-"potion" scent mixing

RISE of the Fallen Meadery-mead tasting

Just Julies-woodcrafts and the original makeup eraser

My Little Poltergeist-handmade horror and Halloween themed dolls

Chris Mann Insurance-pamphlets and information

T3 Landscape Management-hayride The

Happy Baker-baked goods and snacks

Vaendra Calloway Bowman-custom pressed t-shirts

Joe Godfrey-handmade custom jewelry, build-a-bracelet, decals, custom 3D prints

Mi Carretta-Mexican food truck

Cause Mama Tried-mobile boutique (application pending due to the issues resulting in this meeting)

Dead People's Stuff Antiques-free popcorn, scavenger hunt, adult and kid costume contest (would like someone from the town or council to help judge, if possible)

· **Linda** Fay-tarot reader back by popular demand, will only be available 7p-9p on the third floor of Dead People's Stuff Antiques, as before.

Rick Shew commented that the Town has had multiple Christian-oriented events on Central Street, with the Street being closed in the same manner as for Mr. Wakefield's event. Rick stated that if the Town denies the application for Mr. Wakefield's Halloween Block Party, this same type privilege would also be taken away from churches. It could also possibly affect other events, such as the Butterfly Festival, March of the Cross, which are both sponsored by HCDA, plus car shows and other events approved by the Town.

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Attorney Jonathan Green confirmed that the decision made by the Board pertaining to the Halloween Block Party could affect future events.

Mr. Lopez asked why this event is requiring a "special meeting" of the Board.

Jonathan explained that any meeting called outside of our regularly scheduled monthly meetings is referred to as a "special meeting."

Jim Engelman thanked the audience for the passion displayed concerning the event. He commented that the biggest concern he heard from the audience was the tarot cards, and he asked Mr. Wakefield if he would consider not having the card reader at the event.

Mr. Wakefield stated that he has had lots of requests for the tarot card reader, making them one of the biggest attractions for the event. Instead of taking away the tarot cards, he offered a space at the festival for bibles to be distributed.

Town Attorney, Jonathan Green, stated that although members of the audience have shared heart felt concerns about the Halloween Block Party, our country allows people to say what they want to say, so long as it doesn't start a war, etc., and commercial speech is free speech as well. Tarot card reading is allowed, and the bottom line is sometimes we have to put up with people that we do not agree with. As for the Board, it is not a matter at all of whether the members agree or disagree, but when they took their oaths of office, they agreed to administer the law evenly. Basically, if requests are reasonable and follow the guidelines/law, the Board cannot treat one differently than the other.

Janet commented that this event has been made into good vs. evil; however, by law, the Board is not anyone's judge, but we have to follow the law. If the Board allows churches that follow the Town's guidelines for an event to close the street to have an event, the Board cannot say no to someone else that follows the guidelines that also wants to have an event. Janet commented that to her knowledge, all the members of the Board are Christians, but as representatives of the Town, the law must be followed.

Rick asked if any of the business owners present would be affected by the street being closed for the event. No one responded.

Jim asked if a vendor at the event does not follow what their application states, will they be shut down for the event.

Police Chief, Brandon Nelson, stated that they would be shut down.

Barry stated that when an event application is filled out and submitted according to the guidelines, the Board has to give the applicant the benefit of the doubt that they will follow the

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law during the event – that they will do what they say they are going to do. Also, events are decided on by the majority of the entire Board, and not just one person.

Ann stated that in her opinion, the Board has received adequate information to make the decision that needs to be made pertaining to the Halloween Block Party.

The Board took a short recess.

The Board reconvened after the recess.

Motion: (Jim Engelman/Barry Mitchell) to approve the event application submitted by Rick Wakefield for a Halloween Block Party to be held on Central Street on October 24th as requested Unanimously approved.

Adjournment:

Motion: (Jim Engelman/Barry Mitchell) to adjourn the meeting. Unanimously approved.

Tamra T. Swanson, Town Clerk