

MINUTES OF THE TOWN OF WAYNESVILLE TOWN COUNCIL
Regular Meeting
March 25, 2025

THE WAYNESVILLE TOWN COUNCIL held a regular meeting on Tuesday, March 25, 2025, at 6:00pm in the Town Hall Board Room located at 9 South Main Street Waynesville, NC.

A. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Gary Caldwell called the meeting to order at 6:04 pm with the following members present:

Mayor Gary Caldwell
Mayor Pro Tem Chuck Dickson
Councilmember Jon Feichter
Councilmember Julia Freeman

The following members were absent:

Councilmember Anthony Sutton

The following staff members were present:

Rob Hites, Town Manager
Jesse Fowler, Assistant Town Manager
Candace Poolton, Town Clerk
Elizabeth Teague, Director of Development Services
Alex Mumby, Land Use Administrator

Members of the Media:

Paul Nielson, The Mountaineer

1. Welcome/Calendar/Announcements

Mayor Gary Caldwell welcomed everyone and reminded everyone that the next Council meeting is April 8th.

B. PUBLIC COMMENT

Linda Sexton- Ms. Sexton said she lives on Legion Drive where the speed limit is 20mph. She said that people drive much faster. She said that the police will occasionally pull people over for speeding, but she would like to see traffic calming devices installed. Mayor Caldwell offered to speak with the Police Department.

C. ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS TO THE AGENDA

There were no additions or deletions to the agenda.

A motion was made by Councilmember Freeman, seconded by Councilmember Dickson, to approve the agenda as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

D. CONSENT AGENDA

All items below are routine by the Town Council and will be enacted by one motion. There will be no separate discussion on these items unless a Councilmember so requests. In which event, the item will be removed from the Consent Agenda and considered with other items listed in the Regular Agenda.

2.
 - a. Motion to approve the March 11, 2025 Regular Scheduled Meeting Minutes.
 - b. Motion to accept the CDBG-I Semi-Annual Compliance Report.
 - c. Motion to approve the Strive Not to Drive Special Event Permit.

A motion was made by Councilmember Dickson, seconded by Councilmember Feichter, to approve the consent agenda as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

E. PRESENTATION

3. Haywood Regional Medical Center Presentation
 - Chris Brown, CEO

Haywood Regional Medical Center CEO, Chris Brown, introduced his executive team. Mr. Brown presented several highlights of 2024 including the hiring of new staff, increased wages, new medical equipment, employee recognition programs, educational opportunities, and community partnerships. He said they are looking forward to accommodating more patients, retaining and recruiting more providers, and working with other WNC hospitals in 2025.

Councilmember Dickson asked how important Medicaid funding and expansion is to the hospital. Mr. Brown said that Medicaid and HASP funding that comes with Medicaid funding helped fund the hospital last year and it is critically important. He said that when there are less self-paid patients, there is less of a burden on others with insurance.

F. PUBLIC HEARINGS

4. A Public Hearing to consider text amendments related to the signage lighting ordinance
 - Alex Mumby, Land Use Administrator

A motion was made by Councilmember Freeman, seconded by Councilmember Dickson, to open the public hearing at 6:29pm. The motion passed unanimously.

Land Use Administrator Alex Mumby reported that the proposed text amendment includes removing “Point C: The luminous transmittance for the lettering or symbols shall not exceed thirty-five (35) percent” and “Point

D: The luminous transmittance for the background portion of the sign shall not exceed fifteen (15) percent” of the sign lighting ordinance because they are poorly defined and unenforceable. He said that staff recommends the removal of these two points for the purposes of conciseness of the ordinance. He said the Planning Board voted unanimously to recommend the text amendment.

There was no public comment.

A motion was made by Councilmember Feichter, seconded by Councilmember Freeman, to close the public hearing at 6:31pm. The motion passed unanimously.

A motion was made by Councilmember Dickson, seconded by Councilmember Freeman, to find the recommended changes to the Land Development Standards as attached as being consistent with the 2035 Land Use Plan and reasonable and in the public interest in that it continues to promote smart growth principles in land use planning and zoning, creates walkable and attractive neighborhoods and commercial districts, and reinforces the unique character of Waynesville and the town will maintain adequate legal authority through the most up to date ordinance that is clear and enforceable. The motion passed unanimously.

A motion was made by Councilmember Dickson, seconded by Councilmember Freeman, to adopt the ordinance as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

5. A Public Hearing to consider text amendments related to solar panels on private property and EV chargers as a use within civic space.
 - Alex Mumby, Land Use Administrator

A motion was made by Councilmember Dickson, seconded by Councilmember Freeman, to open the public hearing at 6:34pm. The motion passed unanimously.

Land Use Administrator Alex Mumby reported that the proposed text amendment includes allowing ground mounted solar panels (GMSPs) on private property and electrical vehicle (EV) charging as a use in civic space. He said the ordinance addresses several technologies: stand-alone, ground mounted solar panels, EV charging stations, and solar arrays. He said that the Environmental Sustainability Board requested that staff examine how the Land Development Standards could be applied to the use of ground mounted solar panels and arrays on residential and commercial lots. He said that staff would also like to incentivize the installation of electric vehicle charging stations and integrate EV Charging into common parking and civic space areas in major site plans. Mr. Mumby stated that Roof-mounted solar panels and EV Charging ports attached to buildings are already allowed, permitted and inspected by Town’s Building Inspections under the North Carolina Building Codes as part of a structure. He said that only a few stand-alone, ground-mounted solar arrays and panels (GMSPs) have been permitted in Town and were treated simply as mechanical equipment, without the application of zoning standards. Mr. Mumby said that residential solar ground mounted arrays and solar panels on poles must meet North Carolina electrical and wind load requirements and are not connected structurally to buildings. Mr. Mumby said for the incentives for EV charging stations in major site plans, staff is recommending that EV parking spaces can count toward parking requirements and civic space up to 1000 square feet. This would accommodate at least one ADA space and four standard spaces, plus equipment. He

said that staff recommends that the Town ordinance define and allow GMSPs in all districts, so that there is no zoning question in the future:

- Pole mounts and arrays settings should not count as accessory structures but should stay below the height as a ground mounted light fixture, at 15' in residential settings and 20' in commercial settings. They should be allowed within parking lots in commercial settings, but should be limited to the side or rear yard in residential settings. A variance from the ZBA should be sought for alternative locations or extended height requests where the height of neighboring structures or other impediments to the collection of solar energy exist, and when alternative placement is needed for tree preservation. Additionally, variance criteria should include evidence that the installation would not interfere with the neighboring properties or take away from the character of the neighborhood. Pole mounts and ground mount structures should meet the accessory structure setback of 5' feet.
- EV Charging stations should be encouraged in all large-scale development. As incentive for residential placement, EV chargers with adjacent designated parking could count toward civic space in addition to parking requirements. This would give design flexibility and hopefully give some incentive to include them.

Mr. Mumby read the text amendments verbatim. He said the Planning Board voted unanimously to recommend the text amendment.

Councilmember Feichter said section 4.5.3 says that residential solar panels shall be placed for maximum solar capture and tree preservation. He said it sounds a little too vague and would prefer the ordinance read as more quantifiable. Mr. Mumby said the goal of the text in that section was staff did not want to incentivize people cutting down trees to install solar panels. He said the ordinance allows for people to apply for a variance if they need to place the panel in the front yard. He said they can present an amendment at a future meeting.

There was no public comment.

A motion was made by Councilmember Freeman, seconded by Councilmember Feichter, to close the public hearing at 6:44pm. The motion passed unanimously.

A motion was made by Councilmember Dickson, seconded by Councilmember Freeman, to find the recommended changes to the Land Development Standards as attached as being consistent with the 2035 Land Use Plan and reasonable and in the public interest because it continues to promote smart growth principles in land use planning and zoning, in that it promotes conservation design to preserve important natural resources and it protects and enhances Waynesville's natural resources by continuing to engage in and promote best management practices related to energy use, efficiency, and waste management by protecting and enhancing water quality and forests, and by protecting rural lands, iconic views, and mountain vistas. The motion passed unanimously.

A motion was made by Councilmember Dickson, seconded by Councilmember Feichter, to adopt the ordinance as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

G. NEW BUSINESS

6. Request by Councilmember Jon Feichter to reduce the speed limit on Long Street from 35 to 20 MPH and Limit Traffic to “Local Traffic Only” on behalf of residents of Long Street.
 - Jon Feichter, Councilmember

Councilmember Feichter reported that residents of Long Street have contacted him to complain that Long Street is being used as a cut through for vehicles traveling from Allen’s Creek Rd to South Main Street. He requested that the Town possibly reduce the speed limit to 20 mph and have signage that says “No Thru Traffic”. He said that Long Street is a narrow road with a sharp turn and is not designed as a thoroughfare and cannot handle the speed and volume of traffic it is receiving. He added that the resident said she may go through the formal process to pursue traffic calming measures, but he would like to take these steps first to see if that helps.

Councilmember Dickson agrees with Feichter about not allowing thru traffic and introducing traffic calming devices. He said he remembered Councilmember Sutton saying something about a town road that falls between two state roads, that DOT would require a traffic study before changing anything, and the speed limit cannot be lowered below 30mph. Town Attorney Bradley said the did some research and found that the town can control and restrict access, as long and they do not restrict DOT access. Councilmember Feichter said they lowered the speed limit on Hendrix Street, the next street over, and only when it was not successful, did they install speed bumps.

Councilmember Dickson requested that staff research what Councilmember Sutton was talking about regarding the DOT. Mr. Hites said they can do that and bring an update to the next meeting.

A motion was made by Councilmember Feichter, seconded by Councilmember Dickson, to place “No Thru Traffic” signage on Long Street. The motion passed unanimously.

H. COMMUNICATION FROM STAFF

7. Manager’s Report
 - Town Manager, Rob Hites

Town Manager Rob Hites reported that the goal is to have the Depot Street Bridge re-opened a week from this Friday. He also said that FEMA Restoration and Mitigation crews will be doing their first on-site visits on April 8th and 9th. He said that architects from McAdams will be there as well to see what FEMA will and won’t pay for.

8. Town Attorney’s Report
 - Martha Bradley, Town Attorney

Nothing to report.

I. COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE MAYOR AND COUNCIL

Councilmember Dickson reported that he attended the Southwestern Commission meeting last night and the main presenter was Community Care, the same program Waynesville utilized for the social worker intern that worked with the police department. He said that Waynesville's program was highlighted.

Councilmember Dickson said Council has received applications for several Advisory Boards and Commissions. Council agreed to review the applications for the Historic Preservation Commission and bring their recommendation at the next meeting. Councilmembers Feichter and Freeman agreed to interview the Waynesville Housing Authority and Planning Board applicants.

A motion was made by Councilmember Dickson, seconded by Councilmember Feichter, to appoint Alex McKay and John Mason to the Planning Board. The motion passed unanimously.

A motion was made by Councilmember Dickson, seconded by Councilmember Freeman, to appoint Nicole Kott to the Recreation Advisory Commission. The motion passed unanimously.

Councilmember Freeman reminded everyone of the Whole Bloomin Thing Festival in Frog Level on May 10th.

Council thanked staff for their hard work at the Planning Retreat.

J. ADJOURN

A motion was made by Councilmember Dickson, seconded by Councilmember Feichter, to adjourn at 7:12pm. The motion passed unanimously.

ATTEST:

Gary Caldwell, Mayor

Robert W. Hites, Jr. Town Manager

Candace Poolton, Town Clerk