

MINUTES OF THE TOWN OF WAYNESVILLE TOWN COUNCIL
Regular Meeting
May 27, 2025

THE WAYNESVILLE TOWN COUNCIL held a regular meeting on Tuesday, May 27, 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 6:00 pm with the following members present:

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

The following staff members were present:

Rob Hites, Town Manager
Candace Poolton, Town Clerk
Martha Bradley, Town Attorney
Page McCurry, Human Resources Director
Ian Barrett, Finance Director
Elizabeth Teague, Development Services Director
Olga Grooman, Assistant Development Services Director
Tyler Anderson, Stormwater Management Coordinator
Alex Mumby, Land Use Administrator
Ricky Bourne, Public Services Director
Fire Chief Chris Mehaffey
Police Chief David Adams
Assistant Chief of Police Josh Schick
Luke Kinsland, Recreation Director

Members of the Media:

Paul Nielsen, The Mountaineer

1. Welcome/Calendar/Announcements

Mayor Gary Caldwell welcomed everyone and announced that the Meet Me at the Arch event is Saturday June 7th and the next Council meeting is June 10th.

B. PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

C. ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS TO THE AGENDA

A motion was made by Councilmember Sutton, seconded by Councilmember Feichter, 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 May 13, 2025 Regular Meeting Minutes
 - b. Motion to call for a Public Hearing for June 10, 2025, to consider a Map Amendment (Rezoning) request for Richland Creek Storage located at 185/187 West Marshall Street in Waynesville, NC 28786 (PIN 8616-40-9101).
 - c. Motion to approve the request from the Human Resources Department to pursue the Dogwood Health Trust Capacity Building Support Grant opportunity.

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

E. PRESENTATION

3. Assistant Chief Promotion, Captain Promotion
 - Fire Chief Chris Mehaffey

Fire Chief Chris Mehaffey announced the promotions of Cody Parton to Assistant Fire Chief and Shane Messer to Captain. A pinning ceremony took place.

4. The new Development Services Instagram account.
 - Alex Mumby, Land Use Administrator and Tyler Anderson, Stormwater Management Coordinator

Stormwater Management Coordinator Tyler Anderson announced that the Development Services Department created an Instagram page for the purposes of education and promoting Town activities. She said the purpose of the account is to build understanding about Town functions and help fulfill the requirement for educational outreach in the Town's stormwater permit. Ms. Anderson showed Council some of the recent posts.

F. NEW BUSINESS

5. Policy request for flexibility in landscape ordinance for properties impacted by NCDOT roadway projects
 - Elizabeth Teague, Planning Director

Planning Director Elizabeth Teague reported that with the Russ Avenue widening project, NCDOT has constructed a roadway easement as well as a construction easement. She said this has created a problem with people trying to adhere to the landscaping ordinance which requires trees to be planted at the frontages of buildings and along the sidewalk. She requested that they have a policy that allow for a “fee in lieu of” so the town can plant trees after the construction is done. She said the fee would include cost of materials plus what the business would pay a landscaping company to plant tree.

A motion was made by Councilmember Sutton, seconded by Councilmember Feichter, to implement a policy to allow development impacted by NCDOT roadway projects to provide a fee-in-lieu of planting requirements for street trees, in order for plantings to be implemented when feasible and in coordination with NCDOT. The motion passed unanimously.

A motion was made by Councilmember Dickson, seconded by Councilmember Freeman, to direct staff to develop a text amendment with the Planning Board to address this need within the Land Development Standards Section 8.2.4 Alternative Compliance, and to establish an account in which to hold such funds until such time as they can be used toward the landscaping for which they are intended. The motion passed unanimously.

G. PUBLIC HEARING

6. Present the FY26 budget for public hearing.

- Ian Barrett, Finance Director

A motion was made by Councilmember Feichter, seconded by Councilmember Sutton, to open the public hearing at 6:19pm. The motion passed unanimously.

Finance Director Ian Barrett presented the proposed 2025-2026 budget and highlighted several capital requests. He said they made two updates to the proposed budget, adding funding for DWC events and adding \$8,000 to the Parks and Recreation expenses for wayfinding signage. He said that General Fund Revenues total \$19,234,731 and General Fund Expenses total \$19,164,731. He said Water Fund Revenues total \$3,644,037 and Expenses total the same, Sewer Fund Revenues total \$4,867,125 and Expenses total \$4,446,375, Electric Fund Revenues total \$11,429,500 and Expenses total the same, and Stormwater Revenue totals \$193,238 and Expenses total the same. He added that the sewer rate will increase 10% to cover debt payment for the wastewater treatment plant upgrades.

Major capital purchase requests were as follows:

- Public Works Building needs a new roof
- Cemetery Department needs a new mower and an updated Master Plan
- The Water Department needs an excavator
- The Sewer Department needs a primary clarifier rehabilitation
- The Electric Department needs a back yard machine
- The Garage Department needs a concrete slab and roof for vehicle lifts
- Total request estimated amount is \$770,000

Councilmember Dickson reminded Council that money for the cemetery master plan comes from the perpetual fund.

Mr. Barrett said there is a proposed 10% rate increase for Parks and Rec fees and pool party rates will increase to cover staff time and resources.

Town Manager Rob Hites said they need to update the fee schedule to reflect \$65 an hour for off duty police officers.

There was no public comment.

A motion was made by Councilmember Sutton, seconded by Councilmember Freeman, to close the public hearing at 6:33pm. The motion passed unanimously.

A motion was made by Councilmember Freeman, seconded by Councilmember Sutton, accept the presentation of information. The motion passed unanimously.

H. BUDGET WORKSHOP

7. Continue Review of 2025-26 Annual Operating and Operating Budget

- Rob Hites, Town Manager

Councilmembers Sutton and Freeman requested they add \$19,000 for investigative software to be added to the police department budget. Mr. Hites said the money would be taken from Fund Balance.

Councilmember Feichter said that historically, they have underestimated how much the town would make from sales tax. Mr. Barrett said they are being conservative with budgeting revenues and have received guidance from the NC League of Municipalities to project a 1-2% increase in sales tax, and they decided on 1% to be safe. Councilmember Sutton stated that we are heading toward a recession, and it is better to be conservative. Councilmember Feichter said sales tax is a huge line item for revenue. He asked if it's reasonable to bump the projected sales tax a little higher so that could provide revenue to increase the COLA. He suggested that we may be too conservative based on historical evidence. Mr. Hites said they are following state and fellow communities' guidance on having conservative sales tax revenue projections. Councilmember Sutton suggested that if the sales tax revenue is doing better than projected next fiscal year, Council can make budget amendments throughout the year based on that increase. Councilmember Feichter requested that Mr. Barrett look into what we budgeted for sales tax revenue in 2024 and 2025 and compare that to where we ended up. Mr. Barrett said that year to date, they've collected 68% of projected sales tax and the year is 75% complete.

Councilmember Dickson said Council has dealt with many things over the last few years, and this year has more uncertainty of any budget year he has seen. Mr. Hites suggested revisiting the budget at the retreat in February and if we are ahead, they can discuss capital items. Councilmembers Dickson, Freeman, and Sutton agreed it's better to be conservative at this time and they can always change things later on. Councilmember Freeman suggested possibly looking at the sales tax revenue in December and maybe giving a bigger end of year bonus to town employees.

A motion was made by Councilmember Dickson, seconded by Councilmember Freeman, to adopt the 2025-26 Operating and Capital Budget Ordinance as presented with the three changes: that off-duty police officer pay is \$65/hour, add a line item to the police department for \$19,000 for an IT item, and take that amount from fund balance. The motion passed unanimously.

A motion was made by Councilmember Sutton, seconded by Councilmember Dickson, to approve the 5-year Capital Improvement Plan with the aforementioned changes made. The motion passed unanimously

I. COMMUNICATION FROM STAFF

8. Manager's Report

- Town Manager, Rob Hites

Town Manager Rob Hites reported that he and Mr. Barrett found a State Revolving Loan program that is a 0% interest loan over 5-years that's ear-marked for Helene disaster recovery for local governments. He added that it offers 100% principal forgiveness for distressed communities, which means Waynesville would not have to repay this loan. Mr. Hites stated that this loan could help cover costs until FEMA reimburses the town and give the town 50 points towards the SRF loan.

A motion was made by Councilmember Dickson, seconded by Councilmember Feichter, to adopt the resolution to borrow \$1.5 million from the state of North Carolina under the cashflow loans for disaster response activities program. The motion passed unanimously.

9. Town Attorney's Report

- Martha Bradley, Town Attorney

Ms. Bradley had nothing to report.

J. COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE MAYOR AND COUNCIL

Council expressed frustration at the amount of litter in Walmart's parking lot, mostly cart wipes. Councilmember Feichter suggested that the owner of the buildings, Ingles Corp., and retailers in that area, Belk, Walmart, and PetSmart, keep the area clean.

A motion was made by Councilmember Dickson, seconded by Councilmember Feichter, to direct town staff to compose and send a letter to the owner and tenants of the Walmart shopping facility with the Mayor's signature, requesting they keep the parking lot and surrounding grounds clean. The motion passed unanimously.

Councilmember Feichter said he attended the HR lunch and recommended other Councilmembers to attend if they are able. He commended Ms. McCurry and Mr. Bourne for the work they are doing with staff.

K. ADJOURN

A motion was made by Councilmember Dickson, seconded by Councilmember Freeman, to adjourn at 7:18pm. The motion passed unanimously.

ATTEST:

Gary Caldwell, Mayor

Robert W. Hites, Jr. Town Manager

Candace Poolton, Town Clerk