

**MINUTES OF THE TOWN OF WAYNESVILLE TOWN COUNCIL**  
**Regular Meeting**  
**January 27, 2026**

**THE WAYNESVILLE TOWN COUNCIL** held a regular meeting on Tuesday, January 27, 2026, 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 6:03 pm with the following members present:

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

The following staff members were present:

Rob Hites, Town Manager  
Jesse Fowler, Deputy Manager  
Candace Poolton, Town Clerk/Assistant to the Manager  
Elizabeth Teague, Development Services Director  
Olga Grooman, Assistant Development Services Director  
Beth Gilmore, Downtown Waynesville Commission Director  
Fire Chief Chris Mehaffey  
Police Chief David Adams  
Page McCurry, Human Resources Director

The following members of the media were present:

Becky Johnson, The Mountaineer

1. Welcome/Calendar/Announcements

Mayor Gary Caldwell welcomed everyone and announced that the Ice Block Party on Main Street is Friday, and the next Council meeting is February 10<sup>th</sup>. Council thanked staff for their incredible work this weekend during Winter Storm Fern.

**B. PUBLIC COMMENT**

There was no public comment.

**C. ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS TO THE AGENDA**

***A motion was made by Councilmember Feichter, seconded by Councilmember Dickson, to delete from the agenda, “Design for cafe light installation on Church Street”, and to approve the agenda as amended. 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 adopt the January 13, 2026 Regular Meeting Minutes.
- b. Motion to adopt the 2026 Order of Collection.
- c. Motion to renew the JM Teague On-Call Contract.

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

#### **E. PRESENTATIONS**

3. Endorsement of Medford Grant Application
  - Josie Ostendorff & Breanne Haynes, Impact U Club

Ms. Ostendorff presented the updates on the Helene Flood Memorial project. She requested that Council write a letter of support for their Medford Grant application that would help cover landscaping costs. She said that once they get a more detailed landscaping plan, they will meet with a staff member and Council to get approval. Ms. Ostendorff said that different elements of the landscaping plan could be done in more than one grant cycle. She said the proposed landscaping would feature a dry river bed, boulders to sit on, small planters at the base of the sculpture, benches, and a brick walk way.

Councilmember Freeman asked if they will be selling memorial bricks. Ms. Ostendorff said the price point to sell the memorial bricks does not offset the costs, so they will not be selling bricks.

***A motion was made by Councilmember Sutton, seconded by Councilmember Freeman, to endorse Impact U for their application to the Medford Grant for the Helene Flood Memorial landscaping. The motion passed unanimously.***

4. Presentation regarding activities of the Environmental Sustainability Board
  - William Hite, ESB Chair

ESB Chair William Hite presented information about Electric Vehicles. He said that having EVs in the Town’s fleet could maintenance lower costs, lower fuel costs, and eliminate tailpipe emissions.

Councilmember Sutton said he saves hundreds of dollars on gas and has only spent \$58 on maintenance in the last two and a half years with his EV. Councilmember Feichter said he would be interested in a cost comparison of what the town spends on gas and what they would save if they switched to EV. Councilmember Sutton said during Helene, he was still able to get places despite the gas because he had power and could charge his vehicle. Mr. Hite added that EVs could be charged via solar at the Public Works building, and EVs could be charged and then taken around town for others to charge things from the vehicle. Mr. Hite said the Town could charge five to six vehicles to one charger and that one Level Two charge would cost \$600 plus installation. He reminded Council that six chargers are being installed at the Rec Center in November.

5. Fire Department 2025 Annual Report

- Fire Chief Chris Mehaffey

Fire Chief Mehaffey reported that the department was able to secure over \$3 million in grant money this past year. He reported that call overlap has decreased even though call volume has increased slightly. Councilmember Freeman asked about insurance rates. Chief Mehaffey said the average homeowner wouldn't see a change, but some of the bigger businesses may, but there's no way to tell until next year.

F. PUBLIC HEARING

6. Public hearing to consider a text amendment to remove the mandatory waiting period requirement for the resubmission of map and text amendments, Land Development Standards (LDS) Section 15.14.6.

- Olga Grooman, Assistant Development Services Director

***A motion was made by Councilmember Sutton, seconded by Councilmember Freeman, to open the public hearing at 6:51pm. The motion passed unanimously.***

Assistant Development Services Director reported that on October 6, 2025, the NC GS House Bill 926 - Regulatory Reform Act of 2025- became a law. She explained that Section 11 of this bill has updated the NC General Statute 160D-601, prohibiting any ordinance from imposing a waiting period for a landowner, developer, or applicant to resubmit a denied or withdrawn application for a zoning map amendment, text amendment, or development application. Ms. Grooman said that if a Board or staff deny a zoning application, the petitioner cannot be required to wait to refile their application. Currently, Ms. Grooman said that LDS section 15.14.6 includes a 12-month waiting period for zoning map and text amendments, which could only be waived by the Council. She said the proposed text amendment removes this requirement to comply with the updated NC G.S. 160D-601.

There was no public comment.

***A motion was made by Councilmember Dickson, seconded by Councilmember Sutton, to close the public hearing at 6:54pm. The motion passed unanimously.***

***A motion was made by Councilmember Sutton, seconded by Councilmember Freeman, to find that the Ordinance is consistent with the 2035 Comprehensive Plan and that it is reasonable and in the public interest continues to “promote smart growth in land use planning and zoning” and that the proposal is also reasonable and in the public interest as it will allow the Town to maintain adequate legal authority through the most up-to-date ordinances. The motion passed unanimously.***

***A motion was made by Councilmember Sutton, seconded by Councilmember Dickson, to adopt the Ordinance as presented. The motion passed unanimously.***

## **G. NEW BUSINESS**

### **7. Changes to the structure of the Downtown Waynesville Commission**

- Beth Gilmore, Downtown Waynesville Commission (DWC) Executive Director

DWC Executive Director Beth Gilmore reported that the DWC currently has three open seats, each of which is designated for a property owner/resident and that two of those seats have been unoccupied for more than two years. She said they’ve had a difficult time recruiting property owners/residents to fill those seats, in part because many property owners do not maintain a local residence. Ms. Gilmore said they’ve had several people interested in applying, but they were turned away because they do not qualify for the seats that are available. The DWC suggested an amendment to the rules and procedures to make structure specifications a recommendation for best practice, rather than a requirement.

Councilmember Dickson suggested expanding the definition of property owner, so that someone could be designated by the property owner. Councilmember Feichter said he is open to that idea. He emphasized that the DWC is a working Board, and to get the things done they need to, they need a full board. He asked if they could try the updating the definition of “property owner”, and then if that doesn’t work, to move forward with the proposed amendments. Councilmember Dickson suggested getting emails of residents who live in Main Street and reaching out to them to recruit. Councilmember Feichter said the DWC has been actively recruiting every day.

***A motion was made by Councilmember Dickson, seconded by Councilmember Sutton, to add to the definition of “property owners”, in the Downtown Waynesville Commission rules and procedures regarding Board Membership, that property owners can designate an employee, agent, or representative. The motion passed unanimously.***

### **8. Design for Cafe Lighting Installation on Church Street**

- Councilmember Jon Feichter

Councilmember Feichter said the light installation design that DWC approved that will go over Church Street is ready for Council’s approval,

***A motion was made by Councilmember Feichter, seconded by Councilmember Sutton, to approve the schematic. The motion passed unanimously.***

Mr. Hites cautioned that the facades of the building may not hold the weight of the lights.

#### **H. COMMUNICATION FROM STAFF**

9. Manager's Report

- Town Manager, Rob Hites

Town Manager Hites suggested Council sets a date for their planning retreat. Council decided on February 27<sup>th</sup>. Councilmember Dickson suggested scheduling staff to present so they are not forcing all the Leadership staff to stay all day.

#### **I. COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE MAYOR AND COUNCIL**

Council had no comments.

#### **J. CLOSED SESSION**

10. Closed Session-Economic Development

- Rob Hites, Town Manager

***A motion was made by Councilmember Dickson, seconded by Councilmember Sutton, to go into closed session at 7:27pm in accordance with NCGS § 143-318.11. (4) To discuss matters relating to the location or expansion of industries or other businesses in the area served by the public body, including agreement on a tentative list of economic development incentives that may be offered by the public body in negotiations, or to discuss matters relating to military installation closure or realignment. Any action approving the signing of an economic development contract or commitment, or the action authorizing the payment of economic development expenditures, shall be taken in an open session. The motion passed unanimously.***

***A motion was made by Councilmember Dickson, seconded by Councilmember Sutton, to go into open session at 7:54pm. The motion passed unanimously.***

#### **K. ADJOURN**

***A motion was made by Councilmember Freeman, seconded by Councilmember Sutton, to adjourn at 7:55pm. The motion passed unanimously.***

ATTEST:

Gary Caldwell, Mayor

Robert W. Hites, Jr. Town Manager

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Candace Poolton, Town Clerk