

MINUTES OF THE TOWN OF WAYNESVILLE TOWN COUNCIL
Regular Meeting
May 12, 2026

THE WAYNESVILLE TOWN COUNCIL held a regular meeting on Tuesday, May 12, 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 6:06 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 Rob Hites, Town Manager
- Jesse Fowler, Deputy Manager
- Martha Bradley, Town Attorney
- Candace Poolton, Town Clerk/Assistant to the Manager
- Elizabeth Teague, Development Services Director
- Ian Barrett, Finance Director
- Alex Mumby, Land Use Administrator
- Assistant Police Chief Josh Schick
- Fire Chief Chris Mehaffey
- Assistant Fire Chief Cody Parton
- Page McCurry, Human Resources Director

The following members of the media were present:

- Paul Nielsen, The Mountaineer

1. Welcome/Calendar/Announcements

Mayor Gary Caldwell welcomed everyone and announced that the next Council meeting is May 26th and Town Offices will be closed for Memorial Day on May 25th.

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 Dickson, to add the item "Police Appreciation" to the agenda 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 approve the April 14, 2026 Regular Meeting Minutes
 - b. Motion to approve the April 28, 2026 Regular Meeting Minutes
 - c. Motion to call for a Public Hearing for May 26, 2026, to consider the amendments to the Conditional District for Chick-fil-A Restaurant, Land Development Standards (LDS) Sections 15.2.5.D.
 - d. Motion to appoint Brent West to the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board effective July 1st, 2026
 - e. Motion to appoint Deb Kaczar to the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board
 - f. Motion to approve the Special Event Permit Application: Apple Harvest Festival
 - g. Motion to approve the Special Event Permit Application: Mountain Valley Mile

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

E. RESOLUTION

3. Resolution to declare May 15, 2026 through May 22, 2026 as Strive not to Drive Week
 - Alex Mumby, Land Use Administrator

Land Use Administrator Alex Mumby reported that the Land of Sky Regional Council and French Broad River MPO are organizing "Strive Not to Drive Week" from May 15th to May 22nd to raise awareness of transportation resources other than single occupant automobiles. He added that during this week there will be events throughout the region to promote walking, biking, car-pooling, transit, and other transportation opportunities.

A motion was made by Councilmember Freeman, seconded by Councilmember Dickson, to adopt the attached resolution to declare May 15th through May 22nd as Strive Not to Drive Week. The motion passed unanimously.

F. PRESENTATIONS

Councilmember Sutton addressed rumors that were circulating on social media that alleged that the LGBTQ community would be safer without the Waynesville Police Department. He said his experience is that the

community is safer because of the Waynesville Police Department. He expressed immense gratitude to the Waynesville Police Department and their leadership.

4. Haywood County Tourism & Development Authority Annual Report
 - Corrina Ruffieux, Haywood County TDA, Executive Director

Haywood County TDA Executive Director Corrina Ruffieux presented the 2025 Annual Report. She highlighted the economic impact that tourism has on Haywood County. She also highlighted the success of several events Haywood TDA hosts. The full report can be found at www.haywoodtda.com.

There was discussion about the Haywood TDA hosting the International Travel Writers Association.

5. Replacement of the Recreation Center Roof and Installation of a Solar System on the Center
 - Councilmember Chuck Dickson

Councilmember Dickson presented an estimate that Rhino Renewables had presented at the Council Planning retreat, which was \$630,000 to put solar panels on the Rec Center roof. Councilmember Dickson said the revised roof estimate with WNC Roofing is \$360,000, which brings the total cost \$990,000 for the entire project. He said that to get the direct pay tax credit from the IRS, the solar panels need to be in service before the end of the year. If that happens, he explained that the Town would only need to finance \$728,000 of the total. Councilmember Dickson said that Mountain Bizworks has agreed to give the Town a loan with a 3.99% interest rate, amortized over 25 years, with interest only during construction. He said that after construction, payments would be \$5119 a month and then \$3770 after the direct payment from the IRS. Councilmember Dickson said with energy savings, the Town would pay \$15,861 over the first 9 months of the loan.

Councilmember Freeman said she is hesitant to commit to paying for solar panels and a new roof on the Rec Center when the numbers are based off of estimates and projections. She said the roof still has four to seven years of life left. Councilmember Dickson said the estimates are fairly accurate and energy costs will continue to increase. He added that over the course of the life of the solar panels, it will pay the loan off. Councilmember Sutton said that panel replacement, cleaning, monitoring, and insurance have not yet been factored in, so he recommended they do more analysis before making a vote to approve the project.

A motion was made by Councilmember Sutton, seconded by Councilmember Dickson, to approve staff to put out a Request for Proposals for the installation of a new roof and solar panels for the Recreation Center and begin the application process for the loan. The motion passed unanimously.

6. Presentation of the FY2026/2027 Annual Operating & Capital Budget
 - Rob Hites, Town Manager

Town Manager Rob Hites read the Fiscal Year (FY) 2026-2027 budget message verbatim, citing the need for significant salary increases and retirement for staff, and increased costs for fuel and supplies. He said there is a \$725,000 gap between revenues and expenditures and that staff recommend a two-cent increase on ad valorem taxes.

Councilmember Feichter asked if the four-million-dollar deficit is still in the budget. Mr. Hites, no, they are now looking at one-million-dollar deficit at the worst and they are waiting on a 25% match from the state in addition to FEMA reimbursement.

Council scheduled a budget workshop on May 22nd at 8:30am at 16 South Main Street.

A motion was made by Councilmember Sutton, seconded by Councilmember Freeman, to conduct a public hearing on May 26, 2026 to consider the FY2026/2027 annual operating and capital budget. The motion passed unanimously.

G. OLD BUSINESS

7. Comprehensive Pay and Classification Study: Phase One Public Safety

- Page McCurry, Human Resources Director
- Becky Veazy, President Ameritus, The MAPS Group

Becky Veazy (with The MAPS Group) provided background on The MAPS group. She explained the methodology behind the pay classification study. She explained that the last five years have been the hottest market we've ever seen, and Public Safety has led that. She added that the study looks at the position, not the person in that role.

She presented the pay and classification study recommendations and said the total cost to implement the pay increases would be \$211,599 for the year.

Councilmember Feichter asked Ms. Veazy if there are strategies they can use when the market starts changing. Ms. Veazy said she is leaving Council with a spreadsheet they can use, and she can look at the compensation policy.

H. NEW BUSINESS

8. Fleet Heavy Vehicle Lift Replacement

- Chris Bybee, Fleet Supervisor

Fleet Supervisor Chris Bybee reported that Public Works is requesting authorization to purchase a replacement heavy vehicle lift for the Fleet Services division because the current heavy-duty lift has been decommissioned following inspection by both a certified lift inspector and a structural engineer. Mr. Bybee said it has already cost \$6500 to outsource a repair, when they could have done it in house if they had an operational lift.

Councilmember Dickson asked if the roof in the garage needs to be raised. Mr. Bybee said that would be ideal, but not feasible. Councilmember Sutton asked if the new lift includes alignment plates. Mr. Bybee said no, and the add on cost would be \$4500, but it would pay for itself. Councilmember Sutton asked if there is a warranty on the lift. Mr. Bybee said he will look into it, and typically, lifts last 15-20 years.

A motion was made by Councilmember Sutton, seconded by Councilmember Freeman, to authorize Public Works staff to purchase a replacement heavy vehicle lift for Fleet Services In the amount of \$79,987.29. The motion passed unanimously.

I. COMMUNICATION FROM STAFF

9. Manager's Report

- Town Manager, Rob Hites

Nothing to report.

10. Town Attorney's Report

- Town Attorney, Martha Bradley

Nothing to report.

J. COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE MAYOR AND COUNCIL

Mr. Kinsland said that Mark Bolton reached out to him and is willing to go to the engineer about the control side of the HVAC system at the Rec Center to try to rectify the issues.

Councilmember Feichter requested that the gravel from paving Boyd Avenue be cleaned up and that staff remove the weeds growing along the sidewalks and pavement, especially past Bogarts.

K. CLOSED SESSION

A motion was made by Councilmember Sutton, seconded by Councilmember Dickson, to enter into closed session at 8:29pm according to GS 143-318.11 (1) in order to "Prevent the Disclosure of Information that is Privileged or Confidential Pursuant to the Laws of this State or of the United States, or not Considered a Public Record within the meaning of Chapter 132 of the General Statutes". The motion passed unanimously.

A motion was made by Councilmember Freeman, seconded by Dickson, to enter back into open session. The motion passed unanimously.

L. ADJOURN

A motion was made by Councilmember Freeman, seconded by Councilmember Dickson, to adjourn at 10:10pm. The motion passed unanimously.

ATTEST:

Gary Caldwell, Mayor

Robert W. Hites, Jr. Town Manager

Candace Poolton, Town Clerk