

**MINUTES OF THE TOWN OF WAYNESVILLE TOWN COUNCIL**  
**Regular Meeting**  
**October 8, 2024**

**THE WAYNESVILLE TOWN COUNCIL** held a regular meeting on Tuesday, October 8, 2024, 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 Tem Chuck Dickson  
Councilmember Jon Feichter  
Councilmember Anthony Sutton  
Councilmember Julia Freeman

The following staff members were present:

Rob Hites, Town Manager  
Jesse Fowler, Assistant Town Manager  
Candace Poolton, Town Clerk  
Town Attorney Martha Bradley  
Elizabeth Teague, Director of Development  
Olga Grooman, Assistant Director of Development  
Page McCurry, Director of Human Resources  
Jeff Stines, Public Services Director  
David Adams, Police Chief  
Ian Barrett, Finance Director  
Esther Coulter, Administrative Assistant

Members of the Media:

Becky Johnson, The Mountaineer

1. Welcome/Calendar/Announcements

Mayor Gary Caldwell welcomed everyone and announced that the next Town Council meeting will be held on October 22nd. He said that the Chamber of Commerce will decide whether or not to host the Apple Festival on Saturday, October 19<sup>th</sup> at their Thursday's meeting.

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

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

## C. 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. Approve the September 24, 2024 Regular Scheduled Meeting Minutes
  - b. Approve the September 30, 2024 Emergency Meeting Minutes
  - c. Approve the reclassification of one Meter Reader position to Meter Technician and change it from Grade 53 to Grade 56.

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

## D. OATH OF OFFICE

3. Joe Sam Queen-Appointment to the North Carolina Rural Infrastructure Authority
  - Mayor Gary Caldwell

Mayor Gary Caldwell administered Joe Sam Queen's Oath of Office for his appointment to the NC Rural Infrastructure Authority.

## E. PRESENTATIONS

4. Appointment of Josh Schick to Assistant Police Chief
  - Police Chief David Adams

Police Chief David Adams introduced Assistant Chief of Police Josh Schick and swore him into his position.

5. Update on Hurricane Helene Flood Recovery Community Resources
  - Elizabeth Teague, Development Services Director
  - Alison Richmond, Haywood County Emergency Services PIO and Community Representatives as available, Michael Blackburn and Ian Smith from FUMC

Development Services Director Elizabeth Teague presented the Hurricane Helene flood recovery efforts and community resources update. She said there are several resources to help communities recover and rebuild: <https://sba.gov/hurricane-Helene>; 800-659-2955 for businesses, [DisasterAssistance.gov](https://DisasterAssistance.gov); 800-621-3362 for others or email [disastercustomerservice@sba.gov](mailto:disastercustomerservice@sba.gov). Ms. Teague requested that residents affected by the flood take photos of the damage to homes and belongings, make a list of damages and estimate their value, file an insurance claim, and then apply to FEMA through the FEMA app, website, or phone number.

Ian Smith, the Director of Community Engagement with FUMC, said they've coordinated approximately 700 volunteers, and delivered supplies to 100 homes. He said that Pisgah Legal will be offering pro bono disaster related legal advice this week.

Alison Richmond, the PIO for Haywood County Emergency Services, reported that post emergency canvas operations are beginning (PECO). She said PECO will be starting in North Canton and making their way with FEMA members throughout the county to assist with individual needs. She said that welfare checks are still happening, but they are almost done. She said all search and rescue efforts are completed. Ms. Richmond said the Red Cross is operating the shelter that is hosting 17 people right now, but those numbers may grow as the weather gets cooler. Councilmember Dickson requested an update on the status and capability of emergency services. Ms. Richmond said they recently became fully staffed. She said that Mission Hospital has moved all their patients out of their hospital.

Ms. Teague presented photos of flood damage to Waynesville homes and businesses. She said everyone on the Development Services team has been working on post-storm damage assessments. Ms. Teague said the data collected between September 30<sup>th</sup> and October 7<sup>th</sup> showed 137 structures affected by the flood, and they still have more areas to assess. Ms. Teague said they do damage assessments to help share community resources, expedite permitting, identify unsafe structures, and create a record of flood damage.

Assistant Development Services Director Olga Grooman said that Damage Assessment Forms are official records that must be kept indefinitely. Ms. Grooman said the highest water mark was 6 feet on Rebe Street. She said a lot of mud and sediment was found in homes, accessory structures were pushed away, and water flow undermined foundations. She said out of the 137 structures assessed so far, 12 structures were determined to be substantially damaged.

Ms. Teague said that staff have several suggestions:

- Increase the freeboard from 1 ft above the base flood elevation to 3 ft {Freeboard means the building height added to the Base Flood Elevation (BFE) from the ground (Example: elevated slab, crawlspace, or garage on the first level).}
- Establish a temporary policy to allow people with damaged homes to temporarily use FEMA trailers, campers, travel trailers or RVs, while their homes are being repaired. Ms. Teague said they could allow those residences to have alternate housing on their properties they are repairing for six months or until their active building permits close out.
- Pursue opportunities and funding to improve historic buildings as a part of their repair.

Councilmember Feichter asked for staff to work on the policy regarding temporary housing on the site of damaged properties while they're being repaired. Ms. Bradley suggested a resolution authorizing staff to stay enforcement of certain ordinance provisions for a certain timeframe.

***A motion was made by Councilmember Sutton, seconded by Councilmember Feichter to allow for a temporary policy to allow people with unsafe homes to temporarily use FEMA trailers, campers, travel trailers or RVs, while their homes are being repaired for a period of six months. The motion passed unanimously.***

Ms. Teague said that Frog Level was severely damaged, and that included several historic properties. She said they would like to improve those properties as part of their repair and help gather resources to assist those property owners via the State Historic Preservation Office.

Councilmember Sutton asked if the town was allowed to override the County's curfew. Ms. Bradley said no.

Public Services Director Jeff Stines said SDR will begin debris removal next Tuesday morning. He said they inspected the 11 bridges in town after the flood and they found the Depot Street bridge near Charlie's Corner was severely damaged and will need to be shut down while it's repaired. Mr. Hites said that JM Teague will most likely recommend temporary structural work with the formal design and permanent fix coming afterwards. He also reported that every town resident's water has been restored. Mr. Stines said the NCDOT is working on the roads in the Camp Branch area to rebuild the road to Lickstone. He said the town is also helping to provide water to Buncombe County and Asheville.

Councilmember Dickson reported that County Commissioners Kevin Ensley and Jennifer Best, Sherriff Wilke, the county manager and attorney, Maggie Valley Alderman John Hinton, Director of the TDA Corrina Ruffieux, and Alison Richmond met to discuss the state of the county and the readiness of accepting visitors to the area. He said they are working to produce a short video and statement which will be updated as needed that can be put out to visitors. He said the video and statement will provide information on closures and what visitors can expect when visiting the area. He reminded everyone that a week ago, the Governor and NCDOT stated not to come to Haywood County, but the TDA should put a statement out soon approving visitors to come to Haywood County while noting certain limitations regarding medical services limitations.

Town Manager Rob Hites reported that Councilmember Sutton has been working on getting temporary cell towers to Haywood County. He said that he and Mayor Caldwell met with Rep. Pless and Speaker Moore to discuss funding to help with disaster aid and also met with the FEMA representative today to discuss the public sector response to the storm and setting up a temporary office in the community. Mr. Hites said that the town staff are assisting Haywood EMC to restore power in the county and assisting EMS staff in recovery efforts.

## **F. PUBLIC COMMENT**

Ann Walsh, owner of Ava and Arden- Ms. Walsh said that it was distressing to hear last week that the TDA was recommending visitors to not travel to Waynesville. She said businesses are open and need the income from tourism. She said they did Art After Dark last week on Main Street and the community was very appreciative. Ms. Walsh said since the storm, her profits are down 44% and she's had to cut back on staffing.

Spencer Tetrault, owner of Axe and Awl- Mr. Tetrault requested that Council revoke the 60 day lead time usually required to submit a special events permit. He said they are wanting to host a fundraising event on November 2<sup>nd</sup> event for first responders and to help drive traffic to the downtown area. He suggested forming a subcommittee to help with decision making for the DWC.

Charles Trump, owner of Olde Brick House- He asked for Council to find a way to work with the Haywood County TDA to open the town up to visitors. He said this time of year is vital to local businesses.

Theresa Young, American Red Cross- Ms. Young introduced Jerri Goldberg, the Executive Director of the WNC Chapter of the Red Cross and explained the different services that the Red Cross offers: shelter, food, water, first responders, and health services.

## G. COMMUNICATION FROM STAFF

### 6. Manager's Report

- Town Manager, Rob Hites

Nothing to report.

### 7. Town Attorney Report

- Town Attorney, Martha Bradley

Town Attorney Martha Bradley presented a memorandum to Council that offers guidance for policy decisions in response to the flood. She reminded Council that she will be out of town for the next meeting.

## H. COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE MAYOR AND COUNCIL

Councilmember Dickson said FEMA is renting rooms in Haywood County.

Councilmember Freeman said the Elks Lodge will have hot meals from 3-5pm and tractor trailer loads of water and food.

***A motion was made by Councilmember Freeman, seconded by Councilmember Dickson, to waive the 60 day application process for the November 2<sup>nd</sup> benefit event for first responders. The motion passed unanimously.***

Councilmember Sutton publicly thanked Rep. Mark Pless for getting together with Speaker Tim Moore, the Mayor, Mr. Hites and himself to discuss financial aid for the flood.

## I. ADJOURN

***A motion was made by Councilmember Sutton, seconded by Councilmember Freeman, to adjourn at 7:47pm. The motion passed unanimously.***

ATTEST:

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Gary Caldwell, Mayor

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Robert W. Hites, Jr. Town Manager

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Candace Poolton, Town Clerk