

MINUTES OF THE TOWN OF WAYNESVILLE TOWN COUNCIL
Special Meeting
November 18, 2025

THE WAYNESVILLE TOWN COUNCIL held a special called meeting on Tuesday, November 18, 2025, at 6:00pm in the Town Hall Board Room located at 9 South Main Street Waynesville, NC.

A. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Pro Tempore Chuck Dickson called the meeting to order at 6:01 pm with the following members present:

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
Martha Bradley, Town Attorney
Luke Kinsland, Recreation Director
Beth Gilmore, DWC Director
Elizabeth Teague, Development Services Director
Alex Mumby, Land Use Administrator
Ricky Bourne, Public Services Director
Hutch Reese, Deputy Director of Operations
Fire Chief Chris Mehaffey
Police Chief David Adams
Page McCurry, Human Resources Director

The following members of the media were present:

Paul Nielsen, The Mountaineer

1. Welcome/Calendar/Announcements

Mayor Pro Tempore Chuck Dickson welcomed everyone and announced that the next Council meeting on November 25th was cancelled because of Thanksgiving, the Christmas Tree Lighting will be this Saturday, Town Offices will be closed November 27th and 28th, the Christmas Parade is December 1st, the Hazelwood Parade is the 7th, and the next Council meeting will be December 9th.

Lake Silvers reported that Congressman Chuck Edwards' office secured \$2.97 million for the Hazelwood fire station construction.

B. PUBLIC COMMENT

Makylia Blair- Ms. Blair spoke in favor of the social district for the TDA Ice Block Party and American Travel Writers Dine-In event. She said that social districts enhance visitors' experience, foster connection, and encourage people to walk and visit places they might not have otherwise.

Kirk Noonan- Mr. Noonan said he is also in support of the social district for the TDA events. He said as co-owner of a Main Street business, he hears a lot of interest in the establishment of a social district on Main Street.

Jerry Jackson- Mr. Jackson said that he also supports a social district and it is supported by merchants who are committed to enforcing safety guidelines.

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 October 28, 2025 Regular Meeting Minutes

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

E. PROCLAMATION

3. Veterans Appreciation Month Proclamation
 - Mayor Pro Tem Chuck Dickson

Mayor Pro Tem Dickson congratulated the Waynesville Police Department on another successful de-escalation of a potentially deadly situation. He proceeded to read the Proclamation, proclaiming November as Veterans Appreciation Month.

F. PRESENTATIONS

4. Haywood Christian Ministries- Food Pantry

- Blake Hart/John Brejot

Mr. Blake Hart with Haywood Christian Ministries reviewed the history of the organization and their ability to fill in gaps where there are needs in the area. He said their new focus is building food security in the community, offering farm resources, providing commissary kitchens, consolidating food sources, and delivering food to areas that may have trouble getting to the food distribution hubs.

Fire Chief Mehaffey reported that Waynesville recently donated five carts full of food and raised \$3037 to be donated to HCM.

5. Presentation on the Town of Waynesville's America 250 NC Grant Mural

- Alex Mumby, Land Use Administrator

Land Use Administrator Alex Mumby presented a video showcasing the new mural on Wall Street. He said the grant that paid for the mural was funded through the America 250 NC grant fund from the State of North Carolina.

Councilmember Feichter asked how long the mural will last, Mr. Mumby said at least 15 years per the easement, but the mural is sealed and will last longer.

G. PUBLIC HEARINGS

6. Public Hearing to consider text amendments to Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance, Land Development Standards (LDS) 12.3.3.B.

- Olga Grooman, Assistant Director of Development Services

Assistant Director of Development Services Olga Grooman reported that during a recent visit by FEMA and the NC Department of Public Safety, Emergency Management Division, that was conducted to ensure the Town's compliance with floodplain permitting requirements, the auditors noted that the Town's ordinance has a mandatory survey requirement. She said the ordinance currently requires a plot plan certified by a licensed surveyor or engineer for all development applications within the floodplain, which would include minor projects, such as HVAC replacements, heat pump changes, or interior remodels. Ms. Grooman stated that staff find the requirement to be unreasonable for smaller projects as it places unnecessary cost burdens on property owners and causes construction delays. She said the proposed amendment would remove the mandatory survey requirement for all projects in the floodplain, and instead, the requirement would be left to the discretion of the Floodplain Administrator, who will determine the need for the certified survey based on the scope of the project.

There was no public comment.

A motion was made by Councilmember Sutton, seconded by Councilmember Freeman, to close the public hearing at 6:35pm. The motion passed unanimously.

A motion was made by Councilmember Sutton, seconded by Councilmember Feichter, to find that the Ordinance is consistent with the 2035 Comprehensive Plan and that it is reasonable and in the public interest

in that it continues to promote smart growth principles in land use planning and zoning and encourages infill, mixed-use and context-sensitive development. The motion passed unanimously.

A motion was made by Councilmember Sutton, seconded by Councilmember Feichter, to adopt the Ordinance as presented in that it promotes conservation design and preserves important natural resources. The motion passed unanimously.

7. Public Hearing to consider a request for annexation for the 5.48-acre parcel at 1399 Plott Creek Rd, Waynesville, NC (PIN 8605-32-8929).
- Olga Grooman, Assistant Director of Development Services

A motion was made by Councilmember Sutton, seconded by Councilmember Feichter, to open the public hearing at 6:36pm. The motion passed unanimously.

Assistant Director of Development Services Olga Grooman reported that on September 18, 2025, the Town received a Petition for Annexation for a contiguous area from Herman E. Ratchford Jr, Manager of Triangle Real Estate of Gastonia, Inc for a parcel at 1399 Plott Creek Road, Waynesville, NC (PIN 8605-32-8929). She said the 5.48 acre parcel is contiguous to the existing corporate limits of Waynesville, and it is a proposed site of the second Phase of the Palisades at Plott Creek apartment complex, adjacent to the existing Phase I. Ms. Grooman stated that the property is currently located entirely within Haywood County and outside of the Town's extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ). Upon annexation, she explained that the property would be incorporated into the corporate limits of Waynesville and would be eligible for municipal services, including sewer service. Ms. Grooman showed that the closest main sewer line is located off Will Hyatt Road, and the Phase I development ran an additional 8-inch sewer line to their property and an existing 8-inch water main line is located across Plott Creek Road. She explained that if Council votes to annex the property, the applicant will proceed with the zoning assignment process.

Councilmember Sutton said the property is entirely in Haywood County, which means there are no restrictions on what can be done with the property. Ms. Grooman said town standards are stricter. She added that the property is on the Future Land Use map as urban services boundary and expansion of utilities was expected for this area.

Public Comment:

Thom Morgan- Mr. Morgan said he is not anti-growth or anti-apartment or anti-progress. He said the apartments are changing the rural character of the Plott Creek area. He expressed concern over the sewer system capacity. He said there is property within city limits that apartments could be built on without having to annex more property into the town.

William Ratchford, Applicant- Mr. Ratchford said a reason they want to add to the apartment complex is to have two entrances. There was a discussion about sidewalk maintenance. Mr. Ratchford said the complex is responsible for all sidewalk and road maintenance within the apartment complex, and Ms. Teague said a sidewalk is required of all major site plans and the town would maintain any sidewalk outside of the complex. Councilmember Feichter asked Mr. Bourne to get an estimate on the cost of maintenance per linear foot of sidewalk.

Deborah Malpharus- Ms. Malpharus asked if the property is not annexed, will the town not provide sewer services. She said that if they do not get annexed, then septic permitting will limit what can be built there. Councilmember Sutton said they could put a pig or chicken farm, and the applicant said it could even be storage units. Ms. Malpharus asked if there was a deed restriction on the undeveloped part of the property the applicant currently owns. Ms. Grooman said no, and they could develop the other acreage, but the slope is very steep.

Brad Ruthers- Mr. Ruthers said his concern is the location of the proposed complex next to the school. He is worried about sexual predators living next to an elementary school. Ms. Grooman presented criminal reports from the Palisades and said there were just minor disturbances. The applicant said they do background checks on residents and people on the sex offender registry are not allowed to live there.

Kevin Fitzgerald- Mr. Fitzgerald said he was in opposition of Phase 1. He said over \$1000 for a one-bedroom apartment is not affordable, and the developer had originally said it was going to be. He said the apartments were built in an area subject to flooding. Mr. Fitzgerald stated the apartments have obnoxious lighting, increase flooding and affect the water quality. He added that the other part of the Palisades is not developed, but they never signed a conservation easement, so they could develop it.

A motion was made by Councilmember Sutton, seconded by Councilmember Feichter, to close the public hearing at 7:03pm. The motion passed unanimously.

Councilmember Feichter said he voted against the Phase I project. He said after reflecting on the last seven years, he realized the concerns of the original development such as traffic were not much of an issue. He said that growth is inevitable, and it's best to manage it the best we can. He added that it's important to not lose sight of what makes Waynesville special. Councilmember Feichter said he asked if this proposal is the right thing for the Town of Waynesville, and do the people who live here today benefit? He added that if this project is built and that property is annexed, the Town must maintain it forever. He said rent and housing costs have not gone down, but they continue to climb. Councilmember Feichter agreed that Waynesville needs places for people to live, but it's important to approve the right projects in the right time.

Councilmember Sutton said the Palisades complex have been great neighbors, they take great care of the neighborhood, there's no additional traffic, and Waynesville still needs housing. Councilmember Freeman added that if approved, this would be a small expansion. Mayor Pro Tem Dickson said he opposed the initial project because it was taking up beautiful farmland, but traffic has been fine, surrounding property values increased, and crime is very low. He remarked that the only way apartments can be affordable housing is with government assistance. He agreed that adding a second entrance to the Palisades is a good idea. He expressed concern that the upper portion was never dedicated into a conservation easement, but they may be limited by height requirements of the steep slope ordinance. He suggested looking into development going up Plott Creek, because they may not want that.

A motion was made by Councilmember Sutton, seconded by Councilmember Freeman, to adopt the attached Ordinance to approve the annexation of the described property. Councilmembers Freeman, Dickson, and Sutton voted in the affirmative. Councilmember Feichter voted against. The motion passed three to one.

8. Public Hearing to consider a map amendment (rezoning) for the 5.48-acre parcel at 1399 Plott Creek Rd, Waynesville, NC 28786 (PIN 8605-32-8929).
 - Olga Grooman, Assistant Director of Development Services

A motion was made by Councilmember Sutton, seconded by Councilmember Feichter, to open the public hearing at 7:14pm. The motion passed unanimously.

Assistant Director of Development Services Olga Grooman reported that the applicant is requesting to rezone the property to the Plott Creek Neighborhood Residential (PC-NR) zoning district, which is the same zoning as the adjacent district and abuts the Palisades at Plott Creek Apartments. She said the rezoning would allow for a multifamily residential development on this property by the same developer. Ms. Grooman reported that on October 20, 2025, the Planning Board reviewed the map amendment application and recommended assigning the property the Plott Creek Neighborhood Residential (PC-NR) zoning district, which aligns with the adjacent district and with Phase I of the development by the same owner.

William Ratchford, Applicant- Mr. Ratchford stated that he would be willing to do a written conservation easement on the other part of the Palisades property to quell concerns of development. He said the new apartments will be kept to two stories.

There was no public comment.

A motion was made by Councilmember Sutton, seconded by Councilmember Feichter, to close the public hearing at 7:34pm. The motion passed unanimously.

A motion was made by Councilmember Sutton, seconded by Councilmember Freeman, to find that the map amendment request for the property PIN 8605-32-8929 is consistent with the 2035 Comprehensive Plan and that it is reasonable and in the public interest in that it continues to promote smart growth principles in land use planning and zoning, encourages infill, mixed-use, and context-sensitive development and promotes conservation design to preserve important natural resources. Councilmembers Freeman, Dickson, and Sutton voted in the affirmative. Councilmember Feichter voted against. The motion passed three to one.

A motion was made by Councilmember Sutton, seconded by Councilmember Freeman, to adopt the map amendment and the attached Ordinance as presented in that it creates a range of housing opportunities and choices and promotes a diverse housing stock including market rate, workforce housing, and affordable options that appeal to a variety of households. Councilmembers Freeman, Dickson, and Sutton voted in the affirmative. Councilmember Feichter voted against. The motion passed three to one.

H. NEW BUSINESS

9. Presentation of TDA Winter Events, Establishment of Downtown Social District for Ice Block Party, and Society of American Travel Writers Dine Around.
 - Corrina Ruffieux and Rob Hites

Visit Haywood (TDA) Director Corrina Ruffieux presented an overview of weekend events for Ice Fest. She noted that most tickets were sold locally, and the majority of additional activities done by visitors besides Ice Fest was shopping and dining locally. She introduced the Event Impact Calculator and stated that Ice Fest directly impacted the economy in the following ways-138 jobs supported, \$18,286 local taxes made, and \$566,086 in business sales. For 2026 Ice Fest, Ms. Ruffieux said the TDA surveyed 34 Main Street business owners. She reported that 94% said they would stay open for Ice Fest and 28 out of 34 requested they close Main Street for the event. Ms. Ruffieux said they will also be hosting the Society of American Travel Writers (SATW) October 4-8, 2026. She proposed a special event social district for Ice Block Party on January 30th, 2026, and the SATW October 6th, 2026. She said out of the Main Street merchants surveyed, 52% responded, and 49 supported a social district and three said no. Ms. Ruffieux said that GS 160A-205/4 and 18B-300.1 permit municipalities to create and manage Social Districts. She overviewed the requirements of the district including signage, cups, designated areas, etc. Councilmember Freeman asked if they will include Frog Level in the social district. Ms. Ruffieux said not at this time, that they will see how this goes and may expand it in the future. She added that the Haywood TDA will buy and provide cups to ABC businesses, but businesses will have to buy their own stickers for their cups. She emphasized that no businesses are required to participate, it is completely up to them.

Councilmember Freeman asked if the Downtown Waynesville Commission has been involved in the process. Ms. Ruffieux said that Beth Gilmore had attended meetings, and every DWC member who owns a Main Street responded to the survey. Councilmember Feichter, acting Chair of the DWC, said he thought the DWC was not involved in the discussion. He requested that anything involving a social district or anything in downtown should involve discussions with the DWC.

A motion was made by Councilmember Sutton, seconded by Councilmember Feichter, to receive the presentation. The motion passed unanimously.

10. Approval of Ordinance Creating a Social District for the Ice Block Party on January 30th, 2026 and Society of American Writers Dine-In on October 6, 2026
 - Corrina Ruffieux

A motion was made by Councilmember Feichter, seconded by Councilmember Sutton, to adopt the attached ordinance for a Social District for events to be held on January 30th, 2026, from 5-8pm and Society of Writes Dine-In on October 6th, 2026 from 5-9pm. The motion passed unanimously.

11. Special Event Permit for January 30, 2026 Ice Block Party and October 6, 2026, Society of Travel Writers Dine-In.
 - Corrina Ruffieux

A motion was made by Councilmember Sutton, seconded by Councilmember Freeman, to approve the Special Events Permit in accordance with the actions the Council took in previous items. The motion passed unanimously.

12. Position reclassification for the Fire Department
 - Cody Parton, Assistant Fire Chief

Assistant Fire Chief Cody Parton reported that the Fire Department is requesting the reclassification of four fire engineer positions to four Lieutenants. He explained that there is a need to reclassify one of three engineer positions on each of the four shifts to a supervisory position and with the increase of fire station two having to work autonomously from station one, the need for another supervisor position is requested. He explained that the addition of a lieutenant position on each shift would strengthen the department's supervisory structure, improving operational efficiency, and enhancing safety both on emergency incidents and during daily station activities. Chief Parton said the existing organizational framework places significant supervisory responsibility on the shift captain, often resulting in an unmanageable span of control, which means the structure can impede effective communication, reduce oversight capability, and limit the department's ability to maintain consistency in training, performance, and safety standards. He added that the most senior engineer on each shift is already performing this work and deserves compensation. Chief Parton said they currently have 23 full time staff, but they need 42 based on their call volume.

A motion was made by Councilmember Freeman, seconded by Councilmember Sutton, to approve the Fire Department Reclassification request. The motion passed unanimously.

13. Request to permit Michael and Mary Lodico to be permitted to contract for the new Solar Rate Schedule retroactive to the installation of their solar system.
 - Michael Lodico

Town Manager Rob Hites explained that a rate schedule must be applied for by the customer and may not be retroactively changed by the utility. He said the Town is required to keep the original fee schedule for solar customers that applied for service before the new rates were adopted is because the State prohibited the town from eliminating previous schedules. Mr. Hites explained that he sent a letter out to the Town's six solar customers in town notifying them of the rate. He said he did not receive an application for the new rate from the Lodico's. Mr. Hites said they would like to apply for it and make it retroactive.

A motion was made by Councilmember Feichter, seconded by Councilmember Freeman, to permit the six solar customers to apply for the new solar rate schedule and make it retroactive. The motion passed unanimously.

14. Deannexation
 - Rob Hites, Town Manager

Town Manager Rob Hites reported that the owner of 86 Magellan Drive, Mr. Michael A. Robinson, has submitted a deannexation request to the Town Council. He explained that there is no statutory mechanism in the State of North Carolina for municipalities to deannex properties. Mr. Robinson said he spoke with Mark Pless and Mr. Pless suggested that Council write a to him and Kevin Corbin to be deannexed. He added that he understands Council doesn't want to set a precedence, but his situation is unique given that he is two miles away from town limits and did not receive discounted utility rates.

A motion was made by Councilmember Feichter, seconded by Councilmember Freeman, for staff to write a letter of support to Mr. Robinson's deannexation request to his State Representative. The motion passed unanimously.

15. Approval of Service Contract with Davis Engineering and Consultants PLLC

- Rob Hites, Town Manager

Town Manager Rob Hites reported that Louis Davis has been serving as one of the Town’s electrical Engineers for the past 11 years. He outlined his extensive experience, including assisting the Town with negotiating a contract with Santee Cooper. He requested that Council approve the contract so he can continue to negotiate wholesale which is up in January.

A motion was made by Councilmember Feichter, seconded by Councilmember Freeman, to approve the contract with Davis Engineering and Consultants PLLC. The motion passed unanimously.

I. COMMUNICATION FROM STAFF

16. Manager’s Report

- Town Manager, Rob Hites

Mr. Hites reported that he and Luke Kinsland are finishing the specs for the ball parks. He said they will put bids out by the December 9th Council meeting so they can bring them to Council.

17. Town Attorney’s Report

- Town Attorney, Martha Bradley

There was nothing to report.

J. COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE MAYOR AND COUNCIL

Councilmember Freeman requested Council get a vehicle for the Christmas parade. Councilmember Feichter said a former staff member asked him why former staff members are no longer invited to the annual staff luncheon. He requested that staff reconsider and continue to allow former staff members to attend.

K. ADJOURN

A motion was made by Councilmember Freeman, seconded by Councilmember Sutton, to adjourn at 8:36pm. The motion passed unanimously.

ATTEST:

Gary Caldwell, Mayor

Robert W. Hites, Jr. Town Manager

Candace Poolton, Town Clerk