

**MINUTES OF THE TOWN OF WAYNESVILLE TOWN COUNCIL**  
**Special Called Meeting-Budget Workshop Continued**  
**June 8, 2026**

**THE WAYNESVILLE TOWN COUNCIL** held a special called meeting on Monday, June 8, 2026, at 8:30am in the at 16 South Main Street Waynesville, NC.

**A. CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Gary Caldwell called the meeting to order at 8:31 am with the following members present:

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

The following staff members were present:

- Rob Hites, Town Rob Hites, Town Manager
- Jesse Fowler, Deputy Town Manager
- Candace Poolton, Town Clerk
- Matha Bradley, Town Attorney (present for closed session)
- Elizabeth Teague, Development Services Director
- Olga Grooman, Assistant Development Services Director
- Ian Barrett, Finance Director
- Police Chief David Adams
- Assistant Police Chief Josh Schick
- Fire Chief Chris Mehaffey
- Assistant Fire Chief Cody Parton
- Page McCurry, Human Resources Director
- Hutch Reece, Deputy Director of Operations
- Luke Kinsland, Recreation Director

The following members of the media were present:

- Becky Johnson, The Mountaineer

**B. BUDGET DISCUSSION**

Council agreed that they will not be raising taxes this upcoming fiscal year. Councilmember Sutton said they still need to cut \$279,000 from the budget. Councilmember Sutton said from the Cemetery budget, they lowered overtime pay, temporary and part time pay, professional services, and materials and supplies. Councilmember Feichter asked what the ramifications would be from cutting those budget items, such as level of service being impacted. He said that Finance Director Ian Barrett looked at previous year's budget, and the amounts budgeted for each of the line items had historically not been completely spent. Councilmember Dickson suggested cutting the contractual service line as well. Mr. Hites said that line probably includes surveying and Councilmember Sutton reminded Council of the LiDAR needed for the

historical section of the cemetery. Councilmember Dickson suggested they charge more for cemetery sites. Mr. Hites said they can bring back a quote from a LiDAR firm to scan the most historic section of the cemetery.

Regarding the Police Department budget, Ms. McCurry said the suggestions that MAPs group made for salaries were excellent, but they didn't match the career track program. Councilmember Dickson said there is an additional \$400,000 for salary on the budget, even after the suggested increase from MAPs. Ms. McCurry explained that the MAPS group number did not include impacts to retirement, FICA, etc., and they still have to keep a 5% differential between each rank to prevent salary compression. Chief David Adams said they've nixed their requests for new vehicles, but that will not affect level of service for another year.

Councilmember Sutton reported that Development Services cut 4.5% from their budget. Ms. Teague explained that the majority of legal fees are when the Board of Adjustment and Planning Board require working with Ron Sneed, clean up demolitions, and when they need to locate property heirs. Ms. Teague reminded Council that she will be retiring, and her salary has not kept up with the going rate for a Director. She explained that professional services are mostly to match grants. Councilmember Feichter noted that the materials and supplies line dropped \$8200. Ms. Teague said that includes copy costs for agenda packets, as well as the Historic Preservation Commission coloring book costs and code books for building inspectors.

Councilmember Sutton said that the Fire Department has cut 1.5%, so they need to cut another percent. Council emphasized their support for the Fire Department. Councilmember Sutton and Assistant Fire Chief Cody Parton agreed that the Fire Department has the slimmest budget. He said that the increased rural fire tax will provide an additional \$70,000 in revenue. AC Parton said there are two upcoming emergency repairs for two HVAC repairs. AC Parton said they are not seeing nearly as many applicants to the department as they had in years' past, and they are almost at a full shift vacancy. He said that Firefighters start at \$41,000 and the living wage is \$45,000. Chief Mehaffey said that while other places pay more, they work 900 hours more a year, which means they get paid roughly the same as Waynesville firefighters, but Waynesville firefighters have a better work life balance and can even work other jobs on the side with the days off that they have. Ms. McCurry said she could ask Ms. Veazy with MAPs group to recalculate the pay scale after West Buncombe gives their firefighters their raises. Councilmember Feichter requested that Ms. McCurry calculate the cost of increasing firefighter pay rate to living wage.

***A motion was made by Councilmember Sutton, seconded by Councilmember Boyd, to enter into closed session at 10:23am, pursuant of § 143-318.11(6) To consider the qualifications, competence, performance, character, fitness, conditions of appointment, or conditions of initial employment of an individual public officer or employee or prospective public officer or employee. The motion passed unanimously.***

***A motion was made by Councilmember Dickson, seconded by Councilmember Boyd, to enter into open session at 11:10am. The motion passed unanimously.***

Council agreed that they will not be voting for a tax increase at the next Council meeting. Councilmember Sutton said they will still work on departmental budgets. Councilmember Dickson said the water and sewer funds went up dramatically instead of making the requested cuts. Council directed that the water and sewer departments look at their budgets to make cuts.

Councilmember Feichter suggested increasing the projected sales tax revenue to 3% for an additional \$47,000 in revenue, because typically, they underestimate. Councilmember Dickson said he would like to wait until June 15th to get the March 2026 sales tax report before making that decision.

Ms. McCurry said the cost of moving all full-time fire fighters up to living wage is over \$600,000. Councilmember Feichter said he would like to bring every employee up to at least living wage, and they could implement it in stages. Ms. McCurry said if they factor in benefit costs, employees are above living wage.

***A motion was made by Councilmember Dickson, seconded by Councilmember Sutton, to adjourn at 11:24am. 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