

MINUTES OF THE TOWN OF WAYNESVILLE TOWN COUNCIL
Regular Meeting
March 24, 2026

THE WAYNESVILLE TOWN COUNCIL held a regular meeting on Tuesday, March 24, 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 6:05 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
Olga Grooman, Assistant Development Services Director
Alex Mumby, Land Use Administrator
Tyler Anderson, Stormwater Program Coordinator
Fire Chief Chris Mehaffey
Assistant Fire Chief Cody Parton
Luke Kinsland, Recreation Director
Page McCurry, HR Director
Sharon Agostini, Tax Collector
Ian Barrett, Finance Director
Beth Gilmore, DWC Director
Police Department Staff
Hutch Reece, Deputy Director of Public Works-Operations

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 April 14th.

B. PUBLIC COMMENT

Patrick Ryan- Mr. Ryan, president of the Waynesville Kiwanis Club, said he supports the \$200,000 reallocation for a matching fund to replace the wooden Kiwanis Playground. He said that Kiwanis is active in assisting with the replacement. He said they've done a survey in the community to see what they are hoping to see the playground replaced with. Mr. Ryan said a metal structure should be lower maintenance, more accessible, and promote sensory play. He said they have worked on developing a design concept that would be mountain themed and possibly include its own "Gateway to the Smokies" arch. Mr. Ryan said Kiwanis has raised \$100,000 already for the project.

C. ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS TO THE AGENDA

A motion was made by Councilmember Sutton, seconded by Councilmember Dickson, to add to the agenda, "Approval of \$30,000 State Grant to fund recycling and waste cans for Downtown". 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 February 24, 2026 Regular Meeting Minutes
 - b. Motion to approve the February 27, 2026 Planning Retreat Minutes
 - c. Motion to approve the March 4, 2026 Special Called Meeting Minutes
 - d. Motion to call for a Public Hearing for April 14, 2026, to consider a request for annexation of the western portion of the 57.5-acre parcel located at 192 Ratcliff Cove Road, Waynesville, NC 28786 (PIN 8625-08-4616).
 - e. Motion to appoint Bridget Shaughnessy to the Downtown Waynesville Commission
 - f. Motion to appoint Anna Sutton to the Historic Preservation Commission
 - g. Motion to appoint Jules Huntsberger to the Waynesville Public Art Commission
 - h. Motion to approve the reclassification of the Payroll Specialist position to Payroll Specialist & Customer Service Representative
 - i. Motion to approve the Hot Summer Nights Special Event Permit
 - j. Motion to renew the Sharp Contract

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

E. PROCLAMATION

3. Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month
 - Mayor Gary Caldwell and Julia Buckner-Arc of Haywood

Arc of Haywood staff member, Julia Buckner, said that the proclamation represents visibility of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, the impact of Arc of Haywood serving 320 individuals in group homes and supporting thousands of others, and responsibility of the community and leaders creating space for everyone to thrive.

Two residents of the Arc of Haywood, Stone and Reagan, explained their involvement in the community. They thanked the Town for creating a welcoming environment they can call home.

Julia Buckner read the proclamation on the Mayor's behalf, proclaiming March Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month.

F. PRESENTATIONS

4. Recognition of Evan Davis's promotion

- Police Chief David Adams

Police Chief David Adams announced Evan Davis's promotion to Sergeant of Criminal Investigations.

5. Main Street Mural Public Art Commission Presentation-Final Design Approval

- Max Dowdle, Muralist

Muralist Max Dowdle presented the final design of the Historic Main Street Mural for Council approval. He said he will be in Waynesville April 11th-18th to paint, and there will be a Community Paint Day on the 18th.

A motion was made by Councilmember Freeman, seconded by Councilmember Dickson, to approve the final design for the Historic Main Street Mural commissioned by Max Dowdle to be installed at 121 North Main Street. The motion passed unanimously.

6. Presentation by WithersRavenel engineers on the update to the Stormwater Master Plan.

- WithersRavenel

Assistant Development Services Director Olga Grooman reported that on March 23, 2023, the Town of Waynesville was awarded a \$400,000 Stormwater Planning Grant, funded by the American Rescue Plan Act's (ARPA) and administered by the NC Department of Environmental Quality (NC DEQ). She explained that this Planning Grant will update the existing 2008 Stormwater Master Plan and create a new Comprehensive Stormwater Master Plan, which will include an asset inventory and assessment, a broad study to identify stormwater improvements on Town's properties, an evaluation of areas where the sewer system is infiltrating the stormwater system, and other long-term planning initiatives. It will also identify potential capital improvement projects and offer specific recommendations. Ms. Grooman said the grant is scheduled to close out by the end of 2026, and a final version of the Stormwater Master Plan will also be presented to the Town Council at that time.

Alisha Goldstein, staff member with WithersRavenel, outlined six conceptual project areas that could be carried out within a 10-year time frame and are focused on reducing flood risk to public infrastructure, private property, and critical facilities:

1. Legion Drive by Public Works
2. Broad Street Culvert
3. Hazelwood Avenue
4. Virginia Avenue, Kentucky Avenue, and Main Street
5. Burke Street and Shelton Street
6. Charles Street and Branner Avenue

Ms. Goldstein said that these projects incorporate upsizing pipe capacity, replacing aging infrastructure, adding storm inlets, and realigning infrastructure from private yards to right-of-way. Ms. Goldstein said the benefits of the Town completing these projects would be flood risk reduction, protection of public infrastructure and facilities, and improved maintenance access. Councilmember Sutton requested they change it to the title of the program to the “Comprehensive Stormwater Plan”.

Councilmember Dickson asked if there are grants available to help fund these projects. Ms. Goldstein said there are DEQ and planning grants, and that the Comprehensive Stormwater Plan allows the Town to be ready to apply. Councilmember Dickson asked why the majority of Frog Level was not included in the plan. Ms. Goldstein said there were challenges where if some areas were fixed, the problem would be exasperated downstream.

7. Presentation on “Electrification of the Town Fleet”
 - William Hite, Environmental Sustainability Board (ESB) Chair

ESB Chairman William Hite reported that the Town maintains a small fleet of passenger and light-duty vehicles used for administrative, inspection, and public works functions. He proposed a Town policy that states when passenger and light-duty vehicles reach the end of their useful lives, they be replaced with electric vehicles and that Council establishes a 2050 clean energy goal for the Town’s fleet.

Mr.Hite compared maintenance costs of several town vehicles with comparable electric vehicles and reported that the cost of ownership of an electrical vehicle is lower than a gasoline powered vehicles.

Councilmember Dickson asked on behalf of staff if hybrid vehicles would be able to apply in the new policy. Mr. Hite said hopefully not because hybrid vehicles result in less fuel savings, and they are less reliable. Councilmember Dickson asked about charging infrastructure. Mr. Hite said each building would have to be checked for charger installation capabilities. He said there could be five or six vehicles to one charger, and that the total cost of chargers would \$1500-\$2000.

Councilmember Sutton said the Town needs to get buy in from staff and educate them on EVs before Council changes the policy. He suggested using maintenance software to analyze how many miles vehicles are being driven and how long each vehicle is idling. Councilmember Sutton suggested getting leadership team together with the Town Manager to discuss the proposed vehicle electrification policy and the impact it would have on staff and requested that Deputy Manager Fowler install fleet software.

G. OLD BUSINESS

8. Budget Amendment and agreement for brick sidewalk installation along Walnut Street as part of NCDOT U-5839.
- Elizabeth Teague, Development Services Director

Development Services Director Elizabeth Teague reported that at the February 10, 2026 meeting, Council directed staff to request brick sidewalk pavers along Walnut Street, from Boundary to North Main along the frontage of the Spread Out Historic District. She presented what NCDOT said the work will cost the Town, which will be \$87,242.67 and a TIP agreement to allow NCDOT to conduct the work at this additional cost to the Town. She said the fees in-lieu that offsets the Town's contribution to the project totals \$22,000. Council agreed that following the budget retreat, they are hesitant to vote to pay for a brick sidewalk. Ms. Teague said staff will come back to NCDOT and say they will not be paying to put the brick sidewalk in.

Mayor Caldwell asked where the "Welcome to Waynesville" sign went. Ms. Teague said staff could ask NCDOT on where they could get it back based on available right-of-way. Deputy Manager Fowler said the sign belonged to the garden club.

H. NEW BUSINESS

9. Pride on Main: Special Event Permit Amendment Request
- Dr. Printer McIntosh, Founder – Haywood County Pride on Main

Dr. Printer McIntosh, Founder of Haywood County Pride on Main, spoke about the HayCo Pride organization and their impact on the community. They reviewed the success of the HayCo Pride On Main Festival event with increased vendor and public participation. Dr. McIntosh presented an amendment to the original HayCo special event permit that was previously approved by Council on January 13, 2026. The amendments requested were as follows:

1. Extension of the Wall Street closure down to the intersection of Wall Street and Howell Street.
 - The current permitted road closure along Wall Street ends at Wells Event Way.
 - This amendment has been discussed with the Police Department and staff can confirm that, if approved, this amendment would not introduce any additional safety concerns.
2. Implementation of a temporary social district for the event.
 - This social district could exist within the same boundary as the temporary social district previously permitted during the TDA's Ice Festival special event.
 - The applicant may request that the temporary social district for the Pride on Main event be extended down to the intersection of Wall Street and Howell Street.

Deputy Manager Jesse Fowler asked how the street closure would affect the residents of the four houses on Howell Street. Dr. McIntosh said the road wouldn't be closed there, just the parking spaces would be blocked off.

A motion was made by Councilmember Dickson, seconded by Councilmember Sutton, to approve the social district as presented contingent upon an updated ordinance to be placed on the next meeting's consent agenda. The motion passed unanimously.

10. Council permission to apply for the TDA Capital Improvement Grant for the construction of the Boyd Ave Greenway Connector
 - Alex Mumby, Land Use Administrator

Land Use Administrator Alex Mumby reported that the Richland Creek Greenway in Hazelwood currently runs from Dutch Fisher Park to behind the Hickory Hollow Apartments, ending at a large patch of bamboo. He presented the TDA Capital Improvement grant that would enable the town to continue the greenway all the way to Boyd Ave and to pave the path to Killian Street. Mr. Mumby explained that the completion of that section of greenway would allow for a safer route for children walking and biking to school or the park and create a better connection between Frog Level and Downtown Hazelwood.

He presented an engineered estimate of the cost of the project from Preston Gregg, PE. Mr. Mumby said with the help of Haywood Waterways, staff plan to utilize Public Works to perform some of the required tasks such as bamboo removal and shed demolition. He explained that this labor can act as match towards the TDA grant, as confirmed by TDA Director Corrina Ruffieux, and that a third-party contractor will be hired to do construction of the greenway itself. He said the minimum cost would be \$100,000, but there will be no actual money spent. He reminded Council that the Town already owns this property.

A motion was made by Councilmember Freeman, seconded by Councilmember Sutton, to approve staff to apply for the TDA Capital Improvement grant for the construction of the Boyd Ave Greenway Connector. The motion passed unanimously.

11. Report on Unpaid Property Taxes/Yearly Tax Advertisement in Local Paper
 - Sharon Agostini, Tax Collector

A motion was made by Councilmember Dickson, seconded by Councilmember Freeman, to approve the yearly tax advertisements in The Mountaineer in accordance with NCGS 105-369. The motion passed unanimously.

12. Reallocation of Previous PARTF Matching Funds for Playground Replacement Project
 - Luke Kinsland, Recreation Director

Recreation Director Luke Kinsland reported that the Town previously committed \$200,000 in matching funds toward a North Carolina Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF) grant application associated with the Helene project. He explained that according to PARTF guidelines, if the Town was awarded those funds, the Town would not have been allowed to break ground on the dog park project until May. Because the Town had already completed the bidding process and awarded the construction contract, Mr. Kinsland said the required delay would have created conflicts with the project timeline, so staff withdrew the application.

Mr. Kinsland recommended reallocating the previously approved \$200,000 in matching funds toward a new PARTF application for the replacement of the aging wooden playground structure with a modern, accessible playground. He said the proposed total project budget would be approximately \$500,000 and the Kiwanis Club

has committed \$76,000 toward the required match and may contribute additional funds. He added that Kiwanis is also pursuing additional grant opportunities to support the project. Mr. Kinsland said if awarded, the project would be implemented through a competitive RFP process to design and install a modern playground structure with updated amenities and improved accessibility. He said staff will host public input meetings will be held to gather community feedback to help guide the design.

A motion was made by Councilmember Dickson, seconded by Councilmember Feichter, to approve reallocating the previously approved \$200,000 in PARTF matching funds to support submission of a new PARTF grant application for the replacement of the existing wooden playground structure with a modern, accessible playground, with a proposed total project budget of approximately \$500,000. The motion passed unanimously.

13. Budget Amendment

- Beth Gilmore, DWC Executive Director

DWC Director Beth Gilmore reported that the Downtown Waynesville Commission (DWC) voted unanimously on March 17 to request a budget amendment for \$12,000 to secure the purchase of a covered stage system to be used during town events. She said the cost of the Wenger StageTek system is \$14,599.88, and that a 20 ft x 20 ft tent from Tent Craft needed to cover the stage will cost an additional \$9,028.96, making the total cost for a covered stage system \$23,628.84. Ms. Gilmore said the DWC has agreed to spend \$10,000 from the Special Events budget and has secured a grant from the Haywood County Arts Council (HCAC) for \$2,000 for the purchase of a covered stage. Ms. Gilmore said that in the past four years the DWC has spent over \$17,000 to rent equipment. Councilmember Dickson asked about the use of the money designated for the shading over Miller Street. Councilmember Feichter said the DWC is adamant on having shade over Miller Street and that it is a top priority. Councilmember Dickson asked if the DWC will spend the money in the marketing budget before next fiscal year. Ms. Gilmore said that is the plan. Councilmember Feichter said the stage could be used for the Mountain Street Dances, Halloween, and many other events. Ms. Gilmore said the benefits of this stage are that it has different configurations and it could be used as two stages smaller stages or one large one.

A motion was made by Councilmember Sutton, seconded by Councilmember Freeman, to approve a budget amendment for up to \$12,000. The motion passed unanimously.

14. Revisions to DWC Rules and Procedures

- Beth Gilmore, DWC Executive Director

DWC Director Beth Gilmore reported that the Downtown Waynesville Commission (DWC) voted unanimously on March 17 to request approval for revisions made to DWC Rules and Procedures regarding the selection process for DWC board members and meeting attendance. Ms. Gilmore presented the DWC Rules and Procedures revisions that reflect changes approved by Council last month regarding the structure of the board and seats specifically designated for property owners. She added that changes have been made to update references to the Town Board and DWC from “Aldermen” to “Council” and “Committee” to “Commission.”

Ms. Gilmore said that the DWC requested to be more involved in the selection process for applicants, so they are requesting that the by-laws incorporate language into Article 4 regarding the selection of new DWC

members to state: “Vacancies shall be filled on the DWC through an application process managed by the Town Clerk. Applications received by the Town Clerk will be shared with the DWC Executive Director for presentation to DWC board members who will recommend candidates for appointment by the Waynesville Town Council”. She noted that the attendance policy under Article 4 has been updated to mirror national standards requiring board members to attend 75-percent of annual meetings.

Councilmember Dickson asked about the language of the application process, specifically what would happen if the DWC does not recommend an applicant. Deputy Manager Fowler said the application would go back into the applicant pool and they could inform Town Council and receive direction from them. Councilmember Feichter said the DWC would like to have more involvement since they know who would be the best fit for the Commission and then advance those names to Council. Councilmember Dickson said advisory boards should have input, and that there should be a policy for all advisory boards to have the ability to look at applications and comment on them before sending them to Council, but the language of the revision means that not all of the applications would be presented to Council, just the ones recommended by the DWC. Councilmember Freeman said she trusts that DWC to make the proper recommendation. Councilmember Feichter said Council can still decide to appoint applicants or not. Councilmember Dickson said the Town should advertise what qualities and skills advisory boards are looking for in candidates. Town Attorney Martha Bradley said Council could direct staff to re-work the language. Councilmember Sutton said he has faith in the DWC and Councilmember Feichter in making the right decision.

A motion was made by Councilmember Sutton, seconded by Councilmember Freeman, to approve revisions to DWC Rules and Procedures. Councilmembers Sutton and Freeman voted in the affirmative. Councilmember Dickson voted against. The motion passed.

15. Town Expense for Supporting Special Events

- Jesse Fowler, Deputy Town Manager

At the request of Councilmember Dickson, Deputy Manager Fowler presented the total cost of managing historically approved special event permits that are currently absorbed by the Town of Waynesville. Mr. Fowler explained that he worked with Public Safety and Public Works to put together staff and material costs to assist with events. Deputy Manager Fowler noted that when he researched other NC municipality event fees, he never saw a fee of above \$300. Councilmember Dickson requested that Mr. Fowler come back to the next meeting with a proposed fee schedule and the cost of providing police for football games. He added that every other NC municipality pays for police protection at football games. Councilmember Sutton asked if Mr. Fowler could add to the list when each event was last done.

16. Authorize the staff to advertise for architectural services to design Fire Station #2

- Rob Hites, Town Manager

Town Manager Rob Hites reported that the Congressional Earmark of \$2,970,000 was assigned to USDA. He said they stipulate that even though the appropriation has been signed into law, it must meet the internal policies of USDA in order to qualify for disbursement. Mr. Hites said staff have learned that the USDA process assumes that the local government has a “shovel ready” project when they apply for a grant. Mr. Hites said that in order to comply with the USDA regulations, the Town needs to advertise, select, and contract with an architect, and that once the project is approved by USDA, the Town can draw down funds to pay the architect.

He explained that in order to engage an architect, the Town must show that it has the funds to compensate them, which would require the Town to have potentially \$600,000 to cover the architect's contract. Mr. Hites reminded Council that the Town currently has approximately \$2.3 million in general fund balance available for appropriation, so a \$600,000 design contract could be covered by the Town. He said they anticipate that architectural fees will be reimbursed through the appropriation and not permanently impact the fund. Mr. Hites pointed out the risk that USDA will find the project ineligible for Congressman Edward's appropriation and we'd have to decide to cancel the contract or carry it through design and pay the fees through a future borrowing. Mr. Hites further explained that the process requires the Town to advertise architectural services based solely on qualification, recommend a firm to the Council, negotiate a contract after the Council approves a firm and have the Council approve the contract. He said that at any time in the process, Council may reject the candidates and stop the project, even after the contract is signed.

A motion was made by Councilmember Sutton, seconded by Councilmember Freeman, to authorize the staff to draft an RFQ to engage a firm to design Fire Station #2. The motion passed unanimously.

17. Approval of \$30,000 State Grant to fund recycling and waste cans for Downtown.
- Councilmember Jon Feichter

Councilmember Feichter reported that he applied for a State "Waste Reduction Grant" to fund 30 additional recycling cans to be placed in the Downtown, Hazelwood and Frog Level, and the Town received the grant. He said the grant would allow the Town to provide a one-to-one ratio of decorative waste and recycling cans, but the cans may not be purchased until after July 1st. Councilmember Feichter said the Town would have to match \$6000 to the \$30,000 grant award.

A motion was made by Councilmember Feichter, seconded by Councilmember Dickson, to accept the grant and authorize the staff to purchase them according to the grant's guidelines, and approve the Conflict of Interest Statement. The motion passed unanimously.

I. COMMUNICATION FROM STAFF

18. Manager's Report
- Town Manager, Rob Hites

Nothing to report.

19. Town Attorney's Report
- Town Attorney, Martha Bradley

Nothing to report.

J. COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE MAYOR AND COUNCIL

Nothing to report.

K. ADJOURN

A motion was made by Councilmember Sutton, seconded by Councilmember Dickson, to adjourn at 8:55pm. The motion passed unanimously.

ATTEST:

Gary Caldwell, Mayor

Robert W. Hites, Jr. Town Manager

Candace Poolton, Town Clerk