

**MINUTES OF THE TOWN OF WAYNESVILLE TOWN COUNCIL**  
**Special Called Meeting-Budget Workshop**  
**May 22, 2026**

**THE WAYNESVILLE TOWN COUNCIL** held a special called meeting on Friday, May 22, 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 8:30 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  
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  
Ricky Bourne, Public Services Director  
Hutch Reece, Deputy Director of Operations  
Laura Yonkers, Deputy Director of Sustainability  
Chris Bybee, Fleet Supervisor  
Luke Kinsland, Recreation Director

The following members of the media were present:

Becky Johnson, The Mountaineer

**B. BUDGET DISCUSSION**

Finance Director Ian Barrett presented the proposed budget for the 2026-2027 Fiscal Year (FY 26-27). The recommendations included:

- A 10% water and sewer rate increase
- A 3.19% electric rate increase
- 2 cent property tax rate increase
- Bringing first responder pay to market

- No Cost of Living Adjustment(COLA), but will keep a 2.5% Career Track

Mr. Barrett reviewed the capital improvement requests from each department: IT Upgrades and worker onsite, replacing aging HVACs in town, replace aging ADA compliant Rec Center van, sewer line and pipe replacement, WWTP bridge repair, clarifier pumps at the sewer plant, and electric improvements on Allison Acres and Richland Street, totaling \$305,000.

Council agreed that they will not support a tax increase for the year, citing rising utility rates, county taxes, and fuel and food costs.

Mr. Barrett said by law, we cannot budget to collect more property tax than what we collected in the previous year. He said the Town has collected \$7.6 million so far this fiscal year, not including sales tax. Mr. Barrett said due to some proposed fee schedule increases, they were able to increase their budgeted revenue.

Following the pay classification study, Mr. Barrett said to fund the Police Department recommendations, it would cost \$247,175.

Councilmember Dickson asked about the significant increase in postage that was budgeted for admin. Councilmember Sutton said mailing costs have increased significantly and every department bills postage to the admin line. Councilmember Feichter commented that the MSD taxes collected was down \$1000. Mr. Barrett said he will discuss publishing the taxes owed in the MSD with the tax collector.

Councilmember Sutton said if staff are not spending the money they budgeted for expenses, do not try to use it right before the fiscal year is over just so it can get worked into the budget next fiscal year. He said he'd like to see the expenditures cut by 5%.

***A motion was made by Councilmember Dickson, seconded by Councilmember Sutton, to continue the budget workshop to Monday, June 8<sup>th</sup>, 2026 at 8:30am at 16 S. Main Street. 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