Town Council Budget Workshop - Minutes

Tuesday, April 15, 2025, at 6:00 PM

Town Council Chambers, Town Hall, 30 S. Main St. Weaverville, N.C.

The Town Council held the regularly scheduled workshop on Tuesday, April 15, 2025, at 6:00 p.m. in the Town Council Chambers at Town Hall, 30 S. Main Street, Weaverville, N.C.

1. CALL TO ORDER-

Mayor Fitzsimmons called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Councilmembers present: Mayor Patrick Fitzsimmons and Vice Mayor John Chase, Councilmembers Doug Jackson, Catherine Cordell, Michele Wood, and Dee Lawrence. Absent: Peter McGuire

Staff members present: Town Manager Scottie Harris, Finance Director Tonya Dozier, Assistant Town Manager Jennifer Jackson, Public Works Director Dale Pennell, Water Plant Superintendent Randall Wilson, Police Chief Somer Oberlin, Town Clerk Tamara Mercer, Planner Graham Crawford, and A/V Coordinator Lauren Ward.

2. Presentation of Town Manager's Proposed FY: 2025-26 Budget and Budget Message

Town Manager Harris presented the proposed Fiscal Year 2025-2026 Annual Budget and Budget Message to the Town Council. He noted that the budget has been prepared in accordance with the North Carolina Local Government Budget and Fiscal Control Act, is balanced and represents a concerted effort to serve the citizens of Weaverville with a focus on sustainability and resiliency during a time of uncertainty and change. Copies of the proposed budget and budget message are available to the public through the Town's website and at Town Hall.

Manager Harris reviewed the proposed budget which includes a property tax rate increase of 2 cents per $100 in value (for a proposed tax rate of $0.37), 5% water rate increases, and no fire tax increases. There are increases in the budgets for all funds with an overall increase of 5.3% over last year. Harris proposed to add three new positions and proposed a 3% cost-of-living increase and 2% merit increase. Added vehicles and equipment included: Ford Lightning Truck, Leaf Vacuum, Water System Equipment, a Generator for a Water Pump Station, and more security cameras. Capital project funding was included for fire apparatus, cellular read water meter, and waterline replacements.

Tax rate, fund balance, and property tax information was provided as well as information on the growth of personnel by department over the last 10 years.

Manager Harris provided information on an equalized approach to cost-of-living adjustments which could address fairness. If the amount of the 3% is divided equally among all employees then the employees making lower salaries could receive a COLA increase of 3% or higher and those making over $70,000 would have between 3% and 1.7% increase.

The highlights of each departmental budget were reviewed.

3. Action to Set Public Hearing on Proposed FY: 2025-2026 Budget

Motion to set a public hearing on the proposed FY:2025-26 budget for Tuesday, May 13, 2025, at 6:00 pm in the Community Room/ Council Chambers at Town Hall.

Moved by: Dee Lawrence

Aye Doug Jackson, Dee Lawrence, Patrick Fitzsimmons, John Chase, Catherine Cordell, and Michele Wood

Carried unanimously. 6-0

4. Town Council Questions, Discussion, and Input

Staff requested direction regarding the tax rate increase, use of fund balance, COLA/Merit pay, authority to preorder a rescue truck, authority to post the water plant positions, and whether to hold an early voting day.

There was active discussion concerning an increase in the tax rate, continued use of fund balance, and a desire to be fiscally conservative during this time of uncertainty. *There was a general consensus that a 2-cent tax rate increase and the use of fund balance as proposed was reasonable and there may be a willingness to add more to the budget.*

There was general consensus to include the proposed 2% merit and 3% COLA with an equal distribution of COLA to all employees.

There was general consensus to authorize the preordering of the rescue truck with the understanding that no money is due at the time of order.

There was general consensus to allow the posting of the Water Treatment Plant Operator positions prior to the adoption of the FY26 budget.

There was general consensus to include one day of early voting on the Saturday before the election for this year's elections and to further discuss changing Town elections to an even year election cycle.

5. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business and without objection, Mayor Fitzsimmons adjourned the regular meeting at 7:08 p.m.

P Fitzsimmons

Patrick Fitzsimmons, Mayor

Tamara Mercer

Tamara Mercer, Town Clerk