Town Council Regular Workshop - Minutes

Tuesday, May 13, 2025 at 6:00 PM

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

The Town Council regularly scheduled workshop held on Tuesday, May 13, 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

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

Staff members present: Town Manager Scottie Harris, Assistant Town Manager Jennifer Jackson, Finance Director Tonya Dozier, Planning Director James Eller, Town Clerk Tamara Mercer, Police Chief Somer Oberlin, Fire Chief Michael Hunter, Public Works Director Dale Pennell, Water Plant Supervisor Randall Wilson, and Zoom Room Coordinator Lauren Ward.

2. Public Hearing- Proposed Fiscal Year 2025-2026 Budget

Mayor Fitzsimmons opened the Public Hearing on the Fiscal Year 2025-2026 proposed budget in order to receive public comments.

Mr. Bo Platt a resident of Reems Creek in Weaverville said he was in favor of an increase in property taxes in order to maintain standard of living and services. Mr. Platt added that he was also in favor of an employee COLA. He reviewed his history of moving here and was impressed with the Town's efficiency during the disaster response.

No written comments were received and no one else elected to speak.

Mayor Fitzsimmons closed the public hearing.

3. Updates to FY: 2025-26 Budget

3.0 **Summary of proposed FY: 2025-2026 Budget**

Town Manager Harris provided a recap of the budget proposal including:

- Property Tax Rate at $0.37 which includes a .02 cent proposed increase
- Use of General Fund Balance

- Water Rate Increase of 5%
- No Fire Rate Increase
- Full-time positions added for one detective and two water treatment plant positions
- Proposed COLA of 3%
- Proposed Merit of 2%
- Health Insurance Increase of 3%
- Vehicles and Equipment recap and additions
- Capital Project Funding updates including Fire Apparatus, Cellular Read Water Meters, and Waterline Replacement

3.1 **Updated Revenue Projections**

Finance Director Dozier reviewed the updated revenue projections regarding the tax rate and pointed out that the tax assessors' property values had dropped again which reduced the tax levy. These recent reductions are likely due to damage to businesses and real property appeals

Possible revenue additions and projections included: additional tax increase for the current tax rate per $100 value, the proposed rate at $.37 per $100 value, the impacts annually on property owners tax bills, and fund balance information details. Other possible added expenditures for a Police Department garage floor, patrol car, pavement crack sealer, peak hour Police Department officers and vehicles needed, and the streets improvement program.

3.2 **Review of Possible Additions to General Fund Expenditures**

Manager Harris reviewed with Council expenditure items that could be added to the budget if additional revenue is added through increasing the tax rate beyond the 2 cents that was proposed or more use of fund balance.

3.2 **Reassignment of Capital Improvements in Water Fund**

Town Manager Harris proposed the reassignment of some water funds by shifting some of the waterline replacement monies to fire and security alarms at the Water Treatment Plant and money to contract for a backflow prevention program. Harris did mention that the cellular read meter project is still largely underfunded and staff will continue to study and provide recommendations for the FY2026-2027 budget.

4. Review of Grant Funding

Assistant Town Manager Jackson provided an overview of awarded grants, pending and possible grants. Staff is assessing gaps and seeking to fund projects such as the engineering and design costs for the water expansion project through other sources.

5. Re-Opened Public Hearing- Proposed Fiscal Year 2025-2026 Budget

Mayor Fitzsimmons re-opened the Public Hearing after the Fiscal Year 2025-2026 budget summary and updates. No one elected to speak, and Mayor Fitzsimons closed the public hearing.

6. Town Council Questions, Discussion, and Direction

Councilmember Jackson stated that with the economic uncertainty at the federal level this year, to be prudent for those on fixed income he is in favor of a conservative 2-cent tax increase.

Councilmember Cordell disagreed and said that a 2-cent increase is not enough. She discussed providing an employee COLA with the increase in health insurance, the loss in home values, and the

population is expected to double, she recommends a full 4-cent tax increase. Taxes have not been raised in 10 years. Council member Cordell was not in favor of using Fund Balance for the needed fire truck apparatus or for funding other future plans.

Councilmember Wood was not in favor of a 4-cent tax increase as Buncombe County is expected to increase taxes. Council member McGuire said next year is the property re-evaluation, so he cautioned increasing taxes this year. Mayor Fitzsimmons said the Town is in good shape with the fund balance "savings account".

Mayor Fitzsimmons asked for a straw poll with four members in favor of a 2-cent increase, and three members in favor of a higher increase (members Cordell, Chase, and Lawrence).

Vice Mayor Chase reviewed the costs and future expenditures such as the street improvement and paving program and future long-term planning for emergency services. Council member Cordell suggested a compromise at 3-cents although she was in favor of 4-cent increase.

In response to questions, Town Manager Harris clarified the status of a new rescue truck, which included the ordering process, the vendor, the manufacturer timeline, funding, and locking in the price at the current rate.

Mayor Fitzsimmons recapped Council's consensus was to keep the tax increase at 2-cents, and to authorize order the rescue truck.

6. Adjournment

There being no further business and without objection, Mayor Fitzsimmons adjourned the meeting at 6:41 p.m.

P Fitzsimmons

Patrick Fitzsimmons, Mayor

Tamara Mercer

Tamara Mercer, Town Clerk