# BLACK MOUNTAIN TOWN COUNCIL MINUTES

**June 4, 2026 | Budget Work Session & Agenda Review Meeting | Time: 5:00 PM**

Town Hall Council Chambers | 160 Midland Avenue, Black Mountain, NC 28711

Black Mountain Town Council held their budget work session & agenda review meeting on Thursday, June 4, 2026, at 5:00 PM in the Council Chambers of Town Hall, 160 Midland Avenue, Black Mountain, NC 28711.

## 1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor C. Michael Sobol called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. with the following Council Members in attendance: Vice Mayor Archie Pertiller, Town Council Member Alice Berry, Town Council Member Larry Harris, Town Council Member Doug Hay, Town Council Member Ryan Stone.

The following staff members were present: Richard Hicks, Interim Town Manager; Scott Buffkin, Interim Assistant Town Manager; Wesley Barker, Town Clerk; Steve Parker, Police Chief; John Coffey, Fire Chief; Jamey Matthews, Public Works Director; Jacob Guiot, Recreation & Parks Director; Matt Begley, Budget Analyst; Chad Goins, Interim Project Manager; Laurel Mabery, Accountant; Greta Gibson, Revenue & Customer Service Supervisor.

***Town Council Member Alice Berry made a motion to add Closed Session to the agenda, pursuant to NCGS § 143.318-11(a)(6), following the agenda review. A vote of 5-0 in favor.***

## 2. JUNE 8, 2026 COUNCIL MEETING AGENDA REVIEW

The draft agenda for the June 8, 2026 Town Council meeting was reviewed. The following changes were suggested to the agenda:

- Remove "Public Safety Building Presentation by McGill Associates & Moseley" from Communications from Staff
- Switch the order of the items "Adoption of Revised Street Dedication Application & Policy" and "Petition to Dedicate Brookhaven Drive."
- Move the "Acceptance of Water Line Infrastructure within Sweet Birch Commons for Town Ownership & Maintenance to Consent Agenda.

***Vice Mayor Archie Pertiller made a motion to approve the June 8, 2026 agenda as amended. A vote of 5-0 in favor.***

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**CLOSED SESSION: N.C.G.S. § 143-318.11 (a)(6)**

The Town Council would now enter closed session pursuant to N.C.G.S. § 143-318.11 (a)(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; or to hear or investigate a complaint, charge, or grievance by or against an individual public officer or employee.

***Town Council Member Ryan Stone made a motion to enter closed session pursuant to NCGS 143-318.11 (a)(6). A vote of 5-0 in favor.*** *The time was 5:14 p.m.*

***Town Council returned from Closed Session at 5:21 p.m. and moved to the next item on the agenda.***

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**3. BUDGET WORK SESSION FOR FY26-27**

Town Council then began continued discussion on the FY2026-27 budget. Interim Town Manager Richard Hicks first reviewed water supply generation from the town wells in CCF (centrum cubic feet) and how much it would equate to the rate that the City of Asheville charges the Town for wholesale water per CCF. This was a request from Council to determine the water cost that the Town produces from wells compared to what the City of Asheville's cost to supply water to the Town is. Mr. Hicks stated after doing the math, there is not much of a difference in cost if the Town produces the water, compared to what the Town pays Asheville for wholesale. Documentation highlighting this is attached at the end of these minutes.

The next items presented by Mr. Hicks were recommendations to balance the General Fund budget. These included the following and amounts (salary amounts also includes benefits):

- One year freeze on the Assistant Town Manager position - $181,450
- One year freeze on the Project Manager position - $121,312
- Eliminate the Public Information Officer position - $112,932
- Eliminate "Town position number 1" (not identified because this position has someone in it currently) - $102,071
- Eliminate "Town position number 2" (not identified because this position has someone in it currently) - $81,947
- One year freeze on vacant Police Officer position or budget salaries at 95% - $82,659
- One year freeze on vacant Public Works position (1/2 paid out of GF) - $33,717
- Transfer $155,999 from Hurricane Helene Fund to General Fund to pay police car debt due 8/24/26 - $155,999
- Transfer $126,000 from Hurricane Helene Fund to General Fund to pay Town Square debt due 10/16/26- $126,000
- Change the policy on credit card fees - $30,000
- Eliminate funding for community organizations for this year - $24,000

- Fund Balance appropriation to be zeroed out within 90-120 days from additional staff recommended cuts - $100,000. Staff would be asked to identify $100,000 in general funds of items that could be cut.
- Eliminate Town's share of RMS/CAD from Buncombe County - $126,775 (this has been moved to next FY).

Other items noted that would need to be budgeted for would be a $40,000 shortfall in the IT budget as the need to ramp up cyber security is an important need, $56,184 additional contribution to the Fire Dept. budget, and a 3% salary increase (COLA) for staff beginning July 1, 2026, $132,000. When all these positives and negatives are added up, it gives a savings of $914,951.

Additional recommendations are to increase the green fees at the Golf Course (averages $7/round) which will bring in about $154,000 for 22,000 rounds. Proposed increase to solid waste fees by $3.50/month that brings in about $156,000/year. A proposed tax increase of two cents would bring in an additional $526,691.

**Fire Department Budget Adjustments**

$100,000 transfer from Fire Fund to General Fund to cover administrative costs. An option is to freeze one firefighter position for a savings of $80,240 or remove the part-time salaries out of the budget at same amount. Delete drone purchase from budget - $18,000.

Mr. Hicks then stated he is proposing the following salary adjustments to keep the Town from losing firefighter staff to other agencies:

- 15 firefighters/engineers - $10,000 salary increase ($150,000 total)
- 6 Lieutenants - $5,000 salary increase ($30,000)
- 3 Battalion Chiefs - 3% salary increase ($6,900)
- Chief, Assistant Chief, Fire Inspector - 3% COLA increase ($7,660)
- Fringe benefits - 0.3511 ($68,400).

These adjustments total $264,720. Buncombe County's share is 41%, which would amount to $108,535, and the Town's share is 59% which would amount to $135,007.

**Water Fund Budget Adjustment Proposals**

- Eliminate Position 1 (not identified because this position has someone in it currently) - $67,630
- 1 year freeze on vacant Public Works position (1/2 paid out of Water) - $33,717
- Change policy on credit card fees - $36,000
- Delay promissory note on lead/copper loan - $100,000
- 3% salary increases/salary adjustment - (-$20,000)
- Fund Balance appropriation to be zeroed out within 90-120 days of budget adoption - ($20,000)
- Increase water base rate from $6.14/month by $7.00 to $12.14/month - $356,496
- Increase use rate by $0.18 per 100 gallons - $325,812

Mr. Hicks explained, with the increase water rate and use rate, that the total cost per month

to the customer for 5,000 gallons would be $16.00. Mr. Hicks then reviewed what the total impact on residential customers would be with this proposed budget. With a 2-cent tax increase on a $500,000 house, taxes would increase by approx. $100; a $3.50 solid waste fee increase/month would be $42 extra per year; water rate increase for 5000/gallon per month customer would have a $16 increase, or $192 increase annually. This brings total annual increase to $334, or $27.83 additional per month.

Some other discussions ensued on solid waste fees, the water system costs on maintenance, water operator contract, and the proposed budget, noting the difficult year and tough decisions having to be made.

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**4. CONSIDERATION OF ELECTRONIC PAYMENT POLICY**

At the May 11, 2026 Town Council meeting, information was presented to the Council on electronic payments and associated fees that Town departments currently accept using several vendors. It was discussed that based on current fees, the Town will more than likely absorb more than $50,000/year in electronic payment fees. This is a benefit that is only provided to people that choose to pay by debit or credit card, but the cost is borne by all the ratepayers and taxpayers. Staff recommended that the Town change its current protocol, and transfer the fees to the consumer, and create an official policy for electronic payments. Council voted to authorize town staff to create an Electronic Payment Policy to impose fees on electronic payments, and to present the draft at an upcoming meeting as it would affect the FY26-27 budget. Greta Gibson, Customer Service & Revenue Supervisor, presented the draft policy to the Council for consideration, which, if approved, would become effective July 1, 2026.

***Town Council Member Alice Berry made a motion to approve the following resolution as presented. A vote of 5-0 in favor.***

**A RESOLUTION ADOPTING AN ELECTRONIC PAYMENT POLICY FOR THE TOWN OF BLACK MOUNTAIN**
**RESOLUTION NO. R-26-49**

**WHEREAS,** North Carolina General Statute§ 159-32.1 authorizes local governments to accept electronic payments, including credit cards, debit cards, electronic funds transfers (EFTs ), automated clearing house (ACH) transactions, and other forms of electronic payment for taxes, fees, utility bills, and other obligations owed to the local government; and

**WHEREAS,** North Carolina General Statute § 159-32.1 further authorizes local governments to assess and collect convenience fees, transaction fees, negotiated discount rates, or other authorized charges associated with electronic payment processing in order to offset the costs of providing such payment services; and

**WHEREAS,** the Town Council of the Town of Black Mountain finds it to be in the best interest of the Town and its customers to establish a formal policy governing the acceptance of electronic payments and the assessment of associated processing fees; and

**WHEREAS,** the Town Council desires to adopt an Electronic Payment Policy that provides clear guidance regarding electronic payment transactions and the collection of processing fees.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** by the Town Council of the Town of Black Mountain, North Carolina, that the following Electronic Payment Policy is hereby adopted:

**TOWN OF BLACK MOUNTAIN ELECTRONIC PAYMENT POLICY**

State law (G.S. 159-32.1) permits local governments to accept electronic payments (credit cards, debit cards, EFTs) for taxes, fees, and utility bills. Under G.S. 159-32.1, local governments are permitted to charge users a convenience fee, transaction fee, or negotiated discount rate to offset processing costs, rather than absorbing these fees into the local budget.

This Electronic Payment Policy is applicable to transactions made online, in person, and automated payments made to the Town of Black Mountain.

In most cases, debit or credit card payments will be assessed the merchant processor's exact transaction fee. The fee will appear on the receipt as a separate and conspicuous amount.
In cases where the merchant processor is unable to pass the exact transaction processing fee to the customer; the percentage charged by the vendor, rounded to the nearest tenth, will be assessed to the transaction. The fee will appear on the receipt as a separate and conspicuous amount.

Payments made by ACH or electronic check may be assessed up to a $1.98 fee per transaction. The fee will appear on the receipt as a separate and conspicuous amount. Processing fees are paid to the vendor and will not be refunded to the customer.

There are no processing fees on refunded transactions.

Processing fees are passed on to the customer regardless of the payment amount. Vendor fees are subject to change without notice.

Effective Date. This Electronic Payment Policy shall become effective on July 1, 2026.

**ADOPTED this 4th day of June, 2026.**

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**5. ADJOURNMENT.** With no further business to be discussed, Mayor C. Michael Sobol adjourned the meeting at 6:30 p.m.

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C. Michael Sobol, Mayor

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Wesley M. Barker, Town Clerk