BLACK MOUNTAIN TOWN COUNCIL MINUTES

June 11, 2026 | Special Meeting + Budget Work Session Agenda | Time: 8:30 AM

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

Black Mountain Town Council held their special meeting + budget work session agenda on Thursday, June 11, 2026, at 8:30 AM 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 8:30 a.m. with the following members in attendance: Vice Mayor Archie Pertiller, Town Council Member Alice Berry, Council Member Larry Harris, Town Council Member Doug Hay, Town Council Member Ryan Stone,

The following staff members were present: Interim Town Manager Richard Hicks; Interim Assistant Town Manager Scott Buffkin; Town Clerk Wesley Barker; Police Chief Steve Parker; Fire Chief John Coffey; Public Works Director Jamey Matthews; Customer Service & Revenue Supervisor Greta Gibson; Assistant Public Works Director Tausha Millwood; Budget Analyst Matt Begley; Golf Course Manager Brent Miller; Senior Admin Jennifer Tipton.

The Mayor stated he would like to add Citizen Comment to this meeting agenda. The Council was in consensus to add Citizen Comment to the agenda.

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2. UNFINISHED BUSINESS.

2.A. Consideration of an Oak Tree Planting at Lake Tomahawk.

This item was tabled at the June 8, 2026 Town Council meeting but will be discussed at this meeting with more information to be provided by staff on questions raised by Council. The Swannanoa Valley Tree Alliance (SVTA), in partnership with Swannanoa Valley WILD, would like to plant one Shumard Oak Tree (approx. 3' 5" tall) at Lake Tomahawk Park, near the picnic pavilion. This tree coincides with the storybook "GROW Trail" (Greenway Read Outloud Walking Trail) around Lake Tomahawk, and a new book installation will also take place entitled "Thank you, Old Oak" by Britt Crow-Miller. Public Works has identified that this is a suitable location for the tree, away from any water lines, and there are no other utilities in this area that would interfere. If approved, a special tree planting community event is planned for Sunday, June 14th at Lake Tomahawk.

After some Council discussion on locations, ***Town Council Member Doug Hay made a motion to place this oak tree around the playground at Lake Tomahawk and if this option is not good, an alternative option is the north-east corner of the pavilion, nearest the walkway, per the map view indicated below. A vote of 5-0 in favor.***



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3. NEW BUSINESS.

3.A. Consideration of Public Safety Temporary Triple Wide Modular Units Placement

Over the past several weeks, staff has continued working diligently on options to address the displacement of public safety personnel. We have successfully purchased the triple-wide modular unit from Hendersonville and are now moving into the planning and set-up phase, which involves a few logistical considerations. Police Chief Steve Parker provided Council with the options that have been discussed, along with the benefits and challenges associated with each location.

Option 1: Lower Parking Lot (State Street/Richardson Boulevard).

- Benefits:
  - Flat site, which significantly simplifies installation.
  - Close proximity to electrical service, reducing infrastructure costs and installation time.
  - Allows Honeycutt Street to remain open for parking, Splash Pad access, and public safety vehicle ingress and egress.

- Maintains efficient access for Fire, Police, and EMS operations.

➢ Challenges:
- Loss of parking spaces.
- Visual and aesthetic concerns due to the modular unit's visibility in the lower lot.

Option 2: Honeycutt Street Location.

➢ Benefits:
- Close proximity to existing water and sewer infrastructure.
- Preserves parking availability in the lower lot.

➢ Challenges:
- Significant slope creates additional site preparation requirements and costs.
- May hamper ingress and egress for larger fire apparatus and other emergency vehicles.
- Electrical service is further away, requiring additional infrastructure and expense.

From an operational standpoint, Public Safety personnel would prefer the lower parking lot option due to ease of installation, lower overall costs, and reduced impact on emergency response operations. However, we recognize that visual perception and community aesthetics are important considerations. Council members and staff discussed these options and also discussed an options of placement of a unit near Station 2 on White Pine Dr. which could be used as a future substation for the BMPD later on. This item will be researched some more and brought back to the Council at an upcoming meeting.



The Mayor then discussed status of the Public Safety building, core samples, engineers, and

reporting.

CITIZEN COMMENTS.

- Janice Johnston from The Settings spoke about offering services of the Civil Engineer who works with The Settings to assist with the core samples at the Public Safety Building, stating they would take care of the cost of him coming to look at the building.
- Don Collins, 80 Camp Branch Rd., spoke about garbage fees, stating when his area was annexed into the Town they were promised free garbage pickup, and he also spoke about the proposed rate increase for FY27 and suggested instead to start charging a higher tax rate in order to balance the budget.

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4. BUDGET WORK SESSION FOR FY26-27.

Interim Town Manager Richard Hicks led the Council through the next budget work session. First, he spoke on the status of the tax revaluation item in the General Assembly stating the bill passed the House last night and would probably be going to the Governor's office for signature soon. The first budget item discussed was the contributions to local community organizations/non-profits and leaving the $24,000 amount in the proposed budget. The Mayor spoke about the savings in each department once the budget was adopted and rewarding staff if they were able to eliminate certain expenses. Mr. Hicks then spoke about the positions that would be frozen, or eliminated, in the FY27 budget. These included a one-year freeze on the Assistant Town Manager position and Project Manager position; elimination of the Public Information Officer position, elimination of position 1 (currently filled and not disclosed for protection of the staff member), elimination of position 2 (currently filled and not disclosed for protection of the staff member), one year freeze on vacant BMPD position and one year freeze on the vacant Public Works position. Mr. Hicks stated department heads are encouraged to, within 30 days, instead of 60, find $124,000 in additional expenses to cut, but that it may take longer than 30 days.

Mr. Hicks then discussed the proposed tax increase, stating it is sufficient to cover the Town's expenses, so the Town is not in the same position next budget year, or the next. Mr. Hicks discussed the FEMA funds that are still due to be coming in over the next FY and the Fund Balance increases.

The water fund was next to be discussed. The current agreement with Ridgecrest for water has been for about fifteen years and the Town should negotiate a revised agreement, especially as it relates to water rate fees. Revenue would be coming in with the electronic processing fees that will become effective July 1, 2026.

The Fire Department items included a transfer of $100,000 to general fund to cover administrative expenses, reduction of part-time salaries by $80,240 and removal of the drone purchase. Proposed salary adjustments for competitiveness in the Fire Department included the following:

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- 15 Firefighters/Engineers - $10,000 increase each
- 6 Lieutenants- $5,000 increase each
- 3 Battalion Chiefs 3% salary increase each
- Chief, Deputy Chief, Fire Inspector- 3% salary increase each

Mr. Hicks also spoke on the Buncombe County match for Fire Department at 41%.

Mr. Hicks asked the Council to consider adopting the budget on June 30th, 2026, not June 15th after the public hearing to allow for more time to finalize the budget. A special meeting is already set for June 30th, 2026 at 8:30 a.m. at Town Hall.

The next item was concerning the Maintenance Building Design at the Golf Course. ***Council Member Larry Harris made a motion to amend the agenda for discussion of the Golf Course Maintenance Building design item. A vote of 5-0 in favor.***

Discussion ensued from Golf Course Manager Brent Miller, Mr. Hicks, and the Council. Items discussed included the location site(s), surveying and geotechnical. Moving forward on this project and not delaying was mentioned. The location of Byrd Inman Ln. was discussed, which was the previous site of the other building.

After additional Council discussion, Council Member Larry Harris made a motion to amend the agenda for discussion of the Golf Course Maintenance Building design item. A vote of 4-1 in favor. Council Member Alice Berry opposed.

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5. **CLOSED SESSION- N.C.G.S. 143-318.11 (A)(6).**
The Town Council would now enter into 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 Alice Berry made a motion to enter Closed Session pursuant to NCGS 143-318.11(a)(6) after a five-minute recess. A vote of 5-0 in favor. The time was 10:02 a.m.**

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6. **ADJOURNMENT.** The Council returned from Closed Session at 10:30 a.m. With no further business to be discussed, Mayor C. Michael Sobol adjourned the meeting.

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C. Michael Sobol, Mayor

Attest: _____
Wesley M. Barker, Town Clerk

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