Town of Woodfin
Town Council Meeting

Wednesday, January 29, 2026
8:30 am-5:00 pm

Town Council Retreat Minutes

Council Members Present

Mayor Jim McAllister
Council Member Dan Bowers
Council Member Ken Kahn
Council Member Johanna Young
Vice Mayor Elisabeth Ervin
Council Member Philip Cohen
Council Member Max "Chip" Parton

Town Staff Present

Shannon Tuch, Town Manager
Marie Biddix, Business Services Manager
Adrienne Isenhower, Projects & Facilities Director
Jacqui Boykin, Police Chief
Ricky Hurley, Planning Director
Gena Powers, Town Clerk / PIO

Mayor McAllister called the meeting to order at 9:00 A.M.

A. **Approval of the Agenda**
Council Member Cohen made a motion to approve the agenda. Council Member Kahn seconded the motion which passed unanimously, 6-0.

B. **Call to Order & Welcome** — 9:00 a.m.
- Opening Remarks – *Mayor McAllister*

Mayor McAllister welcomed everyone and introduced the facilitator.

C. **Introduction & Orientation** — 9:05 a.m. - *Lindsay Ray, facilitator*
- Facilitator Overview – *Lindsay Ray, facilitator*
- Tone Setting: Shared purpose, respectful discussion, forward focus

Facilitator Ray gave an overview of the Tone/Setting of the meeting.

- Icebreaker: 1) why did you choose public service? and 2) share something about yourself that others don't already know.

Council Members and staff answered the two icebreaker questions and shared a little bit about themselves.

- Expectations & Assumptions Check
- Review of Agenda & Ground Rules

Facilitator Ray went over the expectations, agenda and ground rules for the retreat.

- Manager-Council form of Government + Roles and expectations

Facilitator Ray reviewed various forms of government. She also reviewed roles of staff and council.

- Code of Conduct

Facilitator Ray reviewed Town Council Member expectations of each other and expectations of the Mayor, Vice Mayor and Town Manager. She also reviewed the Town Manager expectations of the Town Council.

D. State of Woodfin: 2025 in Review —9:49 am – *Shannon Tuch / Lindsay Ray*

- Presentation: Key Accomplishments & Ongoing Work
- Visual Timeline: Major milestones from 2020 to now.

Town Manager Tuch reviewed key accomplishments from 2021-2025 that align with the 2025 strategic priorities plan.

- Discussion:
    - What are we most proud of?
    - What goals/priorities should continue, evolve, or sunset in 2026?

Manager Tuch and Facilitator Ray led a discussion to answer the above questions.

[Morning Break – 10:15-10:30 am]

E. Financial Resilience & Recovery — 10:32 am

Financial Snapshot Presentation –*Shannon Tuch*

- FEMA Update:
    - Reimbursement timeline, what's been received, what's still pending.
    - Impact on General Fund

Manager Tuch supplied details and background information on the FEMA process and where the town stands at this point in the process.

- Fund Balance Health:
    - Current % of expenditures, target range, and LGC recommendation.
    - "How much is safe to spend without compromising Town stability?"

Manager Tuch gave an overview of why fund balance matters including protecting the town's ability to operate during emergencies, manage cash flow, and avoid costly borrowing. She also reviewed where we are now in regard to fund balance.

- Debt & Capacity Overview:
    - Current debt service (police vehicles, infrastructure, etc.).
    - Estimated capacity for new borrowing (what size project the Town could realistically finance).

Manager Tuch reviewed a debt snapshot for FY 2026.

F. Town Facilities & Future Space Planning —11:15 am

Overview of Current Facilities – *Adrienne Isenhower / Shannon Tuch*

- Town Hall, Public Works, Parks, Community Center
- Brief recap of prior facility discussion and studies

Manager Tuch introduced this section. Director Isenhower gave an overview of town owned facilities including the community center, public works building, salt shed, ball fields beside the community center, Roy Pope Park, Silver Line Park, Genea Maney Park (Community Garden), Riverside Park and the Wave, vacant properties that total less than one acre, and Town Hall. Manager Tuch gave a more in-depth explanation of the current conditions of the Town Hall. She also reviewed the Town Hall Feasibility Study.

- Scenario Decision: *Rebuild • Renovate • Relocate • Defer*
- Decision Path Exercise (Lotus Blossom) - *Lindsay Ray, facilitator*
    - Identify what information, if any, is missing to make a final Town Hall/Community Center decision.

Facilitator Ray introduced the decision path exercise-Lotus Blossom Activity. She facilitated the activity and instructed council members to state what information they still needed, to give staff directions to move forward with the Town Hall Project. Council members answered: cost and how to fund it, the amount of space needed, what kinds of construction methods that would allow us to build and then expand as needed, where will town hall be housed during construction to maintain services, final resolution on requiring adjacent properties, understand current and future economic conditions: will the tax base be sufficient to cover the cost of construction, are there parcels in town that would be available for a public/private partnership, what are the opportunity cost, and what is community support for this project?

    - Define milestones and accountability steps for 2026.

Facilitator Ray helped council members and staff define milestones and accountability steps for 2026 regarding town facilities including:

- a work session to review retreat questions-schedule after June 30, 2026.
- Identify funding cost 2027.
- having funding plans by FY 2027 budget work sessions and capital discussions.
- Develop estimated cost for improvement plan including all facilities-2028
- Opportunity cost-what can you not do if you do this.
- Plan for community input & engagement.

[Temperature Check – 12:00 PM]
Facilitator Ray asked what is working well today, what is missing, and if we need to adjust the agenda?

G. Lunch –Working Lunch

H. Strategic Priorities Exercise — 12:01 PM - *Lindsay Ray, facilitator*

- *Pre-work:* Brainstorm emerging needs and ongoing priorities.
- "4-Quadrants" follow-up — place priorities on a matrix (High Impact / High Feasibility).

Facilitator Ray and Manager Tuch introduced the strategic priorities exercise and gave council members instructions. Council members placed emerging needs and ongoing priorities they identified in one of four quadrantes:

- **High Impact/Low Feasibility:**
    - Reduce debris and contamination in FBR during future flooding events. (CP)
    - PACE, staff, and Council developing a prioritized list of projects in the Woodfin pedestrian bike study that we just approved and working on securing funding for one of them. (PC)
    - Resiliency and community hubs. (CP)
    - Accessible Community Housing (KK)
    - Pursue the "Sovern Shield" concept aggressively. (KK)
    - Council and staff developing a multipronged communication plan to consult with a wide range of Woodfin residents in spring 2026 on what, if any, critical priorities would justify a modest property tax increase. (PC)
    - Reach and have more residents sign up for TextMyGov town messages. (EE)

- Addressing status of dilapidated housing/structures.

- **High Impact/High Feasibility**
  - In-house development services. (CP)
  - Creating a Woodfin endowment managed by a local nonprofit such as the Community Foundation of Western North Carolina which manages endowments for a number of nonprofits. (PC)
  - An expanded emergency home repair program with a community nonprofit partner like Habitat for Humanity that accesses several external funding sources. (PC)
  - Weaverville Road flood mitigation funding and construction. (EE)
  - Resume interest in placing Wi-Fi in parks. (JY)
  - Equipping officers with modern, quality equipment. (CP)
  - Complete repairs to Silver Line and Riverside Parks. (EE)
  - Complete Taylor's Wave and open it to river enthusiasts. (EE)
  - Work to establish a method to keep IPEX inventory on their property before the next flood. (EE)
  - Stream and riverbank stabilization. (CP)
  - Having the Warehouse Committee develop and publish an RFP for the development of the warehouse and grounds. (PC)
  - Complete update/modernization of all town policies and procedures, ordinances, etc. (EE)
  - Return parks to full use by all our residents. (EE)
  - IPEX fencing. (JY)
  - Make priority the cleanup/safety of dilapidated buildings in Woodfin. (JM)
  - Launch Taylor's Wave successfully. (KK)
  - Communications: Wildfire/Flash Flood Risk Awareness. (KK)
  - Complete Application for Woodfin specific Zip Code. (EE)
  - Re-evaluation of Water and Fire Districts. (CP)
  - Install Wi-Fi back in Roy Pope Park. (EE)
  - Increase and open our grants program to outside providers and interest of services to Woodfin. (JY)
  - Finishing of parks. (JY)
  - Creating an economic development advisory committee of Woodfin volunteers with expertise in this area that is not affiliated with the town. (PC)
  - Strengthen Woodfin's Unique Identity. (KK)
  - Use tax reappraisal to re-budget to tackle long-delayed items including street repair/paving. (JM)
  - Governance improvement Rules of the Road = Town Council excellence. (KK)
  - Make certain our police officers' salaries remain on the high end of area officers to retain and recruit the best. (EE)

- **Low Impact/Low Feasibility**
  - Alternative rideshare-type transportation. (CP)
  - Fostering a healthy environment in our limited commercial areas. (CP)

- **Low Impact/High Feasibility**
  - Modernizing communication and social media presence. (CP)

- Accounting for future economic issues when selecting priorities. (CP)
- LDO, evaluate current zoning considering impacts of SB3.2 and any impending NCG statutes. (CP)
- Involve Council and community leaders in active planning for when opening parks. (JM)
- Wildflower campaign to create a long-lasting pollinator corridor to and along the river. (JY)
- Turn old basketball court into a pocket garden/park. (JY)
- Having the Water Infrastructure Advisory Committee revise last year's West Woodfin user survey and distribute it through several channels. (PC)
- Establishing more community events to build sense of community. (DB)
- WOPD interface with Council/Mayor (KK)
- Staying informed on the Woodfin Greenway project that Buncombe County oversees now that Taylor's Wave is coming online in 2026. (PC)

Town Council Members and staff along with Facilitator Ray's direction discussed and categorized their priorities with the consensus of the group.

- Discussion on goal themes & priorities

I. **Grants & Funding Alignment** — 2:46 p.m. - *Shannon Tuch / Lindsay Ray*
- Overview of Active & Upcoming Grant Opportunities
- Small Group Discussion: Match FY2027 projects with funding sources.
- Report-out: Which funding pathways align best with our strategic priorities?

Facilitator Ray and Manager Tuch introduced this topic and explained how the small groups would be divided to discuss which funding resources align best with the strategic priorities. Manager Tuch facilitated a small group including Mayor McAllister along with Council Members Ervin, Parton, and Bowers; Director Isenhower facilitated a group including Council Members Cohen, Kahn and Young. Facilitator Ray gave each group priorities to focus on. The whole group came back together to share possible fund sources for strategic priorities discussed in small groups including grants, the general fund, privately funded and fee-based priorities. Council Members then voted on which top five strategic priorities they believed should be included in the 2026 Town Council Strategic Priority Goals.

J. **Afternoon Reflection & Temperature Check** — 3:48 p.m.
- Quick temperature gauge: "What's working well today?" "What's missing?"
- Adjust the pace or revisit topics if needed.

K. **Aligning Next Steps & Accountability** — 3:59 p.m.
- Confirm next steps for Town Hall decision process
- Assign council liaisons and check-in points for top 3–5 priorities
- Establish mid-year retreat or work session date
- Appreciation for staff support and facilitator guidance

Facilitator Ray tallied Town Council votes for each strategic priority and Manager Tuch will summarize councils' top priorities. Council identified 6 top priorities that they will be focusing on and identified council members that will be the liaison for each priority. They are as follows:

1) Revisit the town's Emergency Home Repair program – P. Cohen

2) Strengthening Woodfin's unique identity – D. Bowers
3) Advancing the 'Sovereign Shield' concept – K. Kahn
4) Modernizing the Woodfin Police Department – M. Parton
5) Town Hall & facilities – J. McAllister
6) Completing Parks projects – E. Ervin & J. Young

L. Closing Reflection— 4:19–4:24 p.m.

- Facilitator summary of key themes and next steps
- **Closing Reflection Roundtable** – Of all the goals we have identified, which would you like to see as a headliner in the evening news? What would that headline be?
- Adjournment

Facilitator Ray summarized and reflected on the day's work and accomplishments. She then asked council members to answer the questions stated above.

M. Adjournment

Vice Mayor Ervin made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Council Member Parton seconded the motion, which passed unanimously, 6-0.

Mayor McAllister adjourned the meeting at 4:24 pm.

TOWN OF WOODFIN
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JUNE 1971
NORTH CAROLINA

James C. McAllister/Mayor

Attest: Gena Powers
Gena Powers/Town Clerk