

**TOWN OF VALDESE
TOWN COUNCIL PRE - AGENDA MEETING
JANUARY 27, 2025**

The Town of Valdese Town Council met on Monday, January 27, 2025, at 6:00 p.m., in the Town Council Chambers at Town Hall, 102 Massel Avenue SW, Valdese, North Carolina. The Council meeting was live-streamed on YouTube @townofvaldese. The following were present: Mayor Charles Watts, Mayor Pro Tem Gary Ogle, Councilwoman Rexanna Lowman, Councilwoman Heather Ward, Councilwoman Melinda Zimmerman, and Councilman Glenn Harvey. Also present were: Interim Town Manager Bo Weichel, Town Attorney Tim Swanson, Town Clerk Jessica Lail, and various Department Heads.

Absent:

A quorum was present.

Mayor Watts called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m., he offered the invocation and led in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

REVIEW AND DISCUSSION OF FEBRUARY 3, 2025 PRELIMINARY AGENDA:

UNDER NEW BUSINESS:

PUBLIC HEARING – PROPOSED NEW UNIFIED DEVELOPMENT ORDINANCE (UDO) Mayor Watts announced that the Public Hearings are scheduled for next week.

RESULT: MOVED WITHOUT OBJECTION TO THE NEXT MEETING ON FEBRUARY 3, 2025, AT 6:00 P.M.

PUBLIC HEARING – REZONING OF 401 MORGAN ST. SE, VALDESE Mayor Watts announced that the Public Hearings are scheduled for next week.

RESULT: MOVED WITHOUT OBJECTION TO THE NEXT MEETING ON FEBRUARY 3, 2025, AT 6:00 P.M.

ADOPTION OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT-INFRASTRUCTURE (CDBG-I) DOCUMENTS Sherry Griffin from WPCOG informed the Council that they will need to review and approve 13 separate documents related to the Berrytown Waterline Project grants.

RESULT: MOVED WITHOUT OBJECTION TO THE NEXT MEETING ON FEBRUARY 3, 2025, AT 6:00 P.M.

APPROVAL OF RFQ FOR ENGINEERING SERVICES FOR THE BERRYTOWN WATERLINE REPLACEMENT PROJECT Mayor Watts noted that the grant will cover the cost of engineering services, ensuring that this project comes at no expense to the Town.

RESULT: MOVED WITHOUT OBJECTION TO THE NEXT MEETING ON FEBRUARY 3, 2025, AT 6:00 P.M.

PRESENTATION OF FINANCIAL UPDATE FOR FISCAL YEAR ENDING JUNE 30, 2024 Mayor Watts stated that Lowdermilk Church & Co. will present this at the regular meeting.

RESULT: MOVED WITHOUT OBJECTION TO THE NEXT MEETING ON FEBRUARY 3, 2025, AT 6:00 P.M.

APPROVAL OF FY 25-26 AUDIT CONTRACT - LOWDERMILK CHURCH & CO., LLP Interim Town Manager Bo Weichel noted that this is the second year of the three-year contract, which has been approved by the LGC. The contract includes a minimal price adjustment of \$350, as outlined in the original proposal. Council agreed to place the item under the consent agenda.

RESULT: PLACED ON THE CONSENT AGENDA AT THE NEXT MEETING ON FEBRUARY 3, 2025, AT 6:00 P.M.

APPROVAL OF REQUEST FROM VALDESE AMERICAN LEGION LADIES AUXILIARY TO SELL ALCOHOL AT TOWN SPONSORED EVENT Council agreed to place the item under the consent agenda.

RESULT: PLACED ON THE CONSENT AGENDA AT THE NEXT MEETING ON FEBRUARY 3, 2025, AT 6:00 P.M.

APPROVAL OF REQUEST FROM WALDENSIAN STYLE WINES TO SELL ALCOHOL AT TOWN SPONSORED EVENTS Council agreed to place the item under the consent agenda.

RESULT: PLACED ON THE CONSENT AGENDA AT THE NEXT MEETING ON FEBRUARY 3, 2025, AT 6:00 P.M.

APPROVAL OF RESOLUTION WITHDRAWING LOVELADY RD SIDEWALK PHASE I PROJECT APPLICATION Interim Town Manager Bo Weichel noted at the last meeting, there was no action taken so this is the next step in the process. If the Council decides not to move forward with the project, adopting this resolution would be required to formally decline participation.

RESULT: MOVED WITHOUT OBJECTION TO THE NEXT MEETING ON FEBRUARY 3, 2025, AT 6:00 P.M.

BUDGET AMENDMENT – WAYNE OWENS GYMNASIUM GUTTER & FASCIA Interim Town Manager Bo Weichel explained that this Budget Amendment includes a repair cost not to exceed \$5,600 to address urgent issues at the Recreation Center. The gutter system above the bowling alley has caused water intrusion due to rotted fascia boards and a pulling gutter. While additional quotes are being sought, the amendment ensures repairs can proceed without delay.

Council discussed the significant investments made in the Community Recreation Center over the past five years, including approximately \$900,000 spent on renovations to the Wayne Owens Gym, locker rooms, etc. A request was made to compile a comprehensive report detailing the Town's total investment in recreation facilities, including contributions from the public to the agenda packet. Council agreed that this information should be presented as a separate agenda item rather than delaying the current repair request.

RESULT: PLACED ON THE CONSENT AGENDA AT THE NEXT MEETING ON FEBRUARY 3, 2025, AT 6:00 P.M.

Councilman Harvey made a motion to add an information item to review the total expenditures on Recreation facilities on Massel Ave in the past seven years, source of funds, and in general who uses those facilities, seconded by Councilwoman Ward. The vote was unanimous and carried.

ADDED – RECREATION DEPARTMENT EXPENDITURE OVERVIEW: 7-YEAR ANALYSIS TO THE FEBRUARY 3, 2025 MEETING

STATUS OF ONGOING OR APPROVED PROJECTS

- i. **Public Safety Facilities Update**
- ii. **Water Plant Upgrade Project/Lenoir Interconnect Project**
- iii. **FY 24 Year-To-Date Financial Results**
- iv. **Strategic Plan: Citizens Priorities**
- v. **Status of Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Plan**
- vi. **Town Manager Search Process**

RESULT: MOVED WITHOUT OBJECTION TO THE NEXT MEETING ON FEBRUARY 3, 2025, AT 6:00 P.M.

POTENTIAL VALDESE TOWN CHARTER AMENDMENT Councilman Harvey suggested considering an amendment to the Town Charter to change the Mayor's term from four years back to two years, as it was for 80 years prior to 2000. He noted that nearly half of the Town Council is up for election every two years and believes aligning the mayoral term with that cycle could be beneficial. While some towns in North

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Carolina elect all council members every two years, he acknowledged the learning curve for new officials. He encouraged input from both council members and citizens on the idea and welcomed public comments at the next meeting.

RESULT: MOVED WITHOUT OBJECTION TO THE NEXT MEETING ON FEBRUARY 3, 2025, AT 6:00 P.M.

FY 25-26 BUDGET PLANS AND SCHEDULE

- i. **Review of General Schedule** Interim Town Manager Bo Weichel reviewed the FY 25-26 Budget schedule.

Town of Valdese FY 25-26 Budget Preparation Schedule	
2025 Dates	Item
January 14-22	Department heads meet with Interim Manager for mid-year budget review. Budget kickoff with Interim Manager. Discuss big picture goals.
End of January	Interim Manager prepares formatted worksheets for each Department and distributes operating worksheet
February 6	Utility Fund CIP and Rate Study draft begins with meetings, data sharing, etc.
March 1	Department operational draft budget worksheet due (NCGS 159-10 requests due to Manager / Budget Officer before April 30)
March 11-14	Interim Manager reviews operating draft budget with each Department Head
March 18-28	Interim Manager provides feedback on operating and capital budgets and adjusts
End of March	Utility Fund CIP and Rate Study draft reviewed by Interim Manager in preparation for Budget Review #1
April 15-16	Budget Review #1 with Council (review services, employee benefits, etc.) Town Hall Council Chambers
mid April - early May	Feedback from Council during Review #1 incorporated into budget draft
May 12	Budget Review #2 with Council (present fined tuned budget draft)
mid May	Feedback from Council during Review #2 incorporated into proposed budget
May 23	Manager's budget message due for proposed budget
May 28	Proposed budget completed and submitted for June agenda packet Proposed budget is also delivered separately to Council to meet NCGS 159-11 (NCGS 159-11 Budget with budget message shall be submitted to governing board no later than June 1)
June 2	Council Meeting-Budget Presented to Council and Set Public Hearing Date (Time/Place of public hearing to be published with budget information available to the public)
June 23	Council Meeting-Budget Public Hearing and Budget Ordinance Adoption (NCGS 156-13 Not earlier than 10 days after the day the budget is presented to the board and not later than June 30th, the Board shall adopt a budget ordinance)

Councilman Harvey requested that Council receive a year-to-date budget numbers every month, as they are available for here on.

- ii. **Plan for Review of Budget-Related Employee Benefits: Payroll Plan, Position Vacancies, Group Insurance Premium, Etc.** Interim Town Manager Bo Weichel stated that this information would be discussed during the Budget meetings, as the necessary figures are not yet available. Councilman Harvey asked when the Council had to decide on the health insurance premiums. Mr. Weichel clarified that the decision would be made in April when the insurance broker presents their recommendations during a Budget meeting.
- iii. **Other Budget Planning Considerations** Councilman Harvey expressed a desire for department head presentations during Budget meetings to focus less on past

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accomplishments and more on future planning. He emphasized the need for discussions on cost-saving measures, efficiency improvements, and ways to enhance services without increasing expenses. He encouraged a shift from simply listing departmental wants, such as new vehicles or equipment, to exploring innovative approaches for delivering services more effectively within existing budgets. Harvey requested that department heads be encouraged to adopt this forward-thinking mindset in their presentations. Mr. Weichel asked if Council wants Department Heads to present this year because last year, he did all the presenting. Council is going to think on what they want.

RESULT: MOVED WITHOUT OBJECTION TO THE NEXT MEETING ON FEBRUARY 3, 2025, AT 6:00 P.M.

Councilwoman Ward noted that she has received inquiries about road conditions following multiple water line breaks caused by extreme cold. She specifically mentioned concerns about a road near River of Life Church and other areas where repairs have left rough patches. She asked if there is a timeline for road repairs after water line breaks and acknowledged the challenge of maintaining roads with frequent patchwork repairs. Mr. Weichel explained that as temperatures fluctuate, the ground shifts, which contributes to water line breaks. Mr. Weichel explained that patch repairs depend on weather conditions and the need to coordinate multiple patches before repaving. Mr. Weichel emphasized the importance of replacing water lines before repaving streets.

INTERIM MANAGER'S REPORT Interim Town Manager Bo Weichel will report at the February 3, 2025, meeting.

TOWN MANAGER PRESENTATION Anthony Starr, Executive Director from WPCOG provided an overview of the town manager search process. He emphasized that the COG (Council of Governments) would facilitate the process but not make hiring decisions. Their role includes handling logistics, advertising the position, collecting applications, screening candidates based on Council-established criteria, and organizing interviews. The Council will receive all applications but will be presented with the top 8-10 candidates for further consideration.

Mr. Starr reminded Council that, per state law, candidate information must remain confidential to avoid legal liability. The COG will assist in structuring interview questions, coordinating background checks, and guiding the selection process but will not engage in negotiations. Typically, the Mayor and Town Attorney handle contract negotiations.

A sample timeline was provided, estimating interviews in April-May and final selection by summer, with a new manager starting in late summer. Advertising options were discussed, ranging from local postings to a full national search, with costs varying based on reach. The COG has extensive experience conducting executive searches for local governments, including town and city managers, attorneys, and department heads. Mr. Starr concluded by inviting Council questions on the process.

Council discussed the town manager search process, including costs and advertising options. The base fee for services is \$3,500, with additional costs for background checks, advertising, and other expenses. The price for a statewide search is approximately \$125, while a national search ranges from \$1,800 to \$2,100, depending on advertising options.

Councilman Harvey emphasized the importance of "selling" the town to potential candidates, particularly those from out of state. It was noted that previous searches lacked engagement beyond the hiring decision, and efforts should be made to make the town appealing throughout the process. Mr. Starr advised that attracting strong candidates requires proactive efforts to showcase the town as a desirable place to work and live, especially in a competitive hiring environment. Mr. Starr highlighted a statewide shortage of town manager applicants and a general increase in turnover, particularly following municipal elections. It was noted that Western North Carolina may experience higher turnover rates due to challenges like disaster recovery and economic fluctuations.

At 6:46 p.m., Councilman Harvey made a motion to go into closed session, seconded by Councilwoman Ward. The vote was unanimous.

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- Closed Session Pursuant to NC General Statute 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.

At 7:20 p.m., Councilwoman Lowman made a motion to return to open session, seconded by Councilwoman Zimmerman. The vote was unanimous.

APPROVED TOWN MANAGER SEARCH CONTRACT Councilman Harvey made a motion to hire WPCOG to undertake a Town Manager search, with the contract to be finalized between WPCOG, Attorney Swanson, and the Mayor, seconded by Councilwoman Ward. The vote was unanimous.

ADJOURNMENT: At 7:21 p.m., there being no further business to come before Council, Councilwoman Lowman made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Councilwoman Zimmerman. The vote was unanimous.

Town Clerk

Mayor

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