



**TOWN OF WADESBORO
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
WADESBORO TOWN COUNCIL
COUNCIL MEETING ROOM
205 EAST MORGAN STREET, WADESBORO, NC 28170**

Monday	May 5, 2025,	5:00 P.M.
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OPENING OF MEETING

Mayor Fred Davis called the meeting to order at 5pm and presided.

Councilmembers in attendance are as follows: Lawrence Parsons, Jo Ann Bennett, Garrett Snuggs, Chipper Long, Ida Cason and Town Attorney Aaron Bates.

Department Heads in attendance are as follows: Fire Chief Scott Martain, Finance Officer Maureen Mason, Public Works Director Hugh James. Absent Interim Chief Jason Eschert.

INVOCATION

Pastor Michael Chambers

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Councilmember Chipper Long made a motion and Councilmember Lawrence Parsons seconded the approval of the agenda Motion approved by a vote of 5 for and 0 against.

CONSENT AGENDA

Councilmember Lawrence Parsons made a motion and Councilmember Jo Ann Bennett seconded the approval of minutes from April 7, 2025. Approval of Street Closure Resolution for Bearcat Pride 5K and Motion approved by a vote 5 for 0 against.

RECONGNITION AND PRESENTATION

Town council members recognized and presented plaques to retirees Charlie Henry with 22 years and Hugh James with 27 years of dedicated service with the Town of Wadesboro.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Gloria Mae Stewart from 305 Liberty Street addressed her concerns on an overgrown property at 306 Liberty Street. A letter will be sent to the property owner.

Bobby Usrey from 133 Highland Drive addressed his concerns on the proposed budget 3% tax increase and said that it's the council responsibility to provide better life for the citizens of Wadesboro and feels that has not occurred in the past months. Mr. Usrey recommended to the council before considering a tax increase to put tax on the 3 individuals where they live now, require the 3 individuals to move in the city limits, and ask for the 3 individuals' resignation or termination. (The 3 individuals Mr. Usrey is speaking of are Town Manager Wiley Ross, Finance Officer Maureen Mason and Interim Police Chief Jason Eschert due to them not living within the city limits).

Stephen Simpkins addressed the council on starting a conversation and securing a property that will bring a minimum of 150 jobs to Wadesboro.

Vancine Sturdivant from 10140 US Hwy spoke with the council on her nonprofit organization and wanted to thank Town Manager Wiley Ross, Councilmembers Garrett Snuggs, Jo Ann Bennett, Ida Cason and Lawrence Parsons for the donations as well as helping with Mrs. Sturdivant nonprofit organization.

Jerel Miller from 1355 N Greene Street Apt.6H addressed council members on K9 blitz but due to insults that were directed towards the Town Manager and Interim Chief Mr. Miller was asked to leave.

Joan Taylor from 109 Covington Street emailed and delivered copies of ordinances to the Town Attorney and Town Manager and would like an update on her request. Ms. Taylor was informed that the town is updating the ordinances.

PRESENTATION FROM APOSTLE MICHAEL CHAMBERS

Apostle Michael Chambers along with his daughter and colleague presented council members with a brief history of JR Faison with a proposal and partnership with the town for a recreational facility at JR Faison School.

OLD BUSINESS

Councilmember Chipper Long made a motion and Councilmember Garrett Snuggs seconded the approval of CDBG Compliance Plans. Motion was approved by a vote of 5 for 0 against.

Finance Officer Maureen Mason discussed with council members the annual operating budget for FY 25-26. We are proposing an increase in property taxes of .55 cents to .616 per \$100. That works out to raise for the town possibly \$239,000 which will affect the average taxpayers house average of \$100,000 total of \$60.00 a year it will cost the taxpayers \$60.00 a year. We also projected increase in tax collection as you know over the last nine months Mr. Ross and I have met with the county numerous to get them moving on increasing what they collect for us as you know from the audit that was presented by a couple of months ago our tax collection rate was 87.15% but I budgeted 92% because we are not allowed to budget more than what we've collected for previous year. As of right now the county is saying that they have collected 94% and there has been great proof. We are projecting an increase in collection of property taxes. We are also projecting an increase in tax collection revenue which is due to Mr. Ross soliciting 325 customers that are currently outside the city limits that are receiving water from the town with 125 customers accepting to have their trash picked up. letters and forms are prepared and ready to go.

Mrs. Mason said that she has looked at the administrative budget and we are allowed to receive allocations from water and sewer for a portion of the services. Mrs. Mason is projecting an increase of 180,888.00 to be moved for a total of 330,888.00 to be moved over from the water sewer fund to the general fund for reimbursement of expenses incurred by the administration department for water sewer, which would be a portion of everyone's salaries utilities in town hall and other expenses. With the projected increase in revenue, we are still looking to allocate 300,452.00 of funds to balance the budget which is a decrease from 59,000 from the current budget. With expense, there are some positions that are not being filled and are not planning to fill. A 3% cola is being proposed across the board for staff that did not receive a raise last year along with a grant writer position. As of now we are budgeting conservatively.

Mrs. Mason also spoke for the projective saving from general funds for medical insurance 136,000.00 which includes 13 retirees that are receiving full insurance from the town. Also, we have an expense for retirees that are receiving Medicare, and the town is paying for their supplement. The county will be proposing an additional water rate increase of 12%. There is also a proposed increase in the service the city provides. Mrs. Mason stated that fund balance should not be used to balance the budget. However, it is going to be coming for restricted fund balance for a capital purchase for the Police Department \$25,000 for one-time purchases or emergency fund balance is acceptable. What I'm reading off is I'm feeling very comfortable with fund balance For these reasons \$15,000 from capital purchased from assets from arrest for the Police Department \$25,000 small for supplies for assets for assets in arrests from the restricted fund balance \$5000 for the administration department for a one time purchase to get the correct order in office so computer desk chairs monitors and some very strange modifications to one of the ones that town has to give the person a private office our mother \$1000 administration for the one time consulting services for the compensation and the policy revisions that were discussed earlier for the ordinances and policies and such as that so that's a one-time purchase that it is a good use of fund balance \$18,000 for the fire department mandatory RMS software upgrade per federal government guidelines that is 1/2 to one time purchase \$15,000 Fire Rescue broken hardware one time purchase and if that does not get funded we will lose our North Carolina State heavy rescue certification \$16,000 of you're actually getting ready to approve today of a budget amendment transferring from the special project plus fund so that money is going to be going to the general fund if you will approve it and so \$16,000 of upgrades and beautification that is in this budget will be used from fund balance that means \$199,052 that we will be using fund balance for to balance the budget.

NEW BUSINESS

Councilmember Chipper Long made a motion and Councilmember Lawrence Parsons seconded the approval to apply for a 850,000.00 North Carolina Commerce Grant for Downtown Revitalization. Motion was approved by a vote of 5 for 0 against.

Councilmember Chipper Long made a motion and Councilmember Lawrence Parsons seconded the approval for Sale of Surplus Property Resolution. Motion was approved by a vote of 5 for 0 against.

Councilmember Chipper Long made the motion and Councilmember Garrett Snuggs seconded the approval of Audit Recommended Fund Transfers. Motion was approved by a vote of 5 for 0 against.

Councilmember Chipper Long made a motion and Councilmember Lawrence Parsons seconded the approval of Proposed Budget Amendments. Motion was approved by a vote of 5 for 0 against.

Councilmember Garrett Snuggs made a motion and Councilmember Chipper Long seconded the approval of Additional Budget Amendments and Project Budgets. Motion was approved by a vote of 5 for 0 against.

TOWN STAFF REPORT

FIRE CHIEF SCOTT MARTIN – Updated council on upcoming WFD Summer Camp from June 9-13 from 9am to 12pm with 23 kids signed up so far with the max being 30 kids. Chief Martin also said that so far 3750.00 has been raised for the summer camp. Saturday June 7 will be Smoke Alarm Saturday and the WFD will be going to several areas in the community to install smoke alarms.

PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR HUGH JAMES – Updated council on the Splashpad with concrete being poured and working on wiring the building. Mr. James said that hopefully by the end of the week the structural part will be finished. Guardrail was installed last week on Maple Lane. Mr. James also said the projects are on the books that have not been started yet with one being the Burn Street Pump Station. Mr. James gave appreciation to the Town for the many years he has worked.

FINANCE OFFICER MAUREEN MASON - Gave a synopsis of the reports that were given for March. Revenue collected so far 66.4% of our revenue compared to 70% last year. There's a drop this year because if you recall last year in March, we transferred \$1.5 million from the ARPA funds to general fund to cover for the police salaries which was the reason for the increase.

69.7% was expenditure compared to 64.8% at the same time last year with our expenses being a little higher. Despite this improvement, expenditure currently exceeds revenue by \$214,500 with part of that 214,500 with an update next month could have been for one-time purchases.

Last year's budget deficit would have been a million dollars had we not transferred ARPA money we are sure about 77.8% completed revenue has been collected while expenditures are only 53%, 56% revenue is exceeding expenditures by 734,000. Cash and investments we have \$8.4 million between all our savings checking and CDs that's increase of \$844,000 from last year with that figure rising.

North Carolina Cash Management came in last week and went over our accounts with us and they're anticipating at least for the next few months that the interest rate will be higher. Mrs. Mason also attached a little summary that you want the tax collections and as you can see right now based on the last tax roll that was received, we're at 95.6% collection rate so the county has made vast improvement.

INTERIM CHIEF JASON ESCHERT – In the absent of Mr. Eschert, Wiley Ross gave the report, which was 1,372 calls for service, 70 false alarms, 12 animal control, 141 business checks, 346 residential checks, 150 traffic stops, 5 stolen vehicles, 14 shots fired. 23 suspicion persons, 13 IVC, 13 domestic, 31 crashes, 34 arrests and 21 citations.

TOWN MANAGER WILEY ROSS JR. – Spoke on the last incident on the death of K9 Blitz with officers receiving death threats, going on radio runs with the Sheriff Department not backing the WPD up which is unacceptable. Mr. Ross said that folks may not like him or the council, but the bottom line is the WPD is protecting citizens.

Officer Teagues from the WPD began by reading off his prepared statement beginning with officers not feeling safe and morale at an all-time low we are operating in a severely understaffed environment which puts additional strain on their shifts and leaves little room for rest back up and proactive policing. The lack of community support compounds the stress many of us feel like working in neighborhoods were not trusted or respected no matter how much effort we make in trying to build relationships and do the right thing I mean we have officers are going out giving candy. We're doing the best that we can and feel as though we must tiptoe around crime just to properties public perception of a clear enforcement professionalism and respect are essential.

Officer Teagues also said that he would never disrespect by violating their rights, but it has created a culture of hesitation and uncertainty among all of law enforcement. Officers are afraid to make the necessary decisions because the risk of being scrutinized, punished or publicly vilified, is always looming especially with the recent events with our beloved K9. As Mr. Ross said, we have received threats. Officer Teagues said he arrested a guy and was constantly scrutinized threatened over K9 which we are still recovering from.

At the same time, we're being openly threatened taunted and disrespected by individuals who face little to no consequences their actions this environment not only compromise officer safety which is #1 it also weakens our ability to protect the public effectively. We need support from leadership, we need policies that don't leave us without feeling abandonment and if these

conditions persist, they will continue to drop good officers and there are good officers here away from the professional, leaving this community and other communities less protected and public safety increasingly at risk. We need real measurable immediate change and support from the from the top down and it's I can't speak to the Sheriff's Office I used to work for a Sheriff's Office and know if I see another officer struggling, I'm backing you up because officers' safety is #1.

Office Alexis Goins explained an incident that occurred at the Anson Inn. Officer Goins said that the Sheriff Office was called to assist due to suspect being combative. Officer Goins also said that it took a long time with 3 officers trying to handcuff the suspect with the Sherriff Office just standing there with a WPD Officer asking a Sherriff Deputy are they going to help with the deputy saying no and continued to stand and watch. Officer Goins again said that she understands that the deputies are employed by the Sherriff Office and must do what they must do and as Officer Teague stated earlier if a fellow officer needs assistance she will be helping.

Detective Sgt. Tamika Nolen also spoke on an incident that happened on July 9, 2023. At the time I was a patrol sergeant, and we have been so short staffed from before I got here to now. We were running it was me as a patrol Sergeant and one other officer and we saw that party and it was out of him but there was nothing because it was too many people. Two officers and then we have 3 deputies, and we came together there's only five of us we can't break that party up, we knew there were weapons we knew there were guns we had a plan. the plan right before shots fired. Multiple calls for shots fired multiple people hit multiple people hit. Officer Nolen said that with her being the only sergeant and the person in charge of the entire city had to make a decision.

Sgt. Nolen stated that she got on her radio and screen that she needed anybody within a 10-to-20-mile radius with a badge and a gun to come to help me. Marshville, Chesterfield, Rockingham, Wingate, Monroe came to aid. Sgt Nolen then stated that the question is, are they still going to come? Because at this point, nobody wants to have anything to do with the WPD and we are working extremely hard to serve this community but it's not going to last long if the WPD is not getting our help. We've got to take control of this Police Department because we're going to continue to lose officers, they're scared. I spent most of my years here in Wadesboro trying to help other people we're putting our lives on the line we're stopping our families we're missing things to help this community we're here because we want to be but who wants to be here if you're at risk of getting killed.

MAYOR AND COUNCIL COMMENTS- Councilmember Lawrence Parsons spoke on the disrespect that is being shown and said toward councilmembers and asked that citizens be respectful.

Councilmember Ida Cason spoke on getting along with one another and not seeing color and agree to disagree.

Councilmember Jo Ann Bennett spoke on how this council has been taking a lot a heat as opposed to previous council and change must start with board members not attacking one another along with putting information on Facebook about one another and if the board cannot come together, how are we to expect the citizens to come together.

Councilmember Garrett Snuggs addressed the officers in attendance by saying that he supports them 110%. He also stated that he would like to have a conversation about the issue that the officers are experiencing, whether it be social media and what things that can be done by the council to assist and that he sees the great job the officers are doing.

CLOSED SESSION – Councilmember Lawrence Parsons made a motion and Councilmember Jo Ann Bennett seconded to go into closed session to discuss the following - NCGS 143-318.11(a)(6) to consider the qualifications, competence, performance, condition of appointment of a public officer or employee or prospective public officer or employee NCGS143-138.11(a)(3) to consult with an attorney employed or retained by the public body in order to preserve the attorney-client privilege between the attorney and public body. Motion approved by a vote of 4 for 0 against. (Chipper Long left at 7:20pm)

Councilmember Lawrence Parsons made a motion and Councilmember Jo Ann Bennett second to come out of closed session. Motion approved by a vote of 4 for 0 against. Mayor Fred Davis stated council is back in open session.

Councilman Garrett Snuggs began the discussion with councilmembers on the censorship of Councilmember Chipper Long.

Councilmember Lawrence Parson stated to Town Attorney Aaron Bates what are councils legal right to censor Councilman Chipper Long. Town Attorney Aaron Bates stated that it would be up to council to pursue censorship.

Councilmember Garrett Snuggs made a motion and Councilmember Ida Cason made a motion to censor Councilmember Chipper Long. Motion was made by a vote 4 for 0 against.

Councilmember Chipper Long will publicly be censored at the upcoming council meeting on June 2, 2025

ADJOURNMENT – Councilmember Garrett Snuggs made a motion and Councilmember Ida Cason seconded to adjourn the meeting at 7:45pm. Motion approved by a vote 4 for 0 against.

Debbie A. Cox
Clerk to the Council
Town of Wadesboro