

**TOWN OF VALDESE  
TOWN COUNCIL PRE-AGENDA MEETING  
JANUARY 29, 2024**

The Town of Valdese Town Council met on Monday, January 29, 2024, 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, Councilman Glenn Harvey, and Councilman Paul Mears. Also present were: Interim Town Manager Bryan Steen, Town Attorney Tim Swanson, and various Department Heads.

Absent: Town Clerk Jessica Lail

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.

Mayor Watts said that we would be discussing the February 5, 2024 agenda and started under New Business.

**PRESENTATION OF HOYLE CREEK RESTORATION:** Parks and Recreation Director David Andersen shared that this presentation was presented to the Parks & Recreation Commission this past Monday. Mr. Andersen shared the following PowerPoint:

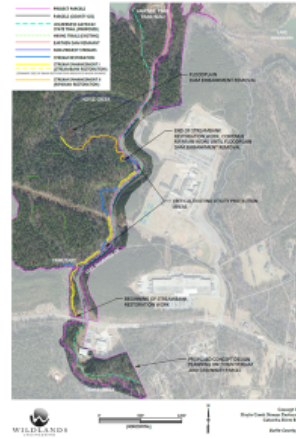
# **Hoyle Creek Stream Restoration and Sidepath Budget Allocation**

David Andersen, Director Parks and Recreation



## What are we talking about?

- State awarded Town of Valdese \$2.2 Million in current state budget for Hoyle Creek Stream Restoration and Sidepath
  - Direct Allocation supported by Rep. Blackwell
  - Funds from North Carolina Water Resiliency Fund administered by NC Department of Public Safety
  - Catawba Riverkeeper/ Foothills Conservancy Support Project
  - The allocation from the state helps enhance other current and future funding requests
  - No Town of Valdese funds required



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## Why is this needed?

- Improve resiliency during flood events
  - Flood mitigation
    - Shift water away from roadway
  - Decrease sediment deposits in stream and at Lake Rhodhiss
  - Protect sewer infrastructure
- Provide pedestrian and cyclist safe path
  - Move pedestrians and cyclists off of the road where school buses, trucks to wastewater plant, and park visitors drive
  - More natural path for visitors without having to venture deep in to the park
- Routine maintenance provided by town staff with funding from state funds specifically for state trail maintenance for any larger repairs.



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## Piece of the Pedestrian Puzzle

- Complete restoration and sidepath at one time to take advantage of economies of scale
- Sidepath identified in the 2016 WalkRCV pedestrian plan (page 51)
- Fits within 2023 CORE plan under Goal 1.3
  - *Advocate for and facilitate progress of state and regional trail projects.*
    - Part of larger Wilderness Gateway State Trail
    - Part of the Burke River Trail
- Funds can also be leveraged as matches for additional grant funding for trailhead
  - Parks and Recreation Trust Fund Grant
  - Recreational Trails Grant



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Councilman Mears asked if there would be additional parking added or if it was just a sidepath. Mr. Andersen answered that most of the cost would be for the stream restoration. Councilman Harvey asked how long the trail was and who owned the property. Mr. Andersen said it is approximately a mile long and

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all property of the Town of Valdese. Mr. Andersen shared that Representative Hugh Blackwell supported this in the recent budget allocation.

**RESULT: MOVED WITHOUT OBJECTION TO THE NEXT MEETING ON FEBRUARY 5, 2024, AT 6:00 P.M.**

**POOL ENCLOSURE DISCUSSION** Parks and Recreation Director David Andersen shared that the following PowerPoint presentation is just for informational purposes. Mr. Andersen went over the history of the pool bubble, its setup and takedown, temporary solutions, and possible options for the future. Mr. Andersen presented the following presentation:

Updated:  
1/23/2024

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## Valdese Pool Enclosure “The Bubble”

David Andersen, Director, Valdese Parks and Recreation

### Facility History

- Purchased from Yeadon Domes for \$126,230 in October 1999, first installed 2000.
  - Town Staff, BRIDGE crew, and volunteers install and take down every year (May, September).
  - Has allowed year-around operations for majority of its lifetime (some extended closures due to other projects)
- Charter Matrix Group, Inc. re-lined interior membrane in 2016.
  - Work was sup-par and was re-lined again in 2017 by WASA, Inc.
  - Total cost to the town for repairs was \$141,730.
  - Town had set aside funds annually that were utilized for re-lining.
  - No additional funds set aside after those 2016-2017 expenditures.
- Anchor system changed in 2016
- Several smaller repairs to doors and parts in inflation unit over the years
- Facility Hosts Following Programs:
  - Swim teams: Xcell Aquatics team, Draughn and East Burke High School teams (practices and meets), Special Olympics practices, Masters swim team
  - Swim lessons
  - Public and private parties
  - Aquacise classes
  - Special events: Senior Games swimming, water safety class for Valdese Elementary School 2<sup>nd</sup> graders, lifeguard trainings, kayak rolling
  - Year-around wellness and recreation opportunities and amenity

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## Facility History: Set Up/Take Down Process



- Staff prep for several days ahead of install/removal to stage and check systems/anchors
- Recommend 35 people (Staff, BRIDGE crew, volunteers) to pull Bubble
- 10-12 people to anchor and remove items from pool and remove second cover
- Annual material/tool costs: forklift rental, rope, replacement hardware
- Usually week-long closure to prep area for indoor/outdoor operations



## Recent History

- March 2023-September 2023: Burner/Air heater in the inflation unit had been inconsistent with operation. Contractor checked prior to install this September, and staff undertook requested fixes to assist with consistent heating operation. Contractor urged replacement of inflation unit due to rust, holes, and air loss.
- November 7: Dry-rotted area of the Bubble membrane broke free from anchor. After consulting with manufacturer and specialists, staff members were able to repair and re-open facility on November 10.
- November 21: After experiencing further inconsistent burner operation, staff observed significant failure to exhaust blower from burner.
- January 20, 2024: Membrane material ripped at repair site causing need to drop Bubble again. Closure of one week expected.



Consulted with reputable local HVAC company about possible re-weld or replacing unit.

### Concerns regarding repair/replace:

1. Metal integrity questionable due to rust
2. Fans would not be properly balanced if metal warped during welding
3. Wall plate where unit mounted is significantly rusted and contractor could not guarantee unit would stay in place if replacement ordered

Further, questions about possible carbon monoxide buildup or leaks were discussed due to insufficient exhaust and compromised cabinet integrity.



## Temporary Solutions Being Attempted:

### Anchors through Bubble Membrane at Inside Corner Tear

- Installed new anchors to provide additional support
- Cut holes in edge of membrane for anchors to pass through
- UPDATE: Tear in repair on 1/20 resulting in dropping Bubble until further, more extensive repair can happen

### Rent Indirect Heating Unit and Duct in to Bubble

- Air-supported structure specialists ducted heat in to the Bubble for supply
- 500 gallon propane tank installed on pool deck to fuel heater

### Repair Exhaust Blower

- Install supports for fan housing
- Install additional CO monitoring; run only with staff present to monitor
- High-heat caulk for crack on blower unit



## Summary of Points for Discussion

- Mechanical maintenance and repairs have led to shut downs or less than ideal conditions on deck (hot, cold, excessive humidity, fog, condensation), which has led to cancellation of programs.
- Bubble itself is showing rot and wear in various places.
- At 23 years old, it is well-beyond the expected life span of 10 years.
- How do we continue to operate year-around in a post-Bubble situation?



## Possible Solutions – Replace Mechanical Cabinet

- Budget Cost: \$170,000- \$190,000
- What's Included: New Mechanical Closet, Updated Generator
- CIP item for upcoming year, but requires 20-24 weeks lead time
- Pros:
  - Least Expense
  - Simplest Solution with regards to any design
- Cons:
  - Commits us to continued Bubble
  - Still have to undergo annual install and removal
  - Must take down after 180 days to satisfy "temporary structure" designation
  - Doesn't address Bubble material degradation which will likely cause more failures in the future



## Possible Solutions – Direct Replacement

- Budget Cost: ~\$421,000
- What's included: New Bubble membrane, new Mechanical, new doors
- Pros:
  - Most economical for immediate time
  - Familiar setup
  - Minimal work to retrofit
- Cons:
  - Still have to undergo annual install and removal
  - Must take down after 180 days to satisfy "temporary structure" designation
  - Still have to deal with possible collapse events that add to wear and tear
  - Replacement in another 10-15 years.

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## Possible Solutions – Retractable Permanent Structure

- Budget Cost: \$1.8 Million (before addressing needed site preparation)
- What's Included: Retractable transparent structure
- Pros:
  - Allows greater indoor/outdoor flexibility with quick transitions
  - Still gives "outdoor" feel when closed
  - No closures for install and removal twice a year
- Cons:
  - Upfront Expense
  - Specialized parts and maintenance
  - Potential loss of covered deck space
  - Down time to retrofit (roughly 2-3 months)



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## Possible Solutions – Fixed Permanent Structure

- Budget Cost: \$37/sq.ft. - \$60/sq. ft.
  - (For 12,300 sq.ft. before site prep: ~\$455,000-\$750,000)
- What's Included: Rigid Frame Structure with Heat and Fans for Summer, Doors/Side panels to open outside for ventilation and natural light
- Pros:
  - Lower annual operating costs
  - Ease maintaining systems with non-specialized equipment
  - No closures for install and removal twice a year
  - Reduction in pool chemical usage
  - Longevity (fabrics 12-15 years, some structures getting 18-20 years); frame made of aluminum so will stay up decades
- Cons:
  - Up front expense
  - Down time for retrofit



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## Funding Options- Ideally Utilize Three Streams

- Fund Balance
- Grant Funding from State
  - Parks And Recreation Trust Fund/Accessibility for Parks
    - PARTF 1:1 Match up to \$500,000 (provide up to \$500,000 to get up to \$500,000)
    - AP 1:5 Match up to \$500,000 (provide \$100,000 to get \$500,000)
    - Three Amenities, Comprehensive Plan helps score higher
      - Complete ramps to gymnasium and tennis court along with structure
- Private Sources/Donations



Councilman Harvey asked several questions: When we knew the bubble would wear out, why was there no plan to replace it? Why did we spend \$150,000 to replace a vent system to inflate and heat? How many citizens use the bubble? Do we need the full-size pool all winter long? What do our neighboring Towns do? We need data such as how many people use it and what it costs to heat and operate it. Are these our only options, and what impact will they have? Mr. Andersen shared that we have around 660 individual users that come in a month, but because we have had several interruptions with COVID, renovations, and now bubble issues, it is hard to capture accurate data. Councilman Harvey said he did not expect Mr. Andersen to answer all the questions tonight. Councilwoman Ward shared that she has had questions from citizens asking if the pool can be opened during the winter and what happens to their membership fees. Mr. Andersen said that the department offers extensions on memberships or credit towards renting one of the Parks & Rec facilities. Councilwoman Ward asked if we receive funds from the Burke County Public Schools or other entities that use it. Mr. Andersen said that Burke County Public School pays \$2,000 annually for two groups. The private aquatics club pays rent, and all swimmers have a membership.

**RESULT: MOVED WITHOUT OBJECTION TO THE NEXT MEETING ON FEBRUARY 5, 2024, AT 6:00 P.M.**

**PUBLIC SAFETY BUILDING** Assistant Town Manager Bo Weichel requested guidance from the Council on how they want staff to proceed with the existing Public Safety Building. Mr. Weichel asked if they want staff to go with an RFQ process for shoring up the building, get a structural architect to look at it again, ask the structural engineer from the past to look at it again, or other options. Councilwoman Lowman asked if Mr. Steen had any recommendations. Mr. Steen thinks we need to evaluate where we are and how we want to do that. Mr. Steen feels we have a few options: get a new structural engineer or ask the previous one to look at it again. Councilman Harvey asked if we could have an RFQ for a complete evaluation and design of a renovation to repair the building. Mayor Watts thinks getting a new set of eyes on the building would be a good idea. Mr. Weichel went through the RFQ process. Councilman Harvey would like to have a committee put together to help advise staff and Council members.

**RESULT: MOVED WITHOUT OBJECTION TO THE NEXT MEETING ON FEBRUARY 5, 2024, AT 6:00 P.M.**

**RECRUITMENT OF A TOWN MANAGER DISCUSSION** Interim Town Manager Bryan Steen shared that he contacted a group out of Virginia, and they charge 28% of the position's salary. Mr. Steen talked to a group in North Carolina and said depending on the Council's level of involvement, they would be between \$7,000 and \$25,000. Mr. Steen said we still have the WPGOG in the \$3,500 range. Mr. Steen shared that we can also post a job ad in different associations. Mr. Steen asked if the Council had a direction that he should pursue. Mr. Steen thinks it would be around July before we could get a manager hired if we start advertising in February. Councilwoman Lowman says utilizing the NCLM, ICMA, and the County Association/MPA would be a good start if we do not use the WPCOG. Councilman Harvey shared that

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there are different levels of support in using search firms. Mr. Steen will send the Council a Town Manager job description to review.

**RESULT: MOVED WITHOUT OBJECTION TO THE NEXT MEETING ON FEBRUARY 5, 2024, AT 6:00 P.M.**

**POTENTIAL VALDESE TOWN CHARTER AMENDMENT FOR FUTURE CONSIDERATION BY CITIZENS** Councilman Harvey shared this for citizens to consider for the future. Councilman Harvey shared that the other people who represent us, like the US House of Representatives, have a two-year term, and in the State of NC, we have two legislative bodies that have two-year terms. Councilman Harvey noted that the Mayor in the Town of Valdese used to be a two-year term but was changed in the year 2000. Councilman Harvey said there was a Town in Rolesville NC with all the Council members and the Mayor on two-year terms. Councilman Harvey shared that this came to light during this campaign season when the entire Council was campaigning, as well as some of the staff, and it may have some advantage by having the entire Council run for office every two years. Councilman Harvey said we could put that out to the citizens in the next strategic planning when we do it again.

**RESULT: MOVED WITHOUT OBJECTION TO THE NEXT MEETING ON FEBRUARY 5, 2024, AT 6:00 P.M.**

**CONSIDERATION OF APPROVAL OF CONTRACT FOR OLD ROCK SCHOOL RENOVATIONS** Community Affairs Director Morrissa Angi gave the Council an update on the project. Ms. Angi shared that on December 14, 2023, we hosted a pre-bid meeting with four construction firms (Gibson, Beam, Houck, Moss-Marlowe). They toured the Old Rock School and went through the outline of the construction portion. Ms. Angi had the pre-bid meeting on January 23, 2024, and two construction firms, Gibson and Houck, showed up to present bids. Ms. Angi noted that since only two firms were present, they could not open the bids. They had to be returned to contractors and then re-advertise the whole process again for a week. Ms. Angi shared that the second bid opening would be on January 30, 2024, at 2:00 pm, and if we only have two contractors at this meeting, the bids can be opened and presented at the February 5, 2024 Council meeting. Ms. Angi identified why the other contractors did not bid on the contract, Beam's lead project manager resigned, and Moss-Marlowe was not interested because the workload was too much for them at this time. Ms. Angi shared that Mark Sealy will present the bids and offer recommendations at the next council meeting. Assistant Town Manager/CFO Bo Weichel noted that legally, we have to accept the lowest bidder. However, the Architect will review those bids to ensure they meet all the specs and requirements.

**RESULT: MOVED WITHOUT OBJECTION TO THE NEXT MEETING ON FEBRUARY 5, 2024, AT 6:00 P.M.**

**FY 24-25 AUDIT PROPOSALS AND APPROVAL OF FY 24-25 AUDIT CONTRACT** Assistant Town Manager/CFO Bo Weichel shared that he went out for requests for proposals to Audit Firms. Mr. Weichel went over the structure of audit services:



# Structure of Audit Services

1. Audit examination of financial transactions and processes.
2. Reports to the Local Government Commission
  - Annual Financial Information Report (AFIR)
  - Data Input Worksheet
3. Financial Statements and Note Disclosures (per GASB 34).
4. Federal and/or State award compliance testing.
5. Submit all the above to the Local Government Commission for their review and approval.

Mr. Weichel completed a Request for Proposals (RFP) and did not get any responses, so he called several firms that the LGC recommended, and out of that, he only received three proposals. Mr. Weichel identified two that were similar in price. Mr. Weichel noted that one of them had a math error in her proposal, so he was concerned about that. Mr. Weichel recommends the current auditor, Lowdermilk Church & Co., in the amount of \$56,340, which is over a three year span. Councilman Harvey asked what other Towns do the two lowest bidders audit. Mr. Weichel said that Misty Watson does Mitchell County and two other Towns. However, we would be her biggest Town. Lowdermilk Church & Co. does Burke County and other Towns that Mr. Weichel can share later as he could not remember off the top of his head.

AUDITOR	LOCATION	2024	2025	2026	TOTAL
RH Accounting, PLLC	Lexington	45,750 (audit fee) 5,100 (travel)	50,323 (audit fee) 5,100 (travel)	55,354 (audit fee) 5,100 (travel)	\$166,727
Martin Starnes Associates	Hickory	DECLINED			
Lowdermilk Church & Co.	Morganton	17,900	18,795	19,735	\$56,340
Burleson & Earley, P.A.	Asheville	DECLINED			
Misty Watson, P.A.	Boone	16,000 (16,100*)	16,500	17,000	\$49,600
Gould Killian CPA Group	Asheville	NO RESPONSE			
Sharpe Patel, PLLC	Raleigh	NO RESPONSE			
Bernard Robinson & Co.	Greensboro	NO RESPONSE			
Butler & Stowe	Gastonia	NO RESPONSE			
Thompson, Price, Scott, Adams & Co.	Whiteville	DECLINED			

**RESULT: MOVED WITHOUT OBJECTION TO THE NEXT MEETING ON FEBRUARY 5, 2024, AT 6:00 P.M.**

**CONSIDERATION OF APPROVING RESOLUTION FOR THE SALE OF TOWN-OWNED PROPERTY-FAT AVE.** Assistant Town Manager/CFO Bo Weichel shared that the Town received an offer to purchase Town-owned property for \$8,500. Mr. Weichel said this was on the agenda to authorize staff to start the upset bid process to sell it. Mr. Weichel noted that the buyer has given his deposit, so once the Council

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approves the resolution, we will advertise for ten days to see if someone upsets the bid. If they do, we have to re-advertise with the higher bid. Councilman Ogle asked where the property was located. Planning Director Larry Johnson gave a background on the property that had code enforcement issues; the Town started a condemnation process in 2012 and was torn down in 2014. Mr. Johnson said the Town took a lean out in 2015 to get the money back in the amount of \$10,000 but was unsuccessful. Mr. Johnson stated the property went into foreclosure, and the Town took possession over it in 2017. Mr. Johnson noted that the Town has been maintaining it all this time. Mr. Johnson would recommend going out for a bid, and the location is across from Children's Park up the hill at 118 Fat Ave. NE, Valdese.

**RESULT: MOVED WITHOUT OBJECTION TO THE NEXT MEETING ON FEBRUARY 5, 2024, AT 6:00 P.M.**

**CONSIDERATION OF AMENDMENT OF THE VALDESE TOWN COUNCIL RULES 31 AND 32(A) OF THE RULES OF PROCEDURES AND AMENDING SECTION 2-1021 OF THE TOWN OF VALDESE CODE OF ORDINANCES**

Councilman Mears noted confusion at the January 8, 2024, Council meeting on this amendment, and it was not passed. Councilman Mears wanted to ensure that both the Council and the Mayor may nominate appointments to the committees and then the entire board elects.

**RESULT: MOVED WITHOUT OBJECTION TO THE NEXT MEETING ON FEBRUARY 5, 2024, AT 6:00 P.M.**

**INTERIM MANAGER'S REPORT:** Interim Town Manager Bryan Steen made the following announcements:

Bluegrass at the Rock presents: Darin & Brooke Aldridge, Saturday, February 10, 2024 at 7:30 p.m., at the Old Rock School

Next Agenda Review Council meeting is scheduled for Monday, February 26, 2024, 6:00 p.m., Council Chambers, Valdese Town Hall

Next Regular Council meeting is scheduled for Monday, March 4, 2024, 6:00 p.m., Council Chambers, Valdese Town Hall

**MAYOR AND COUNCIL COMMENTS:** Councilman Harvey thanked citizens for coming to the first Town of Valdese pre-agenda review a week in advance to view what would be on the February 5, 2024, agenda. Councilman Harvey encouraged citizens to talk to the Council this week if they had any questions or comments.

Councilman Mears thanked the Department Heads for the thorough presentations.

Councilwoman Lowman recommends everyone see *The Little Mermaid* by the Old Colony Players; it was fabulous.

**ADJOURNMENT:** At 7:30 p.m., there being no further business to come before Council, Councilman Harvey made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Councilman Mears.

The next regular Council meeting is scheduled for Monday, February 5, 2024 at Valdese Town Hall.

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Town Clerk

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Mayor

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