

**TOWN OF VALDESE
TOWN COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING
MAY 5, 2025**

The Town of Valdese Town Council met on Monday, May 5, 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 Pro Tem Gary Ogle, Councilwoman Rexanna Lowman, Councilwoman Heather Ward, Councilwoman Melinda Zimmerman, and Councilman Glenn Harvey. Also present were: Town Manager Todd Herms, Assistant Town Manager/CFO Bo Weichel, Town Attorney Tim Swanson, Town Clerk Jessica Lail, and various Department Heads.

Absent: Mayor Charles Watts

A quorum was present.

Rev. Dr. Josh Lail from the First Baptist Church, Valdese, offered the invocation. Following the invocation, Mayor Pro Tem Gary Ogle led in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

OPEN FORUM/PUBLIC COMMENT: Councilwoman Ward read the following open forum/public comment guidelines: The Council shall provide at least one period for public comment per month during a regular meeting, unless no regular meeting is held that month. Any individual or group who wishes to address the Council shall inform the Town clerk, any time prior to the start of the meeting, and provide their name, address and subject matter about which they wish to speak. Person(s) must be present if they wish to address the Council. Comments should be limited to five minutes per speaker.

Open Forum is not intended to require Council or staff to answer impromptu questions. Speakers will address all comments to the entire Council as a whole and not one individual member. Discussions between speakers and the audience will not be permitted. Speakers will maintain decorum at all times. Speakers are expected to be courteous and respectful at all times regardless of who occupies the Council chairs. These guidelines will help ensure that a safe and productive meeting is held and all those wishing to address the Council will be afforded the opportunity.

COUNCIL COMMENTS – WT SORRELL, 102 OAKLAND COURT NE, VALDESE: Mr. Sorrell expressed his appreciation to the Council for their wise decision in selecting Todd as the new Town Manager. He praised Todd as an intelligent and capable individual with a strong record in management and employee benefits coordination. Mr. Sorrell welcomed Todd to Valdese and noted that many citizens are eager to support him and the Town in any way they can.

BEACH BINGO INVITE – SANDRA WALKER – 124 MAIN ST W., VALDESE: Ms. Walker, representing the Merchants Advisory Committee, updated the Council on a new community event organized to replace the absence of live music on Friday nights in May. The committee will host "Beach Bingo" at Temple Field, featuring bingo games, local business participation, food vendors, and music. The event aims to increase business visibility and community engagement. Thirty businesses are involved, offering bingo cards and prizes. Ms. Walker expressed gratitude to the committee, town staff, and supporting businesses, and invited Council members to attend.

BEACH BINGO

TEMPLE FIELD BEHIND OLD ROCKSCHOOL

FRIDAYS - MAY 16, 23, 30

PRIZES

6:30 – 8:30 PM

FOOD***MUSIC**

LOCAL MERCHANT SALES

FREE BINGO CARDS AT THESE LOCATIONS

WSVM	Salon Di Beleeza	Steele Creek Arms
Dolls & Designs by Sandi	MY Peas Consignment	Foothills Thrift Store
Prep N Ready	Hospice Thrift Store	My Nails
Grace Jewelry	Los Compadres	J & R Creations
Brinkley Ins.	Twin Brother's Pizza	All That Glitterz
Bark Side	Highland's Butchery	Rock Drug Store
Bargain House	100 Main	Rusty's Antiques
Your Floral Bouquet	Mountain Burrito	
Play It Again	MacDonald's	
Old Rock School Tourism	Myras Smash Burgers and Creamery	Reynolds Family Wellness Center

SPONSORED BY VALDESE MERCHANTS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

ADDED ITEM: RESOLUTION OF APPRECIATION Councilman Harvey made a motion to add Resolution of Appreciation to the agenda, seconded by Councilwoman Lowman. The vote was unanimous, and motion carried.

CONSENT AGENDA: (enacted by one motion)

APPROVED PRE-AGENDA MEETING MINUTES OF MARCH 31, 2025

APPROVED CLOSED SESSION MINUTES OF MARCH 31, 2025

APPROVED REGULAR MEETING MINUTES OF APRIL 7, 2025

APPROVED CLOSED SESSION MINUTES OF APRIL 7, 2025

APPROVED RECESSED MEETING MINUTES OF APRIL 21, 2025

APPROVED CLOSED SESSION MINUTES OF APRIL 21, 2025

APPROVED RESOLUTION SALE OF TOWN-OWNED PROPERTY – 341 RODORET ST N Mr. Weichel reported that the property at 341 Rodoret Street North went through the upset bid process following last month's approval, with no additional bids received. The original bid was \$7,500, and the resolution to finalize the sale.

**RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING SALE OF REAL
PROPERTY**

341 RODORET STREET N, VALDESE, NC

WHEREAS, the Town of Valdese (the "Town") is the owner of that certain tract or parcel of real property (the "Property") situated in Lovelady Township, Valdese, North Carolina commonly known as 341 Rodoret Street N, Valdese, North Carolina, PIN: 2733968485, REID: 12132;

WHEREAS, pursuant to N.C. Gen. Stat. §160A-269 a city or town may receive, solicit, or negotiate an offer to purchase property and advertise it for upset bid. When the offer is made and council proposes to accept it, the council shall require the offeror to deposit five percent (5%) of his bid with the city clerk, and shall publish a notice of the offer. The notice shall contain a general description of the property, the amount and terms of the offer, and a notice that within ten (10) days any person may raise the bid by not less than ten percent (10%) of the first one thousand dollars (\$1,000) and five percent (5%) of the remainder. When a bid is raised, the bidder shall deposit with the city clerk five percent (5%) of the increased bid, and the clerk shall re-advertise the offer at the increased bid. This procedure shall be repeated until no further qualifying upset bids are received, at which time the council may accept the offer and sell the property to the highest bidder. The council may at any time reject any and all offers;

WHEREAS, on March 5, 2025, Aaron Berry offered to purchase the Property from the Town for seven thousand five hundred and 00/100 Dollars (\$7,500.00) and deposited three hundred seventy-five and 00/100 Dollars (\$375.00), or five percent (5%) of his bid, with the Town Clerk;

WHEREAS, no upset bids were received within the ten (10) day upset bid period and the offer of Aaron Berry for \$7,500.00 is the last and highest bid for the Property; and

WHEREAS, the Town does not need the Property, and the Town therefore desires to accept the offer and sell the Property to Aaron Berry upon the terms and conditions hereafter set forth.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT pursuant to N.C.G.S. § 160A-269, the sale of the Property to Aaron Berry for the purchase price of \$7,500.00 is approved and the Town Manager is hereby authorized and directed to deliver to Aaron Berry a special warranty deed for the Property upon receipt of the purchase price, subject to the following terms and conditions: that the Property shall be sold "as is" and subject to all existing easements; that the Town shall reserve easements for all Town utility lines located on or under the property, if any; that Aaron Berry pay all legal fees associated with preparation of the closing documents and all closing costs necessary to transfer ownership of the Property from the Town to Aaron Berry.

THIS RESOLUTION IS ADOPTED this _____ day of _____, 2025.

THE TOWN OF VALDESE,
a North Carolina Municipal Corporation

[SEAL]

ATTEST:

By: _____
Charles Watts, Mayor

Jessica Lail, Town Clerk

Councilwoman Ward made a motion to approve the aforementioned items on the Consent Agenda, seconded by Councilwoman Lowman. The vote was unanimous and motion carried.

End Consent Agenda

ITEMS REMOVED FROM CONSENT AGENDA: None

APPROVED AWARD OF BID – AERATORS AT WWTP Mr. Weichel provided an update on the Wastewater Treatment Plant aerator project included in the current CIP budget. The Town had budgeted \$900,000 to replace three aerators and their associated electrical systems. An initial formal bid process resulted in only one bid, requiring a rebid. The second bid process yielded two bids, both over budget. However, under state law, the Town was able to negotiate with the lowest bidder, who agreed to reduce their price to \$898,000 without changing the project scope. Mr. Weichel recommended awarding the contract to SPX Flow. The project will take approximately a year to complete and will carry over into the next fiscal year, with funding already allocated in the current budget.

Councilwoman Zimmerman made a motion to approve the award the bid to SPX Flow in the amount of \$898,000 with the contract award contingent to the Town Attorney's review, seconded by Councilwoman Lowman. The vote was unanimous and motion carried.

APPROVED VOTE TO EXPLORE ALL POSSIBILITIES TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF ARPA GRANT: VALDESE BLUFF'S SEWER LINE BID RESULTS AND DISCUSSION Mr. Weichel provided an update on the sewer line extension project near Draughn High School, originally funded with an \$800,000 ARPA grant. Since receiving the funds, construction costs have increased, and the total project cost is now estimated at \$1.57 million, leaving a shortfall of approximately \$770,000. A potential cost-sharing arrangement with the county is unlikely due to insufficient security from the developer, who has only committed to developing 20 lots over four years. Given the limited return on investment, Mr. Weichel suggested exploring options to use the \$800,000 ARPA funds before the December 2026 deadline by negotiating with the low bidder, Iron Mountain Construction, to complete as much of the project as possible within budget. The bid expires on June 5, 2025, so staff is seeking Council direction on how to proceed.

Councilman Harvey made a motion for the Town Manager to explore all possibilities to take full advantage of the ARPA grant within the current bid and bring a proposal to the council in June to consider doing as much of the sewer line as possible, without committing Town funds at this stage, seconded by Councilwoman Lowman.

Discussion: Councilman. Harvey emphasized the background of the proposed sewer line project, noting it originated from a meeting arranged by the Planning Director with the County Manager and County Commission Chairman, during which the developer proposed a plan with anticipated county financial support. However, the county is now no longer offering to contribute, and the developer is not providing any financial support or guarantees. The developer's only offer is to deed 20 undeveloped, landlocked lots (approximately five acres) to the Town if no development occurs. Councilman Harvey stressed the importance of using the ARPA funds to construct as much of the sewer line as possible to preserve the funding and position the area for future development. Councilman Ogle would like Mr. Herms to reengage discussions with county officials about their possible involvement. Mr. Weichel noted the county's reluctance is due to insufficient security from the developer.

The vote was unanimous and motion carried.

FY 24-25 YEAR-TO-DATE FINANCIALS Mr. Weichel presented year-to-date financial results for FY 2024–2025 through March, noting this marks 75% of the budget year. General Fund ad valorem tax collections are nearly complete, with April collections closing the remaining gap. Sales tax revenues are slightly below target but expected to improve. Interest income on idle funds is significantly over budget (239%) due to higher interest rates and unused funds.

In the Utility Fund, vacancies led to lower personnel expenses. Mr. Weichel added fund account summaries to the report, including project accounts, reserve accounts, and restricted funds, providing a more detailed picture of the Town's finances. He clarified the purpose of the fund balance appropriated line item, which is used for budget balancing and adjustments during the year.

Mr. Weichel noted FEMA reimbursements, that all general fund storm-related expenses have been reimbursed, and about half of utility-related expenses have been recovered, with more expected. He also provided an update on the \$500,000 NC88 grant for the pool cover, stating the state has verbally approved a scope change to an inflatable dome. Final paperwork is pending, and once complete, a budget amendment will be made to restore approximately \$500,000 to fund balance that was initially earmarked for the project.

APPROVED POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION TO GENERAL FUND RESERVES: FY 25-26 BUDGET WORKSHOP FOLLOW-UP RESOLUTION Councilman Harvey clarified the meaning of a “balanced budget” in municipal finance, noting that while the state requires all Towns to adopt balanced budgets, this can include using reserve funds to close gaps—something not widely understood by the public. He emphasized that the draft FY 2025–2026 budget presented by the interim manager and finance director not only balances but makes a positive contribution to reserves. To reinforce this fiscal direction, he made a motion resolving that the final budget to be adopted on June 2 will include a positive contribution to the general fund reserves.

Councilman Harvey made a motion to resolve that the draft of the FY25- 26 Fiscal Year Budget that will be finalized on May 12 and adopted on June 2 will include a positive contribution to the General Fund reserves, seconded by Councilwoman Ward.

Discussion: Councilman Harvey recapped the motion. Mr. Weichel confirmed that the current FY 2024–2025 budget also began with a positive reserve contribution of \$23,757.

The vote was unanimous, and the motion carried.

TABLED CONSIDERATION OF POLICY GUIDELINES FOR CITIZEN AND PUBLIC ACCESS TO COMMUNITY CENTER FACILITIES

Councilman Harvey made a motion effective no later than June 1, 2025, the Old Rock School cultural center and the town's Recreation Center be open to citizens and visitors on the same days, and that a tourism office be open during all special events promoted for attendance, seconded by Councilwoman Ward.

Discussion: Councilman Harvey made the motion, responding to citizen and visitor concerns, to ensure that by June 1, 2025, the Old Rock School Cultural Center and the Town's Recreation Center are open to the public on the same days, and that the tourism office is open during all special events. He emphasized the Town's significant financial investment in Community Affairs, tourism promotion, and the Old Rock School renovations, noting it's a misuse of taxpayer funds to keep these facilities closed, especially on Saturdays when visitors are in town.

Councilwoman Lowman expressed that decisions regarding the hours of operation for town facilities should be handled by the new town manager. She emphasized it is the manager's responsibility—not the council's—to determine such operational matters. She recommended the manager consult with relevant stakeholders, including the Trail of Faith, Waldensian Museum, Rock School Arts Foundation, and Community Affairs Department before making any determinations.

Councilman Harvey stressed the Council's responsibility to ensure public access, while agreeing it would be the town manager's role to determine staffing and logistics.

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Councilwoman Zimmerman stated that the Old Rock School is open on various Saturdays throughout the year for different events, providing opportunities for visitors to access the gallery. She emphasized that modern tourists often research hours online in advance and suggested the tourism office's current setup reflects that trend. She agreed with allowing the new town manager time to assess the situation and consult with stakeholders, and expressed opposition to setting a June 1st implementation deadline.

Councilwoman Ward expressed that while she sees the value in having the tourism office open on Saturdays, she believes the decision should be tabled until June to allow time for further discussion with the town manager. She shared insights from visiting other towns, noting that Saturday hours are often limited (e.g., 9–12 or 10–3) and are typically staffed by part-time employees or volunteers—not full-time staff. She emphasized that volunteers should not feel obligated to work weekends and advocated for a thoughtful approach to planning and staffing before implementing any changes.

Councilwoman Ward made a motion to table until the next regular meeting in June, seconded by Councilman Ogle.

Discussion: Councilman Harvey expressed frustration over delaying the decision, stating the issue has persisted in Valdese for 18 years. He emphasized that the motion simply sets an opening date of June 1 for the Old Rock School and the tourism office on Saturdays, without specifying hours or staffing. Harvey said the council had prior notice of the motion but only raised concerns during the public meeting. He urged the Council not to delay or shift responsibility to the Town Manager, stating he is willing to take accountability and that a decision should be made that night.

Councilwoman Ward would like to have it open on Saturdays but feels we need to give the new manager time to look at how to staff it.

Vote: Councilwoman Zimmerman – Yes, Councilwoman Ward – Yes, Councilman Ogle – Yes, Councilman Harvey – No, Councilwoman Lowman – Yes, the motion carried.

STATUS OF ONGOING OR APPROVED PROJECTS

- i. **Public Safety Facilities Update** Mr. Weichel reminded the Council that the review panel previously selected three contractors for interviews. A second round of interviews with Council is scheduled for May 22, 2025, starting at 9:00 a.m. The firms to be interviewed are Wharton-Smith, Moss Marlow, and D.R. Reynolds Company.
- ii. **Water Plant Upgrade Project/Lenoir Interconnect Project** Mr. Weichel reported that the exploratory investigation for the water filter project is underway, as approved by Council at the previous meeting. The design phase has also started, with McGill handling the design work for both Valdese and its project partner, the City of Lenoir. Coordination between the two municipalities is ongoing, especially regarding the placement of a water line under the river and the location of a new pump station. The project is progressing, and the goal is to go out for bid in the fall.
- iii. **Recreation Center ADA and Pool Cover** Mr. Weichel provided updates on two separate Recreation Center projects. The ADA improvements, required by the grant, are being handled by Houck and have already begun with demolition work and ramp installation near the community center and tennis courts. Moss Marlow is responsible for the site work related to the pool dome cover. While materials are being ordered and designs finalized, visible construction will not begin until late August or September to avoid disrupting summer swim programs. The target completion date remains between the first and second week of October.

ADDED ITEM: RESOLUTION OF APPRECIATION Councilman Harvey made a motion to resolve that the 2025 Valdese Town Council express its appreciation to Bo Daniel Weichel with a plaque acknowledging his outstanding service as Interim Town Manager from August 23, 2024, through May 1, 2025. During this special assignment, he made significant contributions, enabling the Valdese Town Council to make policy decisions in the town's best interests. He exceeded the Council's expectations for his extra assignment through extraordinary initiative, hours, and effort while fulfilling his regular responsibilities as Assistant

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Manager and Chief Financial Officer, seconded by Councilwoman Ward. The vote was unanimous, and motion carried.

MANAGER'S REPORT Assistant Town Manager/CFO Bo Weichel reported:

Update on the Sale of Property Located at 800 Pineburr Drive: Mr. Weichel reported that the town-owned property is currently in the upset bid process, with the most recent bid at \$148,378.25, up from an initial offer near the tax value of approximately \$139,000. The latest bid will be advertised in the newspaper on Saturday, May 10, starting a 10-calendar-day period during which it may be upset again. If no further bids are received, the sale could be considered at the June Council meeting. However, if another upset bid is submitted by May 25, the process will continue and likely delay Council consideration until a future meeting.

Granville Morrow Fun Fish Day is scheduled for Saturday, May 10, 2025, 9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. at McGalliard Falls. Register online at valdese.recdesk.com. Rain Date: May 17, 2025

Budget Review #2 is scheduled for Monday, May 12, 2025, 9:00 a.m. at the Council Chambers, Valdese Town Hall

Public Safety Building Contractor Presentations, Thursday, May 22, 2025, 9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m., Valdese Town Hall, Community Room

Town Offices Closed on Monday, May 26, 2025, in Observance of Memorial Day

Next Agenda Review Council meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, May 27, 2025, 6:00 p.m., Council Chambers, Valdese Town Hall

Next Regular Council meeting is scheduled for Monday, June 2, 2025, 6:00 p.m., Council Chambers, Valdese Town Hall

MAYOR AND COUNCIL COMMENTS:

Councilwoman Lowman asked if anyone had an update on the Weavers Mill project. Attorney Swanson does not have any updates on the project.

Councilwoman Zimmerman asked Mr. Weichel to give an update on where we are at with street paving. Mr. Weichel provided an update on the DOT partnership for paving, noting that the project was delayed due to a hurricane and the DOT's current focus on western counties. The previous paving contract in Burke County has ended, and the DOT has not yet issued a new one. Once they do, the Town will need to restart the process, including obtaining new quotes. Meanwhile, the Town continues to allocate funds in the upcoming budget to build reserves for future paving efforts.

Councilwoman Ward shared her positive experience attending the City Vision conference in Greenville, NC, where she engaged with other municipal officials and attended informative classes. She encouraged fellow council members to attend in the future and expressed enthusiasm about learning more about municipal governance. Councilwoman Ward noted that many towns across the state face similar challenges but felt reassured that Valdese is doing well by comparison. She also received positive feedback about the Town's recent hire of Town Manager Todd Herms and expressed optimism about working with him.

(A Closed Session was included on the agenda but was not held.)

ADJOURNMENT: At 8:06 p.m., there being no further business to come before Council, Councilman Harvey made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Councilwoman Lowman. The vote was unanimous and motion carried.

Town Clerk

Mayor

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