

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

The Town of Valdese Town Council met on Tuesday, May 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 Heather Ward, Councilwoman Rexanna Lowman, 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:

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 JUNE 2, 2025, PRELIMINARY AGENDA:

CONSENT AGENDA: Mayor Watts noted the items on the Consent Agenda.

APPROVAL OF BUDGET REVIEW #1 MINUTES OF APRIL 15 & 16, 2025

APPROVAL OF SPECIAL CALLED MEETING MINUTES OF APRIL 25, 2025

APPROVAL OF CLOSED SESSION MINUTES OF APRIL 25, 2025

APPROVAL OF AGENDA REVIEW MEETING MINUTES OF APRIL 28, 2025

APPROVAL OF CLOSED SESSION MINUTES OF APRIL 28, 2025

APPROVAL OF REGULAR MEETING MINUTES OF MAY 5, 2025

APPROVAL OF BUDGET REVIEW #2 MEETING MINUTES OF MAY 12, 2025

APPROVAL OF COUNCIL CONTRACTORS MEETING MINUTES OF MAY 22, 2025

APPROVAL OF VALDESE ABC BOARD TRAVEL POLICY

NEW BUSINESS:

PRESENTATION OF 2024 NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF LABOR SAFETY AWARDS Mr. Weichel noted that the Town receives this annual award from the Department of Labor. He added that during the regular meeting, he will briefly go through each department.

RESULT: MOVED WITHOUT OBJECTION TO THE NEXT MEETING ON JUNE 2, 2025, AT 6:00 P.M.

FY 25-26 PROPOSED BUDGET AND SCHEDULING OF PUBLIC HEARING FOR MONDAY, JUNE 23, 2025 Mr. Weichel stated that the FY 2025-2026 proposed budget will be included in the full agenda packet, along with the Manager's Budget Message, for Council's consideration at the June 2nd meeting. At that meeting, Council will also schedule a public hearing for Monday, June 23, 2025, at which time the budget is expected to be adopted.

RESULT: MOVED WITHOUT OBJECTION TO THE NEXT MEETING ON JUNE 2, 2025, AT 6:00 P.M.

APPROVAL OF LEASE AGREEMENT AT THE OLD ROCK SCHOOL WITH DREAM CONNECTIONS Mr. Weichel said this is an annual lease agreement renewal with Dream Connections for space at the Old Rock School. The 12-month lease, running from July 2025 through June 2026, is for \$1,100 per month.

RESULT: PLACED ON THE CONSENT AGENDA AT THE NEXT MEETING ON JUNE 2, 2025, AT 6:00 P.M.

APPROVAL OF RESOLUTION FOR SALE OF TOWN-OWNED PROPERTY - 800 PINEBURR AVE SW

Mr. Weichel reviewed a resolution for the sale of Town-owned property located at 800 Pineburr Avenue SW. Following the upset bid process initiated after the April meeting, the final offer is \$148,378.25—approximately \$14,000 above the tax value of \$134,490—for the nearly 15-acre parcel. The prospective buyer plans to develop townhomes and some single-family homes, all market rate from what he has been told. The sale includes a 90-day due diligence period to allow time for the developer to obtain a special use permit. During this period, the buyer may withdraw. If the sale does not proceed, the property would remain for sale.

RESULT: PLACED ON THE CONSENT AGENDA AT THE NEXT MEETING ON JUNE 2, 2025, AT 6:00 P.M.

APPROVAL OF RESOLUTION FOR MASSEL AVE SE SIDEWALK PROJECT

Mr. Weichel explained that the Town worked with COG staff to submit a LAP funding application by the May 2 deadline, proposing two sidewalk projects—one on Laurel Street SE and one on Massel Avenue SE. The Massel Avenue project is being recommended for award by the Greater Hickory Metropolitan Planning Organization. The project's estimated cost is \$950,000, with a required 20% local match of approximately \$190,000. The resolution commits the Town to provide the matching funds, paid primarily in FY 2027-2028. A capital project ordinance would be established now to ensure funding is in place as the project progresses.

RESULT: MOVED WITHOUT OBJECTION TO THE NEXT MEETING ON JUNE 2, 2025, AT 6:00 P.M.

APPROVAL OF CAPITAL PROJECT ORDINANCE AMENDMENT – POOL STRUCTURE

Mr. Weichel reported that the Town has received written confirmation of a \$500,000 AP grant award, for which the project scope was previously amended. This amendment adjusts the project budget to reflect the grant funding, reducing the amount drawn from fund balance from over \$700,000 to approximately \$200,000. The amendment serves as a budgetary correction.

RESULT: MOVED WITHOUT OBJECTION TO THE NEXT MEETING ON JUNE 2, 2025, AT 6:00 P.M.

APPROVAL OF DESIGN-BUILD CONTRACTOR FOR PUBLIC SAFETY BUILDINGS

Council discussed concerns about moving forward with selecting a general contractor for the design-build project involving police and fire facilities. Councilman Harvey expressed hesitation due to uncertainty about the usability of the lower level of 215 Main Street, which could eliminate one of the three proposed options. It was clarified that code compliance would depend on the intended use, and modifications may be possible.

Mr. Herms recommended splitting the fire and police projects into separate paths: move forward immediately with the fire station to avoid construction cost increases, while taking more time to explore viable options for the police department. He suggested not limiting police options to the three currently outlined, and emphasized that proceeding on separate tracks would allow one project to continue even if the other hits a delay.

There was also discussion about whether 2,000 sq. ft. of wasted space in the current Town Hall building could be repurposed once the police relocate. Attorney Swanson advised that exploring this would likely require a separate RFQ unless current contract options are exhausted.

The Fire Department's ISO rating was discussed. The current rating is a 3, which is excellent, but that could change if a plan for a new fire station is not in place when the next evaluation occurs. It was noted that business and industrial insurance rates are especially affected by ISO scores.

Council generally agreed that if comfortable with one of the contractors, it would be beneficial to proceed with the fire station planning now while continuing to explore police department options separately.

RESULT: MOVED WITHOUT OBJECTION TO THE NEXT MEETING ON JUNE 2, 2025, AT 6:00 P.M.

REMOVED - CONSIDERATION OF LEGAL REVIEW OF ALL TOWN CONTRACTUAL MATTERS, FROM THE LEASING OF SPACE TO THE VENDING OF FOOD AND BEVERAGES ON TOWN

PROPERTY Councilman Harvey raised concerns about the lack of standardized contracts for various town property uses, such as leasing space and selling food or alcohol, which could leave the town exposed to liability. He suggested creating a standard contract to address these risks.

Attorney Swanson reported that he and staff are already working on two types of lease agreements—one for short-term (day rentals) and one for long-term tenants. These drafts address liability, insurance, and alcohol permit requirements and will be ready for Council review shortly.

As the issue is already being addressed, Councilman Harvey requested the item be removed from the agenda. Council agreed to remove the item.

RESULT: REMOVED

PRUDENT USE OF TOWN ROLLING STOCK ASSETS Councilman Harvey proposed modifying the personnel policy to prohibit personal use of town vehicles and town-purchased fuel. He expressed concern over the town's financial investment in vehicles and fuel, and cited past practices that allowed some employees to commute in town vehicles, which he believes should be discontinued.

He noted that the issue had been raised with auditors, and while there was initially no concern, subsequent discussion suggested it warranted further review. Councilman Harvey clarified that his concern does not apply to employees on call, such as emergency personnel, but to routine commuting without on-call status.

Discussion followed regarding standard practices in other municipalities and whether take-home vehicles were part of negotiated compensation. Mr. Harvey indicated he would bring a formal motion at the June 2 meeting for Council consideration.

RESULT: MOVED WITHOUT OBJECTION TO THE NEXT MEETING ON JUNE 2, 2025, AT 6:00 P.M.

CONSIDERATION OF RESOLUTION ON CIVILITY AND PROTOCOL FOR THE 2025 MUNICIPAL ELECTION Councilman Harvey introduced a draft resolution, originally suggested by Attorney Swanson, promoting civility and adherence to ethical standards during the upcoming municipal election. He made a minor revision and previously shared the draft with Council but received no feedback. Councilman Harvey emphasized the need to avoid a repeat of the 2023 election, which was widely regarded as divisive and inappropriate due to council and staff involvement. He noted the importance of going on record to assure citizens that the 2025 election will be handled more responsibly. Clarification on campaign signage under the revised UDO was also suggested. The resolution will be included in the June 2 agenda packet.

RESULT: MOVED WITHOUT OBJECTION TO THE NEXT MEETING ON JUNE 2, 2025, AT 6:00 P.M.

CONSIDERATION OF CITIZEN COMMUNICATION Councilman Harvey proposed two initiatives to improve communication with residents:

1. Sending a post-budget letter with water bills to inform citizens about the tax rate, as was done in the previous year.
2. Reinstating a regular monthly written communication from the Town to residents, particularly to reach those not using digital platforms.

He stressed the importance of inclusive communication methods, especially for residents without internet access or bank accounts. He also noted the need to provide written instructions regarding upcoming changes to trash trolley services.

RESULT: MOVED WITHOUT OBJECTION TO THE NEXT MEETING ON JUNE 2, 2025, AT 6:00 P.M.

CONSIDERATION OF RESOLUTION REGARDING APPOINTMENTS TO TOWN BOARDS, PANELS, AND COMMITTEES Mr. Harvey proposed establishing a residency requirement for individuals applying to serve on Town boards or advisory committees. He suggested applicants should either be residents of Valdese or owners/managers of a business located in town. He referenced Morganton's policy, which requires board applicants to be town residents, and noted that while similar requirements apply to the Council and Planning Board, they are not consistent across all committees.

Mr. Harvey expressed concern about individuals with out-of-town addresses serving on Valdese committees and emphasized the importance of prioritizing input from those who reside in or invest in the

town. Councilwoman Lowman asked what we would do with current non-resident members already appointed. Councilman Harvey suggested they could potentially be grandfathered in.

RESULT: MOVED WITHOUT OBJECTION TO THE NEXT MEETING ON JUNE 2, 2025, AT 6:00 P.M.

APPOINTMENTS TO BOARDS/COMMISSIONS/COMMITTEES

- **Town Board Discussion**
- **Non-Town Board Appointments**
 - i. **VEDIC – Town Manager and other Appointments/Reappointments**
 - ii. **BDI – Town Manager Appointment**

Mr. Herms explained that as the new Town Manager, he must be formally appointed to certain boards that he is automatically deemed to serve on. He also noted that some reappointments are required, including to a regional board VEDIC, which has specific membership requirements based on its charter.

RESULT: MOVED WITHOUT OBJECTION TO THE NEXT MEETING ON JUNE 2, 2025, AT 6:00 P.M.

CONSIDERATION OF POLICY GUIDELINES FOR CITIZENS AND PUBLIC ACCESS TO COMMUNITY CENTER FACILITIES DISCUSSION

Mr. Herms presented a proposed four-month pilot program to expand public access to the Old Rock School on Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. The program aims to collect data and assess community needs. It will utilize part-time staff from the Recreation Department to avoid additional onboarding or background checks. The short duration ensures compliance with state limitations on part-time employee hours.

Council members discussed procedural details, seeking clarification on whether the original motion had been tabled or postponed. Attorney Swanson will review the meeting and provide guidance on the correct parliamentary procedure and next steps.

RESULT: MOVED WITHOUT OBJECTION TO THE NEXT MEETING ON JUNE 2, 2025, AT 6:00 P.M.

STATUS OF ONGOING OR APPROVED PROJECTS

- Town Manager Todd Herms will report at the June 2, 2025 meeting.
- i. **Public Safety Buildings Update**
 - ii. **Water Plant Upgrade Project/Lenoir Interconnect Project**
 - iii. **Recreation Center ADA and Pool Cover**

Councilman Harvey noted that we were supposed to look at the Valdese Bluff’s Sewer Line but it was not included in this agenda. Mr. Weichel said that we are awaiting approval from the Division of Water Infrastructure (DWI), the granting agency, before proceeding. The Town is seeking permission to move forward with a partial scope of the project. Because it is a reimbursement grant, no action will be taken without DWI's approval. An update is expected by the June 23 meeting.

RESULT: MOVED WITHOUT OBJECTION TO THE NEXT MEETING ON JUNE 2, 2025, AT 6:00 P.M.

TOWN MANAGER’S REPORT

Town Manager Todd Herms will report at the June 2, 2025 meeting.

CLOSED SESSION: At 6:49 p.m., Councilwoman Ward made a motion to go into Closed Session under NC General Statute 143-318.11(a)(3) to consult with an attorney retained by the Town in order to preserve the attorney-client privilege between the Town attorney and the Town Council, which privilege is hereby acknowledged, seconded by Councilwoman Zimmerman. The vote was unanimous.

At 6:57 p.m., Councilwoman Zimmerman made a motion to go out of Closed Session, seconded by Councilman Harvey. The vote was unanimous.

ADJOURNMENT: At 6:59 p.m., there being no further business to come before Council, Councilman Harvey made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Councilwoman Zimmerman. The vote was unanimous.

Town Clerk

Mayor