**TOWN OF VALDESE**
**TOWN COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING**
**May 28, 2026**

The Town of Valdese Town Council met on Thursday, May 28, 2026, 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 Keith Huffman, Mayor Pro Tem Rexanna Lowman, Councilman Gary Ogle, Councilwoman Heather Ward, Councilwoman Melinda Zimmerman, and Councilwoman Shannon Radabaugh. 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: None

A quorum was present.

Mayor Huffman called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Mayor Huffman offered the invocation and led in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**
Councilwoman Zimmerman made a motion to approve the Agenda as presented. Seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Lowman. The vote was unanimous and the motion carried.

**APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES**
Councilwoman Ward made a motion to approve the minutes for the May 11, 2026 FY 26-27 Budget Presentation Meeting and the May 11, 2026 Regular Meeting. Seconded by Councilwoman Zimmerman. The vote was unanimous and the motion carried.

**SCHEDULED PUBLIC HEARINGS:**

**FY 2026-2027 BUDGET PUBLIC HEARING AND ORDINANCE ADOPTION**
Mayor Huffman provided that this item included the following items: Adoption of FY 2026-2027 Fee Schedules, Adoption of FY 2026-2027 General Fund Capital Improvement Plan, Adoption of FY 2026-2027 Utility Capital Improvements Plan, Adoption of Budget Ordinance, Adoption of Amended Personnel Policy, and Adoption of the Pay & Classification Plan.

Mayor Huffman called the public hearing to order at 6:03 p.m. and asked those who wished to speak to step forward.

**Mr. Glenn Harvey, 801 Micol Avenue,** stepped forward to the podium and stated there were four (4) good news budget items that everyone needed to know. He provided that the first one was that it was not only okay to speak up and ask questions, it was one's civic responsibility to do so, citing a local newspaper editorial stating such. Mr. Harvey reported that this year marked the first time the annual budget presentation was moved from June to May, which provided more time than ever to revise it. He continued that the North Carolina Legislature made the hearing prior to adoption mandatory to enable citizens to participate in the budget process. Mr. Harvey asserted that the eleventh hour for revising and adopting the annual budget and tax rate was not on May 18, and that it was not on the present day either, it was designated as July 1 at 11 p.m. He continued that even then, if there was a compelling reason to defer adoption, such as waiting for the final costs of a multi-million-dollar project, there were provisions to delay the budget approval until essential information was available. Mr. Harvey stated that no missing information was needed to adopt the budget by July 1, as if one reviewed the proposed budget, they would realize that there were virtually no expenses in the budget associated with the new public safety building.

Mr. Harvey recounted that in the previous week Town Manager Herms explained that the 31% tax hike was intended to influence the Local Government Commission (LGC) to approve the $10,800,000 debt for a project for which the Town did not yet know the full cost. Mr. Harvey expressed that the future cost was unknown as the current Council had never heard directly from the general contractor it hired. He continued that despite this the Council unanimously hired the contractor to proceed with the final construction plans and a contract for a guaranteed maximum price, even though that guaranteed maximum cost was subject to changes for contingencies.

**Mr. Michael Farris, 112 Phillip Avenue,** stepped forward to the podium. He stated he wanted to make comments about the budget, but before doing so acknowledged that he, like most citizens, did not like to see everyday expenses increase. Mr. Farris continued that whether it was gas, groceries, utilities, or phone bills, he did not want to see increases, however, he acknowledged that in order to maintain the standard of living that had come to be expected, one had to pay for that. He asserted that nothing was free.

Mr. Farris reported that Valdese was steeped in history, a history which had led to a community which was proud of its roots, where it had been, and where it was going. He added that a large part of that came down to the hard work of Town employees. Mr. Farris disclosed that he was recently at a presentation which informed him that on average approximately 400 individuals from outside of the local zip code visited the Town's local parks each weekend. Mr. Farris stated that all of those individuals who visited the Town brought revenue, and added value, to the Town. He expressed that it would be a great disservice to the Town if it did not value its employees with more than just a thank you, adding that these individuals were grossly underpaid.

Mr. Farris stated that he only supported an increase in cost if it added value, noting that if employees were not given an increase in pay, it would kick off the first domino in a line of dominos that would most likely plunge Valdese into a spiral which would be difficult to recover from. Mr. Farris asked what was to keep individuals in a position where they were not compensated fairly for their time and efforts. He added that if the Town's employees left, or were not compensated fairly, the Town would suffer. Mr. Farris questioned what would keep these employees from going to other local municipalities where they could be paid more for less responsibility and less area to cover. Mr. Farris asserted that it was no secret that the Town of Drexel offered much higher pay for certain employees, employees who would not have to relocate, and do the same job for more money. He noted that he had lived in communities that had made these mistakes in the past, such as Durham when they revamped their downtown, stating that the community struggled mightily due to short-sightedness and that it took them much longer than anticipated to recover. Mr. Farris expressed that it would be a grave mistake if Valdese were to follow suit.

Mr. Farris recounted that the estimate for the fire and police building in 2024 was $7,000,000 and now was north of $10,000,000. He asked if one thought that it would be cheaper the longer one kept kicking the can down the road. Mr. Farris asserted that he believed everyone knew the answer to that question. He asked the Council to do the right thing for the long-term future, and not the short-term approval.

**Ms. Diane Hamby, 801 Orchard Street,** stepped forward to the podium. Ms. Hamby reported that she was present to speak in support of the Town's Police Department, through not just her opinion, but from personal experience. Ms. Hamby disclosed that on December 19, 2025 she was a victim of a violent assault, the most terrifying experience of her life. She continued that everything changed in a matter of seconds and that she truly did not know if she would survive. Ms. Hamby stated that the Town's Police Department responded immediately, secured her safety, located her stolen vehicle, and took the individual into custody within minutes.

Ms. Hamby provided that during the arrest, the individual rammed three (3) separate police vehicles while trying to escape. Ms. Hamby stated that those officers willingly put themselves in danger to protect her and the community. She described that what impacted her the most was not only the police officers' professionalism, but also their compassion. Ms. Hamby reported that the Chief of Police personally came to the hospital to speak with her, stayed there with her, and waited as the hospital provided her with the care she needed. Ms. Hamby stated that the Chief assured her that he would make sure she was safe and did so. She continued that afterwards, officers continued to follow up with her, collected evidence, checked on her wellbeing, and made sure she felt safe during one of the hardest times in her life.

Ms. Hamby provided that as court proceedings moved forward, the police continued standing by her, testified to the facts, and worked with the District Attorney's Office to make sure her voice as a victim was heard, and respected, throughout the process. Ms. Hamby expressed that before this happened to her, she viewed the police, as many other people did, as a part of the background of everyday life. She stated that one rarely stopped to think about what those officers meant to the community until the moment one desperately needed them. Ms. Hamby expressed that she needed them and that they were there. Ms. Hamby reported that not everyone experienced violent crime, but noted that it could happen anywhere, even in a small town like Valdese. She stated that when something did happen, one depended on the men and women who were willing to run toward danger while everyone else was trying to escape it. Ms. Hamby expressed that due to what she had experienced, she no longer saw the Town's Police Department as strangers in uniforms, rather, she saw human beings who chose a difficult and dangerous profession to serve and protect others. She continued that she saw people who cared about her safety, her recovery, and her future.

Ms. Hamby asserted that the Valdese Police Department was essential to the Town, that the service it provided could not be replaced, and That Valdese would no longer feel like the safe small town it was presently without the Town's Police Department. She added that the Police Department deserved respect, appreciation, and the proper tools, facilities, and support needed to continue to do their job safely and effectively.

Ms. Hamby announced she wanted to publicly say thank you to the officers who protected her when she was vulnerable. She thanked them for their courage, their sacrifice, and their service to the Town.

**Ms. Cheryl McCarthy, 205 Laurel Street,** stepped forward to the podium. She reported she was there to speak regarding the Valdese Police Department. Ms. McCarthy recounted that on December 22, 2024, she was taking a walk on Main Street, noted it was a beautiful day, and stated that she passed other individuals walking and running saying Merry Christmas to one another. Ms. McCarthy stated that as she continued her walk she heard a young man asking for directions. She stated he was behind her, and that as she turned around he pulled an eight (8) inch knife above his head, lunged toward her, and tried to kill her. Ms. McCarthy asserted that he wanted to kill her. She stated that she would not recount all the details of the attack, but expressed that she would have those scars for the rest of her life. Ms. McCarthy stated that she survived because she fought for her life and because God sent a wonderful man, named Daniel Peacock, who put his own life in danger to help her.

Ms. McCarthy shared that she had not spoken publicly about the matter, outside of court, but believed she needed to be there on the present day because she wanted one to know what Valdese's Police Department did on that day and for the weeks and months afterward. She continued that after Mr. Peacock came to her aid, the suspect dropped the bloody knife in the street and ran. Ms. McCarthy reported that they immediately called 911 and that the officers arrived within minutes. She expressed that this was a Sunday afternoon and recounted that they were there in minutes. Ms. McCarthy stated that the officers made sure she was getting the help she needed and secured the knife. She added that there were enough officers that day by the grace of God to be able to find the suspect.

Ms. McCarthy reported that the suspect made it known later on in court that he was looking for someone to kill, driving up and down the street to find a victim. She recounted that he was not poorly dressed, was not a vagrant, and had an address in Town. Ms. McCarthy stated that in the hours, days, and months that followed, the Valdese Police Department went above and beyond to help her and her family. She continued that on that day Chief Sharpe called the State Bureau of Investigation and asked if a female officer would come speak with her, reporting that the female officer came that night and that she found it very comforting to talk with her. Ms. McCarthy described how officers went up and down the street gathering every bit of video evidence they could. She disclosed that through mutual aid from the Federal Bureau of Investigation they were able to clear up a photo of the suspect to release publicly in order to inform the public of the danger.

Ms. McCarthy provided that Officer Marlowe interviewed her and continued to support her, coming to her home to collect DNA for the case and giving her his personal phone number to call. Ms. McCarthy expressed that this was priceless to her. She stated that the Police Department gathered all the evidence, the knife, the shoes, the clothes, the suspect's computer, and witness statements, all during the Christmas holidays. Ms. McCarthy reported that Chief Sharpe did not leave his post for three (3) days while he and his officers did the investigation, missing holiday time with his family.

Ms. McCarthy stated that after her attacker was in custody, Chief Sharpe and Officer Marlowe worked with the District Attorney to convene a grand jury to make sure the suspect did not get out on bail. She reported that the suspect was never out of custody and never got out on bail.

Ms. McCarthy asserted that recovery was hard, but that she was making progress. She wanted all to know that the Valdese Police Department was wonderful and very professional.

**Mr. Robert Stevenson, 1009 Creekside Drive,** stepped forward to the podium, and expressed agreement with the quality and greatness of the Town's Police and Fire Departments. Mr. Stevenson stated he wanted to remind the Council that in the last election the Valdese citizens voted 70% to show solid disapproval of the ideology of the previous regime. He reported that this was the largest margin of victory for all four seats in the history of Valdese elections. Mr. Stevenson urged the Council to listen to the vast majority of the Citizens in regard to the immediate need for a public safety building, proper pay for the employees, and a desire for reasonable amenities.

Mr. Stevenson expressed that the Town's citizens wanted a safe environment which had been made possible by the Town's outstanding Fire and Police Departments. He then acknowledged that the services did not come without a cost. Mr. Stevenson reported that the last regime first told citizens that the old public safety building could be repaired to suit the Town's needs, he added that this was untrue and a waste of time. Mr. Stevenson continued that the plan of the new building was then shunned, noting that the interest rate at that time was considerably lower than that of the present. He asserted that the delay cost the Town several million dollars, as did the multiple studies. Mr. Stevenson stated that time was money on the public safety building project and urged for it to move on as quickly as possible.

Mr. Stevenson stated Town employees on all levels needed to be fairly compensated, noting the Town had fallen behind in this regard and that amends needed to be made. He asserted that the Town would end up losing valuable employees if it continued to pay less than small surrounding communities.

Mr. Stevenson moved to discuss the tax rate, expressing that the tax cut which was implemented over the previous two (2) years was obviously unsustainable and had set the Town back financially. He stated that the same thing happened at the county level several years ago, reporting he had heard it would take ten (10) years to bring their general fund back up to its necessary level. Mr. Stevenson urged the Council to return the tax rate to at least that of the previous level to allow the Town to operate properly with proper facilities. He expressed that this was a reset of what the previous tax rate was, adding that he felt the taxes he paid to the Town gave him more tangible results than any other taxes he paid.

Mr. Stevenson urged the Council members to be decisive and vote yes on the presented budget, to help Valdese get back on the right foot again.

**Mr. Jason Whisnant, 404 Italy Street,** stepped forward to the podium, stating he would be speaking in support of constructing a new public safety building. He stated he would be providing his perspective as a 30-year public safety officer and retired chief. Mr. Whisnant expressed that the discussion was bigger than bricks, concrete, square footage, and the $10,000,000 price tag. He acknowledged that such a building would be expensive, but noted that it was about being prepared and leaving the community in the right place for the next generation.

Mr. Whisnant stated that every day, the Town's police officers and firefighters were asked to respond to emergencies under difficult and unpredictable conditions. He continued that they were expected to protect lives, preserve property, respond to serious wrecks, and serve the community, all at a moment's notice. Mr. Whisnant asserted that there were many examples of such service that had been heard on that night. He added that many of the facilities these employees worked from were built in an era before modern equipment, increased staffing demand, and today's safety standards. Mr. Whisnant spoke to other existing buildings being explored for the Fire and Police departments, stating it was realized that the current buildings were not sustainable and required substantial upfitting, which would have missed the mark for a long-term investment. Mr. Whisnant asserted that a new public safety building was not a luxury, it was critical infrastructure for the residents of the Town.

Mr. Whisnant reported that modern fire and police facilities improved emergency response coordination, provided safe conditions for first responders, and created valuable room for training, equipment, and evidence storage. He continued that when seconds mattered, the quality and functionality of those facilities were front and center, having a direct impact on outcomes.

Mr. Whisnant acknowledged that projects such as this one did in fact cost a lot of money, and that supporting such a project meant recognizing that taxes were going to have to be raised, noting that he felt they never should have been lowered in the first place. He stated that no one enjoyed paying higher taxes, but believed that most residents understood the difference between unnecessary spending and an essential investment in the community. Mr. Whisnant called for Town employees to be supported through a full implementation of the pay study. Mr. Whisnant expressed that the cost of doing nothing also deserved consideration, stating the Town had delayed infrastructure projects which led to higher costs. He shared that when a new fire station was being built in Morganton, they were given an "-ish" measurement, stating there was no set fee, just told it would be approximately $10,000,000. Mr. Whisnant stated that one knew delayed project cost would still eventually have to be paid for either way, stating it would either be paid for proactively with a plan, or reactively during a crisis when it was a dire need.

Mr. Whisnant expressed that the investment was about long-term responsibility, stating a well-designed public safety building could serve the Town for 40 to 60 years. He added that strong public safety systems strengthened economic development and were a way to invest in the future. Mr. Whisnant encouraged the Council to move forward with courage, transparency, and fiscal responsibility.

**Mr. Daniel Cobb, 1153 Gardiol Avenue,** stepped forward to the podium and provided that he was a resident of the Town and also the Town Manager of Granite Falls. He stated that he was present in the capacity of a resident who happened to be a town manager, and to relay his opinion of the proposed budget. Mr. Cobb stated that the numbers were what the numbers were. Mr. Cobb reported that he and Town Manager Herms spoke several months prior when Town Manager Herms had first started doing the math on what the budget would look like. He assured one that Town Manager Herms had looked for everything, adding that he had reached out from one manager to another to figure out if there was another option. Mr. Cobb assured the Council the last thing he wanted to do as a manager was recommend a tax increase, but noted that sometimes it was the answer.

Mr. Cobb reported that tax revenue was one's most reliable source of income and one's most dependable way to pay for things. He added that in terms of the LGC, this is what they wanted to see, they wanted to see if one had a way to pay back what they were going to borrow. Mr. Cobb expressed that Valdese was not alone, that in Granite Falls there was a similar situation as their Fire Department was built in 1967 and was causing capacity issues. He stated that he had also recommended a penny tax increase in Granite Falls to help pay for fire service, as after doing the math, that was what the numbers said had to be done.

Mr. Cobb summarized that he believed what had been heard on that night was fairly strong support for what needed to be done that evening. He stated that he did not envy the position that the Town was in, but completely understood it. Mr. Cobb expressed that the right call was in front of the Council and wished them good luck.

**Mr. Tim Skidmore, 312 Becker Avenue,** stepped forward to the podium and stated he was a lifetime Valdese resident and a former Council member of Ward 5. He reported that he was present to voice his concerns, observations, and words of encouragement on the issues that were facing the Council and community. Mr. Skidmore expressed that the Town was facing a list of difficult choices, most of them not acceptable as everyone would have to give up something. Mr. Skidmore acknowledged that the public safety building had been on Council's agenda for quite some time in some form or another. He continued that due to external pushback and political delays, it had come to a point where costs had risen to the level of causing a budget crisis. Mr. Skidmore expressed there was no doubt that the building had to be built, noting that the Town's Police and Fire Departments could not continue to operate in the manner that they currently were.

Mr. Skidmore reported that the citizens that he had talked to demanded it be built. He continued that the Town's police officers and firefighters deserved a better working environment and that the Town had invested millions of dollars in equipment, which was now in jeopardy. Mr. Skidmore noted that the center of the existing public safety building was over 100 years old. Mr. Skidmore expressed the Town was out of time and that there were no viable alternatives. He added that the use of county deputies or county fire departments was not feasible for Valdese. Mr. Skidmore stated that this option was eliminated as a possibility years ago and was not doable, but noted that it seemed like this is where the Town was headed if the budget were to not be approved. Mr. Skidmore asserted that response times of 30 minutes or more could be expected and that he had seen it happen to his own family who lived in Icard. He expressed that the County was already spread too thin and asked how they would be able to take on more. Mr. Skidmore stated that the same could be said for fire protection, asking how people would like their fire insurance going up. He reported that this would be more than offset by a tax increase.

Mr. Skidmore recounted that there was a question about pay, stating it must be addressed now. He stated that those individuals risked their lives to protect the community. Mr. Skidmore asserted that it was imperative that the pay study be completed. He asked how it would be paid for, stating that he did not think cuts in recreation were the answer. Mr. Skidmore likened this to stealing from the Town's future and noted that for years this had been the heart of Valdese. He stated that these programs attracted people to Valdese and that programs were offered for all ages and should be taken advantage of. Mr. Skidmore shared that he had attended the Valdese Sports Hall of Fame induction, noting a theme that ran through all of those that were honored. He continued that all had come up through the recreational sports in Valdese and all had successful careers and made major contributions to their communities.

Mr. Skidmore expressed that sometimes there were things one could just not put a dollar sign on. He stated he would leave those who said they could not do anymore with this thought. Mr. Skidmore shared he was having a conversation with his mother two (2) months prior, who had just turned 98, where she stated no one liked paying more taxes, but when it was for the common good, such as safety, she was willing to do her civic duty. Mr. Skidmore stated his mother had since passed away and noted that it struck him when she used the term civic duty, which he had not heard in a while. Mr. Skidmore expressed that maybe this was something that one had lost sight of in Valdese, stating it was one's civic duty to pass the budget, build the public safety building, and not cut the heart out of Valdese while doing so.

**Ms. Sandi Walker, 124 Main Street,** stepped forward to the podium and stated she was the owner of Dolls and Designs by Sandi, the largest porcelain doll making business in North Carolina. She noted that this should tell one that she had a background of how to work with money. Ms. Walker shared that she started in a ten by ten (10x10) part of her garage and now had the largest doll making business in the state, so she knew a little bit about making money and being conservative with what one was doing. Ms. Walker reported that she had looked at the budgets that the Town has had for the past four (4) years, stating that the 22-23 Budget was in the amount of $12,444,500, the 23-24 Budget was in the amount of $13,375,607, the 24-25 Budget was in the amount of $14,463,192, and the 25-26 Budget was in the amount of $17,647,861. She expressed that she had been hearing the Town had to cut and asked if it was cutting, why was more money being spent. Ms. Walker asserted that this was a $5,000,000 increase over four (4) years. Ms. Walker asked if the Town was in such dire straits, where had all the money gone, what happened to it. She stated that she had a proposal for the budget that would be simple and equitable to everyone.

Ms. Walker proposed a 10% reduction in each department. She stated that 10% was good enough for God and asked why it was not good enough for the Council and the Town's citizens. Ms. Walker reminded everyone that the elected officials, and Staff, worked for the people who made the businesses, owned the property, and paid the bills, and asked for the citizens to receive consideration. Ms. Walker expressed that she fought for 25 years to get the Town's firemen and policemen a decent place to operate out of, stating that it was an issue that kept being kicked down the road. She thanked God that there had not been a horrible accident in those years, and blessed the hearts of the police officers and firefighters who did their jobs in spite of what they have had to deal with.

Ms. Walker reported the situations that had to be dealt with, stating there was rain soaking everything in the old police department due to the Taj Mahal of a Town Hall that had been built. She stated that that was what this was about, recounting that Mr. Weichel had stated that more money was owed on the building than what it was originally financed for. Ms. Walker stated that one had to learn from prior mistakes. She provided that she wanted to work with the Council to find a solution, stating that they did not have to vote on the Budget that night.

Ms. Walker reported that the 10% cut she proposed would bring in $750,000 which was equal to the money being raised by the proposed tax increase. She expressed that this was worth thinking about and thanked the Council for their time.

**Mr. Ben Lutz, 1104 Lutz Street,** stepped forward to the podium, sharing that he had been a lifetime resident of Valdese and that his ancestors came to Valdese which was part of the reason he was there today. Mr. Lutz stated that he had watched the Town grow, go through a lot of trials, and die. He expressed that Council members in the past made good decisions and built it back up and that the Town showed resiliency as industry was lost overseas. Mr. Lutz acknowledged that the Council had hard decisions to make and that he did not envy them. Mr. Lutz expressed that he lived on the side of Town that apparently was not represented that night, as there was no one speaking about his side of Town which was the south side of Crow Hill.

Mr. Lutz stated that the Town's Police Department was one of the finest that there was but acknowledged that it had its problems in the past, which were solved through the wisdom of the Council. Mr. Lutz discussed the positive changes that were made to the Police Department. Mr. Lutz recounted an incident that happened near his residence back in 2022, stating it was an area that was rarely patrolled, noting this was not the fault of the Police Department. He continued that three (3) separate times individuals shot up a drug house, even emptying out an AR-15 into the house in one of those incidents. Mr. Lutz reported that those individuals were arrested due to the video he was able to provide. He added that anything one could do to be proactive in helping the community was a positive, adding that all had to work through these issues together.

Mr. Lutz spoke regarding taxes, stating that no one was talking about the poor people that were doing the best they could. He discussed the upcoming re-evaluation being done by Burke County, stating that he did not know where that was going, but noted that based on what the Town was asking for, he was afraid that increase may exceed 30%. Mr. Lutz expressed there was a community which was not represented at the hearing that night, pointing out he did not see older people that were not able to leave their home to defend themselves at the hearing.

Mr. Lutz spoke to the individuals who came to Valdese, asserting that they had a dream and that one should want their children and grandchildren to have a dream as well. He continued that he did not want that dream to be erased because of high taxes that would dissuade individuals from wanting to move to the Town. Mr. Lutz asked for the Council to consider those who were on fixed incomes before making their decisions, stating they were already hurting. He added that they had medical bills and urged the Council to think of the people who were not quite as lucky as them. Mr. Lutz reported that his ancestors built the Town and noted that most of those people were gone.

Mr. Lutz stated that the decisions which were made from now on involved a lot of responsibility. He asked the Council to use wisdom, think about everybody, think about the big picture, and thanked them for the job they did for the Town.

Mayor Huffman closed the public hearing at 6:46 p.m.

Mayor Huffman asked the Council what their preference was as to a motion on Agenda Item A FY26-27 Budget Public Hearing and Ordinance Adoption, including Items: 8A1, 8A2, 8A3, 8A4, 8A5, and 8A6.

**MOTION:** Councilwoman Radabaugh made a motion to defer the budget adoption until June 22, 2026. Seconded by Councilwoman Ward.

**DISCUSSION:** Councilwoman Radabaugh stated the reason she was asking for the delay was due to citizens' concerns, as well as her own. She expressed that she wanted a public safety building and wanted to make sure that the Town moved forward with it with the best, most responsible decision. Councilwoman Radabaugh asserted that she did not know how one could push the decision forward without a guaranteed maximum price, which the Council was told it would get in two (2) weeks.

Councilwoman Radabaugh stated she had something she'd like to propose and referenced the graphic which follows.


Councilwoman Radabaugh reported that this was a graphic of the exact building currently being sat in, that being the Town Hall. She continued that this was an option that she felt could potentially be used for the Town's Police Department. Councilwoman Radabaugh stated that this could be done almost immediately and she felt that it could potentially save the Town millions of dollars. She continued that Town Hall Staff could be moved into the Old Rock School, which had recently been renovated and had the space which was required.

Councilwoman Radabaugh stated this plan was a draft and could be modified, but noted that it felt like something that was usable and was a great landmark for Valdese. She added that she did not know why the building could not be used for a police department currently, stating that renovations could start almost immediately. Councilwoman Radabaugh reiterated that this would save the Town money and move the Police Department forward in the direction they deserved.

Councilwoman Radabaugh proposed that the Fire Department could be housed next door, noting that it would not cost nearly as much as the current $10,000,000-plus price tag. Councilwoman Radabaugh reported that a town two (2) miles away was building a 15,000 square foot police department as well for approximately $4,200,000. She acknowledged that this price was likely guaranteed over a year ago, but added that even if it was $2,000,000 more now it would still save the Town a potential $7,000,000.

Councilwoman Radabaugh stated she did not know what the building renovation would cost, noting that she was asked to come up with ideas and that this was her idea. She reported that past discussions were had to potentially sell the Town Hall building as the Town owed more than what it cost to originally construct it. Councilwoman Radabaugh asked why the building could not be used for the men and women who served the Town each and every day, adding that it would no longer be half empty.

Councilwoman Radabaugh added that it would allow the Council time to not only explore that opportunity, but take a better look at the pay study. She stated that the pay study needed to happen for everyone in the Town, not just most, and that hourly employees needed to be paid for 40 hours, not 35. Councilwoman Radabaugh continued that she did not think one should give someone a pay raise and then tell them that 12% of their hours would be deducted, expressing that this was not fair.

Councilwoman Radabaugh reported that she was asked to come up with ideas, noting that she was not asking for any programmatic cuts. She expressed that she, and her family, loved all the programs the Town had and wanted to sustain those programs. Councilwoman Radabaugh stated that there was a way to potentially save the Town millions so that it was not constantly asking the Town's residents to raise taxes.

Councilwoman Radabaugh noted that the thirteen (13) cent tax increase was going to cover $10,000,000, stating that this was not what the building would cost, it would in fact cost more than this. She continued that the Town was also relying on Burke County's reevaluation to raise additional tax revenue even though it did not know what that increase would look like. Councilwoman Radabaugh asked if the reevaluation was not favorable, would the Council ask for another tax increase in the year which was to follow. Councilwoman Radabaugh summarized that all she was asking was to take a couple weeks to look at other options and find out what the guaranteed maximum price would be.

Councilwoman Ward expressed that she agreed with Councilwoman Radabaugh, stating that there were a lot of unknowns, such as the finalized construction costs, the total debt service obligation, the operational costs associated with the facility, the contingency exposure, and the true long-term impact on taxpayers. She asked if the Council did not have those numbers when they sat in the meeting with First Tryon, who were they supposed to talk to to see what options were available regarding debt service. Councilwoman Ward recounted that the Council was given the figure of $10,000,000, and when she questioned what would happen if costs went above that amount she was immediately told the Town would not be able to afford the facility.

Councilwoman Ward questioned why the Council was voting on this matter before they saw the guaranteed maximum price, which they would see in two (2) weeks. She continued that she did not want to make a final decision without seeing what First Tryon, the Town's financial advisors, had to say about it as they evaluated the cost at $10,000,000, not at $10,800,000 to $11,200,000. Councilwoman Ward expressed that all that was being asked was to put the meeting off until June 22, 2026, that she was not saying no. She wanted the Town to present transparently to the public what the cost would be, stating it would be the wise thing to do.

Mayor Pro Tem Lowman asked what the cost would be to find out the cost of the potential renovation of Town Hall. She also asked what was going to be done to the people who were currently paying rent at the Old Rock School, questioning where they would be moved to, as one would have to move someone to make room for the Town offices. Councilwoman Radabaugh stated that in months prior she had asked how much room there was in the Old Rock School and reported she was told that there would be plenty of room for the Town Hall Staff to move there. She added that Council meetings could be held in the auditorium. Mayor Pro Tem Lowman stated she was sure there was room, but noted that there were individuals presently in those offices who would have to be moved. Councilwoman Radabaugh responded that she was told that there were empty rooms, which is why she had made the proposal. Town Manager Herms stated that there was some empty space, but that he did not know what the renovation cost would be to make those spaces usable. He continued that he looked at it briefly while trying to come up with alternatives, but never went as far as to get an estimated cost of what renovations may be. Town Manager Herms stated that he did not know if those spaces would be ADA compliant without installing an additional elevator.

Ms. Angi touched on the empty spaces that were at the Old Rock School, stating that they were currently used as supplemental space for the auditorium, which is why they were currently empty. She added that they were not empty during major events. Ms. Angi reported that there were only four (4) of those spaces currently and that in order to move Town Hall Staff some individuals would have to be moved. Councilwoman Radabaugh asked if there would be room for four (4) offices or if more than one (1) individual could occupy those rooms. Ms. Angi responded that they were approximately 700 square feet apiece, stating they were sizable. She added that it would impact what could be done in the auditorium, stating that, in her opinion, one would need to keep two (2) dressing rooms to support programming in the auditorium. Ms. Angi summarized that this would leave only two (2) spaces without moving others.

Town Manager Herms stated that without hiring someone who knew more about architecture there was no way to know what the cost of the renovations would be. He added that he did know there was space over there, but noted that at least one (1) or two (2) businesses may need to be moved. Ms. Angi added that if one were to move the entirety of the Town Hall Staff to the Old Rock School one would more than likely need to move the business Dream Connections which has the lower level. She noted that this would allow one the means of having a drive-thru for water bills and other things of that nature. Councilwoman Radabaugh asked if they could be moved upstairs. Ms. Angi responded that they could not, stating that they had the whole lower level on the east side of the building. Councilwoman Radabaugh stated that the Town did not need the lower level, asking if Ms. Angi was stating this due to the drive-thru. Ms. Angi stated that if one wanted to continue programming they would at minimum have to keep the two (2) dressing rooms that were upstairs, which would free up two (2) spaces. Councilwoman Radabaugh reported that this was approximately 1,400 square feet which would be free.

Town Manager Herms stated that he did not think it was impossible, providing that the reason Staff was being hesitant was because they did not want to speak to something they had not yet had the chance to explore. He continued that he did not want to come back and say he was wrong, adding that nothing more than a preliminary walkthrough had been conducted. Town Manager Herms provided that there was some space on the third floor, which would require the moving of Old Colony Players, and would also require figuring out how to make the space ADA compliant.

Town Manager Herms expressed that he thought it was possible, but the cost was unknown, noting that in his experience renovations of a 100-year-old building got costly quickly. He stated he was not for or against it, there were just a lot of unknowns. Councilwoman Radabaugh stated that one would only put offices in there, not a police department with a sally port and other requirements. Town Manager Herms responded in the affirmative, noting that they would still have to be made ADA compliant.

Councilwoman Ward recounted that all that was being asked was to defer the vote to June 22, 2026, that it was not a no, they just wanted to be able to be transparent with citizens who were relying on the Council to make wise choices on their behalf, especially when it came to their hard-earned dollars.

Mayor Pro Tem Lowman asked what the cost would be to explore putting the Police Department in the Town Hall, as the Town would have to spend money again to explore that option. She noted that she knew they were currently in the building, but added that they did not have an evidence room, armory, interrogation room, or sally port. Mayor Pro Tem Lowman expressed that in order to turn the Town Hall into a police department it would have to be renovated and asked what the cost would be just to get an architect to look at it. Town Manager Herms provided that D.R. Reynolds did a walkthrough of the building, though nothing was formal. He reported that they stated it would be very expensive, adding that he did not know what very expensive specifically meant. Town Manager Herms stated while there would be a guaranteed maximum price by June 22, 2026, he could not guarantee an estimate of what it would cost to renovate the Town Hall, or the Old Rock School, by then. Councilwoman Radabaugh asked if D.R. Reynolds was the same company doing the public safety building. Town Manager Herms responded in the affirmative, that it was the same company chosen by the Council to complete the design-build.

Councilwoman Zimmerman stated that Council had already entertained that idea and voted it down. Councilwoman Radabaugh responded that those discussions involved renovating half the building, with the Police Department sharing the space with Town Hall Staff. Councilwoman Ward stated she thought it would be a great building for the Town’s Police Officers. Mayor Pro Tem Lowman agreed with Councilwoman Zimmerman, that the idea of keeping the Police Department in the Town Hall was voted down four (4) to one (1), with Zimmerman, Lowman, Ogle, and Ward making up the four (4). She noted that vote occurred in October of 2025. Councilwoman Radabaugh stated that this was due to space being shared with Town Hall Staff, which was not safe. Mayor Pro Tem Lowman responded that this was correct. Councilwoman Radabaugh reported that the space would not be shared at all, that one would have the new Police Department next to the Fire Department. Mayor Pro Tem Lowman stated that she understood this and asked if the Council would have numbers by June 22, 2026, to give them enough information to make that decision. Councilman Ogle asked what the cost would be just to receive those estimates. Councilwoman Zimmerman stated that there was a cost associated with having D.R. Reynolds prepare that figure, adding that she just saw a lot more price tags being added on to the project. She expressed that she did not see how this would be resolved by June 22, 2026. Councilwoman Radabaugh responded that on June 22, 2026 Council would have the firm number of the proposed building that they had been waiting on.

Councilwoman Ward reported that this is what she had been hearing from citizens, who asked how Council could vote on something without knowing the cost. She noted that this was 100% of the calls she had been receiving. Councilwoman Ward stated there were a lot of individuals at the meeting telling them to go forward, but noted that she got texts from individuals who could not make the meetings who wanted to know the cost. She asserted that she was standing in for them and saying that the vote needed to be deferred until June 22, 2026.

Councilwoman Zimmerman asked what the process looked like, in terms of scheduling, if the vote was delayed until June 22, 2026. Town Manager Herms reported that the way things were set up was for the loan to not exceed $10,800,000 and for the Town to use funds which had been set aside for the remaining amount. He added that the Town had properties it planned to sell and a pledge from a private entity to assist in raising any additional shortfalls. Town Manager Herms stated that whether that materialized or not, he could not speak to, but asserted that this was the process the Town was moving forward with. Town Manager Herms provided that the Town should have the guaranteed maximum price no later than June 15, would speak to banks on June 3, comments on that RFP would be June 8th, and the final RFP would be submitted to the banks on June 10th. He continued that by June 19, the Town had to send notice to the joint legislative committee, bank bids would be due by July 1, the Town would submit its application to the LGC on July 7, a draft approval resolution for loan documents would be distributed the week of July 13 with comments due July 22, on July 24 the Town would finalize approval of the resolution, distribute the draft closing documents the week of July 27 with an August 3 Council meeting where the resolution would be voted on. Town Manager Herms stated that the loan would close on August 11, not to exceed $10,800,000.

Mr. Weichel explained the tight deadline that the Town had, stating that if Council waited until June 22 to receive the guaranteed maximum price, he was worried that the Town would miss the August LGC meeting. He reported that this meant the Town would not present to the LGC until September, at which point the 60-day guaranteed maximum price would have expired, which ran the risk of that price increasing. Mr. Weichel provided that this was why the LGC, as well as the Town's debt attorney, had recommended an "up to" amount, adding that this was typically how construction projects were handled. He stated that this was why the Town was ahead of the curve, as it only had a 60-day window between getting the price and going out for bank bids to get the best interest rate. Mr. Weichel reported that the LGC would not put the Town on its agenda unless Council had passed the resolution supporting the financing of the public safety building. He recounted that the Town ran the risk of pushing itself out of the 60-day window and having to redo the process to get an updated guaranteed maximum price.

Mayor Pro Tem Lowman sought to clarify what Mr. Weichel was stating, asking if it was possible that delaying the process would cause the price to go up and restart the process with the LGC. Mr. Weichel replied that he could not say the price would go up, but stated that it would put the Town in major jeopardy of missing the 60-day window. He noted that if the Town shortened its window for bank proposals, it could possibly shorten the window a bit, but added that it could lead to the Town not getting the most competitive interest rate.

Councilwoman Radabaugh asked what First Tryon had to say, as in the budget workshop numbers over $10,000,000 were not discussed. Mr. Weichel replied that the model provided by First Tryon was a living document, so as things changed, the Town could input the numbers and see the new projections. Councilwoman Radabaugh asked who would pay for the difference in cost if it were over $10,800,000, questioning if more taxes would need to be raised in the following year if costs exceeded that figure. Mr. Weichel stated that if the cost exceeded that figure, First Tryon was recommending that the Town take the difference out of its fund balance reserves. Councilwoman Radabaugh clarified where the additional $800,000 was coming from, as discussions from the budget workshop indicated a maximum cost of $10,000,000. Mr. Weichel answered that this would be part of the borrowing if Council were to choose to do so, he continued that Council may ask to only borrow $9,500,000, in which case the Town would have to take the rest out of fund balance. Mr. Weichel reported that First Tryon suggested keeping the Town's fund balance higher in case of emergencies. Mr. Weichel recounted that August 3 is when Council would receive the resolutions regarding bank proposals, noting that the LGC meeting would be on the following day. Mr. Weichel added that the resolution from the current meeting would signal to the LGC that the Town was moving forward to allow them to be placed on the LGC's August 4 agenda.

Mayor Pro Tem Lowman asked Mr. Weichel to clarify if a delay of the current vote would cause the Town not to be heard at the LGC's August meeting. Mr. Weichel responded that the Town still had to go to banks and could not do so before there was a consensus on the building and the budget. Mr. Weichel emphasized that the Town did not want to have the guaranteed maximum price expire on them. Town Manager Herms added that the First Tryon model did not account for additional funds that the Town may collect from the sale of properties in the near future.

**VOTE:** The motion to defer budget adoption until June 22, 2026, failed by a vote of two (2) to three (3). Councilwoman Radabaugh and Councilwoman Ward voted in favor of the motion. Mayor Pro Tem Lowman, Councilwoman Zimmerman, and Councilman Ogle voted against the motion.

Councilwoman Radabaugh stated she would like a roll call vote for the next vote. Mayor Huffman stated that according to the guidelines there would be no roll call vote. Councilwoman Ward asked when it was appropriate to have a roll call vote. Mayor Huffman provided that since he had been on Council there had never been a roll call vote. Councilwoman Ward asked Town Attorney Swanson when it would be appropriate to have a roll call vote. Town Attorney Swanson reported that the rules did not specify that one could have a roll call vote, but noted that the Town operated under Robert's Rules of Order. He stated that in this scenario one would probably be fine to do a roll call vote.

**MOTION:** Mayor Pro Tem Lowman made a motion to approve the FY26-27 Budget Ordinance as presented, including Items: 8A1, 8A2, 8A3, 8A4, 8A5, and 8A6. Seconded by Councilwoman Zimmerman.

**DISCUSSION:** Councilwoman Zimmerman provided that she felt confident in making the following statement. She stated that no one wanted to pay more in taxes and that one did not have to participate in, or follow, social media feeds to convince one otherwise. Councilwoman Zimmerman continued that she had immediate and extended family who had to pay Valdese property taxes and would be affected by the decision to implement a new fire tax. She stated she had to face people in the grocery stores and church pews who would be affected by the proposal. Councilwoman Zimmerman asserted that this was not an easy solution by any means, noting that the only easy decision was that the Town must build a new public safety facility for its police and fire services. She reported that the need for such a facility had been recognized by the Town's citizens in the 2024 Strategic Plan and prior Councils who had put the project in motion. Councilwoman Zimmerman expressed that it had also been past Councils who had slowed down progress on the facility. She continued that delaying the project any longer could result in losing more uniformed officers and firefighters, and would certainly not help the Town recruit in any capacity. Councilwoman Zimmerman reported it would affect homeowners, businesses, and merchants to keep kicking the can down the road. She expressed that she was dismayed that there were additional considerations of such an idea.

Councilwoman Zimmerman asserted that she wanted to live in a community that had services such as trash collection, debris pickup, clean streets, and other places and things that improved everyone's quality of life. She noted that there was a cost to providing such services and recognized that they would have to be paid for. Councilwoman Zimmerman reported that she had received an email from a citizen which stated a 30% tax increase was excessive and not needed. She stated she would disagree with comments like this and say that the proposed increase was a reset, a reset to a tax rate which was cut 30% in 2024. Councilwoman Zimmerman expressed that that rate could not sustain the level of services that citizens needed. She indicated that the Town was working on building plans that would result in a facility that would meet the needs of the Town's Police and Fire Departments well into the future. Councilwoman Zimmerman stated that the Town was working with its financial advisors to find the most affordable debt service package that would allow the Town to move forward on the most financially sensible path. She added that those funds had to be found somewhere and thought that the presented budget provided such a path.

Councilwoman Zimmerman spoke to recognizing the Town's workforce and finding a path forward for proper pay. She stated that while it may not be the perfect solution, it had been sliced and diced to give everyone an increase. Councilwoman Zimmerman asserted that the Town was making the best choices it could as to not put an onerous burden on the backs of its residents. She stated that these decisions were not made lightly or without concern and that it was time to make the hard decisions that past Councils had chosen to ignore or dismiss as they were either too hard, or not their idea. Councilwoman Zimmerman called for one to step up and make the Town the best place it could be, stating that she believed the budget put the Town on the path to accomplish such a feat.

Mayor Pro Tem Lowman felt the Town was at a crossroads regarding safety, stability, and the very identity of Valdese. She expressed that it was time to support the fire tax to fund the construction of a long overdue public safety building. Mayor Pro Tem Lowman continued that the Town needed to provide essential funding for pay raises for its Staff. She provided that she knew a tax increase was a significant ask and that it was not fun for anybody. Mayor Pro Tem Lowman reported that she had researched programs which would provide property tax relief to Burke County residents, stating there was a program for elderly or disable exclusion. She provided that qualifying owners had to be at least 65 years old or be totally and permanently disabled, while also having an income of $38,800 or less. Mayor Pro Tem Lowman provided a second program which was for disabled veterans, reporting that disabled veterans, as well as their surviving spouses, were eligible for property tax relief. She noted a third program, which was a circuit breaker property tax deferment, stating this program identified that individuals who were at least 65 years old, or permanently disabled, with an income ranging from $38,800 to $58,200. Mayor Pro Tem Lowman stated that the forms for the programs were in the pamphlet area in the lobby of the Town Hall and that they had to be submitted to the Burke County Tax Office by Monday, June 1.

Mayor Pro Tem Lowman stated that one must look at the facts in Valdese, reporting that the tax rate was lowered to 41.5 cents in 2023. She noted that this rate was too low to sustain the Town’s basic services and far too low to maintain the facilities the Town’s Police and Fire Departments required. Mayor Pro Tem Lowman asserted that the Town was now paying the price for that delay, noting the conditions which the police officers and firefighters were facing, such as the condemnation of the public safety building and the Police Department operating out of the Town Hall. She added that the Town Hall was never designed for law enforcement, and had no armory, evidence storage room, interrogation room, or secure sally port. Mayor Pro Tem Lowman continued that the current arrangement was unfair to other Town Staff, reporting over 30 incidents where Town Hall employees were confronted by individuals who were intoxicated, under the influence, or suffering from a mental health crisis. Mayor Pro Tem Lowman stated that the Fire Department was in no better shape, reporting firefighters were sleeping in quarters where truck exhaust rose through the floorboards, had to shower in an area with rusty pipes, and had reported fluids leaking into storm drains due to the facility failing. She added that office spaces were currently within a commercial trailer.

Mayor Pro Tem Lowman asserted that beyond the buildings, the Town was failing its people, stating a recent pay study showed that the Town’s Police and Fire Departments were over 20% below market value. She expressed that if the Town did not act, it would not have departments left to lead as its employees would leave and it would be forced to hand its safety services over to the County.

Mayor Pro Tem Lowman concluded by acknowledging the cost of waiting. She noted that a 2023 estimate for a public safety building on Pineburr was proposed for $7,900,000, and a public safety building at the Massel Avenue site was proposed for $9,200,000. Mayor Pro Tem Lowman restated that the current estimate was between $10,800,000 and $11,200,000 and that every time the Town delayed the process, the price for its taxpayers went up. Mayor Pro Tem Lowman asserted that if the Town wanted to recruit businesses and grow its community, it must provide the basic tools for safety. She noted that the citizens of Valdese were willing to do what was necessary to ensure its employees were paid and its Town was protected.

Councilwoman Ward hoped that the Council would take the next couple of days and distribute the information about tax relief programs to its elderly citizens. She added that there was no one on the Council that did not believe the Town’s police officers and firefighters were worthy of being paid, but noted that she wished the budget was split into line items, as she could not accept the budget because she did not know the numbers. Councilwoman Radabaugh agreed, stating she did not know why there were six (6) different line items all being voted on at the same time. She expressed that she thought all Town employees deserved a raise, including hourly employees, noting that they were being excluded from receiving the full benefits from the pay study.

Councilwoman Radabaugh wanted to include that she was always for public safety, whether it was the Town’s Fire Department or Police Department. She asserted that they definitely needed to have a facility, which was why she was trying to come up with ideas that would not cost everyone more and more every single year.

**<u>VOTE:</u>** The results of the roll call vote were as follows: Councilwoman Radabaugh voted Nay, Councilwoman Zimmerman voted Aye, Mayor Pro Tem Lowman voted Aye, Councilman Ogle voted Aye, and Councilwoman Ward voted Nay. The vote was three (3) to two (2) and the motion was approved.



Agenda

TOWN OF VALDESE BUDGET ORDINANCE
FISCAL YEAR 2026-2027

VALDESE NORTH CAROLINA

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE TOWN COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF VALDESE, NORTH CAROLINA, THAT:

Section 1: It is estimated that the following revenues will be available in the General Fund for the Fiscal Year beginning July 1, 2026 and ending June 30, 2027:

| | |
|---|---|
| Ad Valorem Taxes | $ 2,384,770 |
| Other Taxes | 2,738,223 |
| Unrestricted Intergovernmental Revenues | 1,521,000 |
| Restricted Intergovernmental Revenues | 198,300 |
| Sales and Services | 1,073,867 |
| Investment Earnings | 223,612 |
| Miscellaneous | <u>33,719</u> |
| | $8,173,491 |

Section 2: The following amounts are hereby appropriated in the General Fund for the Operation of the Town government and its activities for the Fiscal Year beginning July 1, 2026 and ending June 30, 2027, in accordance with the chart of accounts heretofore established for this Town:

| | |
|---|---|
| General Government | $ 2,522,193 |
| Public Safety | 2,272,676 |
| Transportation | 1,039,609 |
| Economic and Community Development | 115,852 |
| Culture and Recreation | 2,062,040 |
| Debt Service | <u>161,122</u> |
| | $8,173,491 |

Section 3: It is estimated that the following revenues will be available in the Water and Sewer Fund for the Fiscal Year beginning July 1, 2026 and ending June 30, 2027:

| | |
|---|---|
| Sales and Services | $ 7,950,723 |
| Investment Earnings | 35,000 |
| Miscellaneous | <u>191,900</u> |
| | $8,177,623 |

Section 4: The following amounts are hereby appropriated in the Water and Sewer Fund for the operation of the water and sewer utilities for the Fiscal Year beginning July 1, 2026 and ending June 30, 2027, in accordance with the chart of accounts heretofore established for this Town:

| | |
|---|---|
| Environmental Protection | $ 5,632,829 |
| Construction, Maintenance, and Repairs | 1,565,879 |
| Debt Service | <u>978,915</u> |
| | $8,177,623 |





Agenda

TOWN OF VALDESE BUDGET ORDINANCE
FISCAL YEAR 2026-2027

VALDESE NORTH CAROLINA

Section 5: The following amounts form the revenue portion of the financial plan for the Fire Department:

| | |
|---|---|
| Fire District Tax | <u>$ 742,338</u> |
| | $742,338 |

Section 6: The following amounts form the expenditure portion of the financial plan for the Fire Department:

| | |
|---|---|
| Fire Department Operations | <u>$ 742,338</u> |
| | $742,338 |

Section 7: There is hereby levied an ad valorem tax at the rate of forty-one- and one-half cents ($0.415) per one hundred dollars ($100) valuation of property as listed for taxes as of January 1, 2026, for the purpose of generating a portion of the available revenue listed in the General Fund in Section 1 of this ordinance. This rate, based upon an estimated total valuation of $589,270,946 will generate a levy of $2,371,770 with an estimated collection rate of 98.38%.

Section 8: There is hereby levied a fire district tax at the rate of thirteen cents ($0.13) per one hundred dollars ($100) valuation of property as listed for taxes as of January 1, 2026, for the purpose of generating the available revenue of the fire department financial plan in Section 5 of this ordinance. This rate, based upon an estimated total valuation of $589,270,946 will generate a levy of $742,338 with an estimated collection rate of 98.38%.

Section 9: The operating funds encumbered on the financial records of June 30, 2026 are hereby reappropriated into this budget.

Section 10: The corresponding "Fiscal Year 2026-2027 Rate and Fee Schedule" is approved with the adoption of this Annual Budget Ordinance.

Section 11: The Budget Officer is hereby authorized to transfer appropriations within a fund as contained herein under the following conditions:

a. He may transfer amounts between line-item expenditures within a department without limitation and without a report being required.
b. He may transfer amounts up to $100,000 between departments of the same fund including contingency appropriations within the same fund.
c. He may not transfer any amounts between funds, except as approved by the Governing Board in the Annual Budget Ordinance as amended.

376 of 611
TOWN OF VALDESE BUDGET ORDINANCE
FISCAL YEAR 2026-2027

VALDESE NORTH CAROLINA

Agenda

Section 12: The Town Manager, or his designee, is hereby authorized to execute agreements within funds included in the Budget Ordinance or other actions by the Governing Board. To enhance the efficiency of implementing this Budget Ordinance, the Governing Board also grants authority to the Town Manager, or his designee to:

a. Approve applications and agreements for acceptance of grant funds from other governmental units and non-profit organizations;
b. Approve lease agreements;
c. Approve construction or repair projects where formal bids are not required by law;
d. Approve consultant, professional, or maintenance service agreements;
e. Purchase of supplies, materials, or equipment where formal bids are not required by law;
f. Purchase real property when funds are available in an adopted or amended budget;
g. Adjust the payment of fees owed to the Town when both reasonable and justified;
h. Dispose of personal property as provided under NCGS 160A-266(c);
i. Approve contracts related to bid awards made by the Governing Board;
j. Approve settlement agreements;
k. Approve easements;
l. Enter into all other contracts and agreements adopted by the Governing Board when authorized to do so under NC General Statutes;
m. Take all other action not specifically reserved for City Council under NC General Statutes.

Section 13: Copies of the Annual Budget Ordinance shall be furnished to the Town Clerk, Governing Board, Town Manager, and Chief Finance Officer to be kept on file by them for their direction in the disbursement of funds

This ordinance is adopted on this the 28th day May, 2026.

________________________
Mayor Keith Huffman

Attest: ______________________
Jessica Lail, Town Clerk

**<u>APPROVED SUPPORT FOR FINANCING FOR A PUBLIC SAFETY BUILDING</u>**

Mayor Huffman called the public hearing to order at 7:32 p.m. and asked those who wished to speak to step forward.

**<u>Mr. Glenn Harvey, 801 Micol Avenue</u>**, stepped forward to the podium. Mr. Harvey stated that the most fundamental thing he had to say about the hearing was that the hearing should not be occurring. He continued that the hearing was about financing a building that one did not know the cost of. Mr. Harvey stated it was irresponsible, if not morally reprehensible, to tax citizens for an unknown future expense. He reported that the Town was tripling its debt. Mr. Harvey asked whether anyone had ever hired a contractor, as the Council had done, to build a home without even meeting the contractor or obtaining an estimate of a final cost before applying for a loan.

Mr. Harvey asserted that the timing for the financing of the project was completely wrong because many, if not most, new public safety building projects were funded in whole or in part by federal and state grants. Mr. Harvey stated that one must exhaust the search for grants prior to applying for a loan, as grants were needs-based, and one did not apply for a grant if one already had a loan for the project. He continued that applying for a grant, like applying for a loan, required a firm cost estimate. Mr. Harvey noted that Staff may receive the final cost in June, adding that the next Council meeting was not scheduled until August. He then pointed out that there were more grant funds available for fire stations than there were for police stations, which meant the combination of the facilities reduced the likelihood of receiving such a grant, though it did not necessarily eliminate it.

Mr. Harvey recounted that in 2024, some Council Members and Interim Town Manager Steen learned the things he had just reported during meetings with Representative Hugh Blackwell, then-Speaker of the House Tim Moore, and legislative assistants to Senators Tillis and Budd. Mr. Harvey shared that in the prior year he had heard the former Manager of Maiden say that Maiden had discussed securing a $5,000,000 grant for a facility in that Town, although he added that the facility eventually cost much more.

Mr. Harvey summarized that it would be irresponsible for the Council to encumber citizens with overwhelming debt without first exploring grants to help pay for it and without knowing the final cost.

Mayor Huffman asked if anyone else wished to speak. Hearing none, Mayor Huffman closed the public hearing at 7:36 p.m.

**MOTION:** Councilwoman Zimmerman made a motion to approve the resolution supporting the Town's application to the LGC for approval of its financing agreement for the public safety building. Seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Lowman.

**DISCUSSION:** Mayor Pro Tem Lowman stated that the Town had looked into grant opportunities as much as possible. She noted that, since Hurricane Helene, available grant funding had been directed towards areas of Western North Carolina that sustained major damage. Mayor Pro Tem Lowman continued that the Town had not been able to obtain grant funding for a fire or police station because available funds were being used in areas devastated by Hurricane Helene.

Councilwoman Ward asked if this was opening the door to say that Staff would go with whatever the contractor said the amount was. Town Manager Herms stated that Council was authorizing Staff to submit an application for financing in an amount not to exceed $10,800,000. Mr. Weichel added that the resolution informed the LGC that the Town intended to solicit bank bids after receiving the guaranteed maximum price from D.R. Reynolds. He continued that, at the August 3, 2026, meeting, Council would consider another, final, resolution for the specific lending proposal. Councilwoman Ward felt that citizens needed to understand that there would be one more vote in August.

Councilwoman Ward asked if $10,800,000 was decided on with this motion, further questioning what would happen if the contractor came back and asked for more. Mr. Weichel responded that the amount borrowed would not exceed $10,800,000 and that, if the project cost exceeded that amount, the Town would have to use fund balance to cover the difference. Councilwoman Ward asked whether it would be acceptable to use fund balance in that scenario, as the Council was originally told to borrow the full amount. Mr. Weichel provided that there were pros and cons to borrowing the full amount versus putting a large amount down. He stated that borrowing could provide the Town a buffer in case it was needed.

TOWN of VALDESE
RESOLUTION
Supporting an application to the Local Government Commission
for its approval of a Town financing agreement – 2026 Public Safety Building

The Town Council of the Town of Valdese has previously determined to carry out a project to acquire, construct, equip and finance a public safety building for the police and fire departments.

The Council has also made a preliminary determination to finance this project through an installment financing, as authorized under Section 160A-20 of the North Carolina General Statutes. In an installment financing, the Town's repayment obligation is secured by a mortgage-type interest in all or part of the property being financed, but not by any pledge of the Town's taxing power or any specific revenue stream. In this case, the Town expects that the public safety building will serve as the collateral.

State law requires that the Town's financing be approved by the North Carolina Local Government Commission, a division of the North Carolina State Treasurer's office. Under the LGC's guidelines, this governing body must make certain findings of fact to support the Town's application for the LGC's approval of the Town's financing arrangements.

**1. The Town of Valdese Town Council RESOLVES, as follows:**

(a) The Town makes a preliminary determination to finance approximately $10,800,000 to pay project costs.

(b) The Council will determine the final amount to be financed by a later resolution. The final amount financed may be higher or lower than $10,800,000, depending on the outcome of the construction bid process. Some of the financing proceeds may represent reimbursement to the Town for prior expenditures on project costs, and some proceeds may be used to pay financing expenses or to provide any appropriate reserves.

**2. The Council makes the following findings of fact in support of the Town's application to the LGC:**

(a) The proposed project is necessary and appropriate for the Town under all the circumstances.

(b) The proposed installment financing is preferable to a bond issue for the same purposes. This financing is for a discrete facility and is therefore particularly suitable for installment financing.

The Town has no meaningful ability to issue non-voted general obligation bonds for this project. This project will produce no revenues that could be used support a self-liquidating financing. The Town expects that in the current interest rate environment for municipal securities there would be no material difference in the overall financing costs between general obligation bonds and installment financings for this project.

(c) The estimated sums to fall due under the proposed financing contract are adequate and not excessive for the proposed purpose. The Town will closely review proposed financing rates against market rates with guidance from the LGC and the Town's financial adviser. All amounts financed will reflect either approved contracts, previous actual expenditures, or professional estimates.

(d) As confirmed by the Town's Finance Officer, (i) the Town's debt management procedures and policies are sound and in compliance with law, and (ii) the Town is not in default under any of its debt service obligations.

(e) Given the Town's need for the project, the Council believes that the effect on the Town's budget and the tax rate from repaying the borrowed money will be reasonable under all the circumstances. The Council will work to minimize the tax rate impact in a manner consistent with moving forward with the project and addressing the full range of Town needs.

(f) The Town Attorney is of the opinion that the proposed project is authorized by law and is a purpose for which public funds of the Town may be expended pursuant to the Constitution and laws of North Carolina.

**3. Additionally, the Council resolves as follows:**

(a) The Town intends that the adoption of this resolution will be a declaration of the Town's official intent to reimburse project expenditures from financing proceeds. The Town intends that funds that have been advanced for project costs, or which may be so advanced, from the Town's general fund, or any other Town fund, may be reimbursed from the financing proceeds.

(b) The Council directs the Town Manager and the Finance Officer to take all appropriate steps toward the completion of the financing, including (i) completing an application to the LGC for its approval of the proposed financing, and (ii) soliciting one or more proposals from financial institutions to provide the financing. The Council ratifies all prior actions of Town representatives in this regard.

(c) This resolution takes effect immediately.

* * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * *

I certify as follows: that the foregoing resolution was properly adopted at a meeting of the Town Council of the Town of Valdese, North Carolina; that this meeting was properly called and held on May 28, 2026; that a quorum was present and acting throughout this meeting; and that this resolution has not been modified or amended, and remains in full effect as of today.

Dated this ____ day of ______________, 2026.

_________________________
Keith Huffman
Mayor

[SEAL]

_______________________
Jessica Lail
Town Clerk

**VOTE:** The motion passed by a vote of three (3) to two (2). Mayor Pro Tem Lowman, Councilwoman Zimmerman, and Councilman Ogle voted in favor of the motion. Councilwoman Radabaugh and Councilwoman Ward voted against the motion. The motion carried.

**1ST HEARING – COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT (CDBG)**
Mayor Huffman called the public hearing to order at 7:42 p.m.

Mr. Kyle Case, Community Economic Development Manager with the Western Piedmont Council of Governments (WPCOG), stepped forward to the podium. Mr. Case provided that the WPCOG had been working with the Town over the years on many different grant projects. He continued that he was present to briefly discuss the CDBG program, reporting that it was a federal funding program which came through HUD and the North Carolina Department of Commerce. Mr. Case stated that applications generally opened in the spring, but noted that this year was slightly different as there were additional disaster recovery funds available.

Mr. Case stated that the first public hearing was a requirement for any and all CDBG programs, which could include neighborhood revitalization, economic development, infrastructure, community housing, demolition of publicly owned dilapidated buildings, and disaster recovery. He continued that the hearing was a general and broad announcement that the Town was interested in possibly applying to any of the aforementioned programs. Mr. Case reported that if the Town decided to move forward with any applications, a second public hearing would occur to discuss the specifics of a project.

Mr. Case noted that all CDBG funds must predominantly benefit low- and moderate-income persons, stating this could be documented in a variety of ways.

Mayor Huffman closed the public hearing at 7:44 p.m.

Councilwoman Ward asked if the purpose of this hearing was to announce that the Town would be having a second hearing. She noted that this was the first time she had heard about such an application and just wanted to make sure things were properly explained to both the Council and citizens. Mr. Weichel provided that there would not be a second hearing unless the Town identified a project that fit within the CDBG scope. He continued that the current hearing allowed the Town to apply for specific projects.

Councilwoman Ward asked if there were certain projects already being considered. Mr. Weichel replied that there were a couple on the horizon, noting that the Town did not have the full details yet. Councilwoman Ward asked if the Council would know of these projects before the public. Mr. Weichel responded in the affirmative.

Mr. Case stated that there was no match required with CDBG funds, adding that no vote was required at the present moment. He continued that this was simply a public input session to hear if there were any comments from the public. Mr. Case reported that if there was a second hearing with an application, there would be an authorizing resolution that would be required at that time.

**APPROVED VALDESE BLUFFS DEVELOPMENT AGREEMENT**
Mayor Huffman called the public hearing to order at 7:47 p.m.

Town Manager Herms reported that before Council was an economic development agreement between the Town, Burke County, and a Developer for a project called Valdese Bluffs. He believed that this had come before Council in years prior with a different developer and stated that he was not a part of those discussions. Town Manager Herms stated that the Town did receive a grant for part of the project and that the rest of the costs would be split between the Town and Burke County. He estimated the Town's and County's share to be approximately $400,000 each.

Town Manager Herms asserted that Burke County had already held a public comment period and voted in favor of the development agreement. Town Manager Herms summarized that if the project were to be completed it would represent $49,000,000 in new taxable value. He provided that if completed, the project would lead to the construction of 140 new homes, with an average value of $350,000 each. Town Manager Herms stated that there was a minimum requirement of 27 homes to be built within the first three (3) years to offset the cost of the new sewer station. Town Manager Herms stated that there would be a penalty of just over $14,400 per home if the target was not met and added that there were additional penalties if the value of homes fell below the expected $350,000. He continued that the agreement was backed by a deed of trust and required progress reports and compliance reviews throughout the process.

**Mr. Glenn Harvey, 801 Micol Avenue,** stepped forward to the podium. Mr. Harvey identified there was an item he was still confused about, that being the $400,000 which Valdese would have to put up. He reported that he had heard this would come out of the Utility Fund, asking whether it came out of the current year's budget or out of the new budget which had just been approved.

Mr. Harvey provided some history about a similar project, from 2010, stating at that time he was surprised to learn that the Town had invested $2,000,000 for a sewer substation to serve the Settings. He continued that while this was happening, he himself was developing a subdivision in Pender County and negotiating with Surf City about how they would put in a sewer substation. Mr. Harvey stated that in his situation in Pender County he was told if a substation had to be put in, it had to be paid for by the developer. He then reported that he challenged then Town Manager Jeff Morris about that fact.

Mr. Harvey stated that the Town took out a $2,000,000 loan over a 40-year period, noting that the Town still owed $1,500,000 on this loan. He asked if one knew how many homes had been built in the Settings, noting it was a nice lakeside subdivision in comparison to the rugged, landlocked, area that would be the Bluffs. Mr. Harvey reported that, over a fifteen (15) year period, twelve (12) homes had been built in the Settings. He then recounted that the developer was to build 27 homes and sell them for $350,000 within three (3) years, reporting that he had done some building and stated that this would not happen.

Mayor Huffman closed the public hearing at 7:53 p.m.

**MOTION:** Mayor Pro Tem Lowman made a motion to approve the Valdese Bluffs Development Agreement with Burke County. Seconded by Councilman Ogle.

**DISCUSSION:** Councilwoman Radabaugh asked if the 27 homes were to not be built within the three (3) year period, would the $14,400 in fines come to Valdese, or did they have to be split between Valdese and Burke County. Town Attorney Swanson provided the agreement outlined that there would be a payment to each entity, stating the number Councilwoman Radabaugh provided would be the number that went to the Town. He added that Burke County would receive a comparable amount. Town Manager Herms stated that there was land which backed the deal as well, on top of the money which was discussed.

Councilwoman Ward asked if this agreement was already budgeted for or whether it was in the newly approved budget. Mr. Weichel answered that there would be a capital project ordinance amendment which would recognize the Town's revenues from its contribution out of the Utility Fund balance along with the County's contribution. He continued that the expenditure side would be for the construction costs associated with the project. Mr. Weichel stated that half the project was funded, and that the agreement would cover the other half.

Councilwoman Ward asked how much of the project had been covered so far. Mr. Weichel provided that the whole project was around $1,600,000 and that the Town had received approximately $800,000 in grant funding, which accounted for half of the project being covered. Town Manager Herms added that there would be an MOU between the Town and Burke County coming to the Council in August.

Councilwoman Ward stated that her setback with the agreement was the fact that the Town was raising water rates by 7% in the current year as well as the years which were to follow. She continued that it did not fare well for the Town to be giving money to private developers when it could not help its own citizens.

**State of North Carolina** ) **MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING**
**COUNTY OF BURKE** )

This MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING (the "MOU") is made and entered into this ____ day of _____________, 20____ (the "Effective Date") by and among Burke County, North Carolina (the "County"), and the Town of Valdese (the "Town") (together the "Local Governments").

**STATEMENT OF PURPOSE**

1. The County, the Town, and Natural Land Alliance, Inc. (the "Developer") have entered into, or will soon enter into, a development agreement (the "Agreement") related to the development of the Valdese Bluffs residential project (the "Project") on certain real property located within the corporate limits of the Town.

2. Pursuant to the Agreement, the Local Governments have jointly committed to provide, at their sole cost and expense, public sewer service to the Project, in the form of designing, permitting, constructing, and installing a sewer pump station and force main (collective, the "Pump Station").

3. The County desires to provide grant funding to the Town to assist with the costs of the Pump Station and related infrastructure that will serve the Project.

4. While the Town is the entity who will ultimately own the Pump Station, the County has been designated in the Agreement as the local government responsible for the overall administration of the Agreement pursuant to N.C.G.S. § 160D-1006(c). However, the Town will act as the lead agency for the design, permitting, bidding, construction, and administration of the Pump Station.

5. The Local Governments wish to memorialize their understanding as to how they will administer the Development Agreement.

**TERMS**

NOW, THEREFORE, in consideration of the terms and conditions set forth herein and in consideration of the mutual promises and assurances provided herein, the receipt and sufficiency of such consideration being acknowledged by the Local Governments, the Local Governments do hereby agree as follows:

1. **Incorporation.** The above recitals are incorporated in this Agreement as if the recitals were set out in this Agreement in their entirety.

2. **Definitions.** Capitalized terms in this Agreement shall have the meanings assigned to them below or the meanings assigned to them elsewhere in this Agreement.

   A. "Agreement" means the Development Agreement entered into by the Local Governments and the Developer.

   B. "Developer" means Natural Land Alliance, Inc., a North Carolina non-profit corporation, and its successors in title to the Property who undertake development of the Property or who are transferred Development Rights.

   C. "Property" means that real property located in the Town of Valdese, located in Burke County, that is comprised of all of the properties with Burke County Real Estate ID ("REID") Nos. 66856 and 66857 and Parcel Identification Numbers (PINs) 2744840778 and 2744742017, said properties having been conveyed to Developer pursuant to the deed recorded at Book 002312 Page 264 of the Burke County Public Registry.

3. **Grant of Funds by County.** The County shall provide to the Town a grant in the amount of $376,106.55] (the "Grant Funds") solely for the purpose of paying costs associated with the design, permitting, construction, installation, and start-up of the Pump Station and related force main and sewer infrastructure required under the Agreement.

4. **Use of Grant Funds.** The Town shall use the Grant Funds exclusively for the Pump Station and related improvements that serve the Project as described in the Development Agreement. Any grant funds not expended for such purposes shall be returned to the County within sixty (60) days after final completion of the Pump Station.

5. **Disbursement of Grant Funds.** The County shall disburse the Grant Funds to the Town in up to three (3) installments, upon written request from the Town Manager accompanied by reasonable documentation of incurred or anticipated costs. These installments may be paid in any manner the County deems appropriate, in its sole discretion. The installments may take the following form:

   A. Installment One: Up to thirty percent (30%) of the total Grant Funds upon the award of a construction contract for the Pump Station.

   B. Up to an additional sixty percent (60%) of the total Grant Funds upon the Pump Station being approximately halfway complete (as certified by the project engineer to the County's satisfaction.

   C. The balance upon final completion, testing, and acceptance of the Pump Station by the Town and issuance of all required permits and approvals from the State.

6. **Town Responsibilities.** The Town shall be solely responsible for the administration, bidding, construction, inspection, and acceptance of the Pump Station and related improvements. The Town shall comply with all applicable state and local laws regarding public contracting, competitive bidding, and financial reporting.

7. **Reporting and Records.** The Town shall maintain accurate records of all expenditures of Grant Funds and shall provide the County with quarterly reports on the status and expenditures related to the Pump Station until the Pump Station is completed and all Grant Funds are expended or returned.

8. **No Third-Party Beneficiaries.** This MOU is solely for the benefit of the County and the Town. Nothing herein shall create any rights or obligations in or for the Developer or any other person or entity.

9. **Term and Termination.** This MOU shall remain in effect until the Pump Station is completed, all Grant Funds are accounted for, and any unexpended funds are returned to the County, unless terminated earlier by mutual written agreement of the Local Governments. Provided, however, this MOU will terminate no later than December 31, 2036.

10. **Entire Agreement; Amendment.** This MOU constitutes the entire understanding between the Local Governments with respect to the subject matter hereof and supersedes all prior discussions or agreements, except for the Agreement. To the extent this MOU conflicts with any provision of the Agreement, the Agreement shall control. This MOU may only be amended in writing signed by both of the Local Governments.

11. **Governing Law.** This MOU shall be governed by the laws of the State of North Carolina.

12. **Counterparts.** This MOU may be executed in counterparts, each of which shall be deemed an original, and all of which together shall constitute one and the same instrument.

13. **Construction.** The Parties agree that each party and its counsel have reviewed and revised the Agreement and that any rule of construction to the effect that ambiguities are to be resolved against the drafting party shall not apply in the interpretation of this Agreement or any amendments or exhibits thereto.

14. **Assignment.** After notice to the Local Governments, the Developer may assign its rights and responsibilities hereunder to subsequent land owners of all or any portion of the Property, provided that no assignment as to a portion of the relevant parcel of land will relieve the assigning party of responsibility with respect to the remaining portion of the relevant parcel of land owned by the assigning party without the written consent of the Local Governments. Subject to the provisions of applicable laws, in the event that the Developer sells all of the Property and assigns its respective rights and responsibilities to a subsequent land owner, then the Developer shall be relieved of all of its covenants, commitments and obligations hereunder.

15. **Severability.** If any term or provision herein shall be judicially determined to be void or of no effect, such determination shall not affect the validity of the remaining terms and provisions. This MOU shall not purport to supersede any provision of any applicable law.

16. **Governing Law.** This Agreement shall be governed by the laws of the State of North Carolina.

[SIGNATURE PAGES TO FOLLOW]

**FOR BURKE COUNTY**

Signature: ______________________________ Date: ______________

Printed Name: ______________________________

Title: Chairman, Board of Commissioners

Attestation: ______________________________ Date: ______________

Printed Name: Kay Honeycutt Draughn [SEAL]

Title: Clerk to the Board of Commissioners

**FOR THE TOWN OF VALDESE**

Signature: ______________________________ Date: ______________

Printed Name: ______________________________

Title: Mayor, Town of Valdese

Attestation: ______________________________ Date: ______________

Printed Name: ______________________________ [SEAL]

Title: Clerk to the Town Council



**VOTE:** The motion passed by a vote of four (4) to one (1). Mayor Pro Tem Lowman, Councilwoman Zimmerman, Councilwoman Radabaugh and Councilman Ogle voted in favor of the motion. Councilwoman Ward voted against the motion. The motion carried.

Mayor Huffman called for a ten (10) minute recess at 7:56 p.m.

Mayor Huffman called the meeting back to order at 8:06 p.m.

**OPEN FORUM/PUBLIC COMMENT**

**OPEN FORUM/PUBLIC COMMENT GUIDELINES:** Mayor Pro Tem Rexanna Lowman 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.

**APOLOGIES – GLENN HARVEY – 801 MICOL AVENUE, VALDESE, NC**
Mr. Harvey stated that he had signed up after the May 18 Council Meeting to come and apologize to the Council and the 4,000 Valdese citizens and viewers who may have been troubled by his outburst. He stated he did not want to excuse his misbehavior, but wanted to explain what led to it. Mr. Harvey reported that he moved to Valdese 20 years prior after 25 years of reporting to, and serving on, boards of directors that followed the parliamentary procedures adopted by all deliberative elected boards. He noted that these were the same procedures that were set forth in the Valdese Town Council Rules and Procedures. Mr. Harvey

asserted that the three (3) key absolutes of Robert's Rules of Order were that all comments were addressed to the Chair, no member may call out or address another member, and that the Chair was required to ensure that parliamentary procedure was followed and serve as an impartial moderator during debates. Mr. Harvey expressed that he was troubled since the beginning of the previous meeting by violations of impartiality.

Mr. Harvey stated that when he saw the Mayor turn the Chair over to the Mayor Pro Tem to call out, and begin criticizing, another Council member, it reopened old wounds. He continued that he was reminded of the personal attacks that he had to endure in silence as a Councilman, from the people who lost to him, who he'd never met, and even from the Mayor himself and other Council members.

Mr. Harvey reported that at the previous meeting, where he was no longer constrained by being on the Council, he was compelled to voice his objection as an offended citizen. He clarified when the abuse occurred at the Council level the Mayor Pro Tem was the Chair, noting that it was the Chair's responsibility to pound the gavel and restore order. Mr. Harvey continued that it was not the responsibility of the speaker who shouted at him, or the responsibility of the armed police officers who threatened him. Mr. Harvey apologized for his conduct and respectfully suggested that it behooved all Council members, including the Mayor and Mayor Pro Tem, to understand and comply with Robert's Rules of Order.

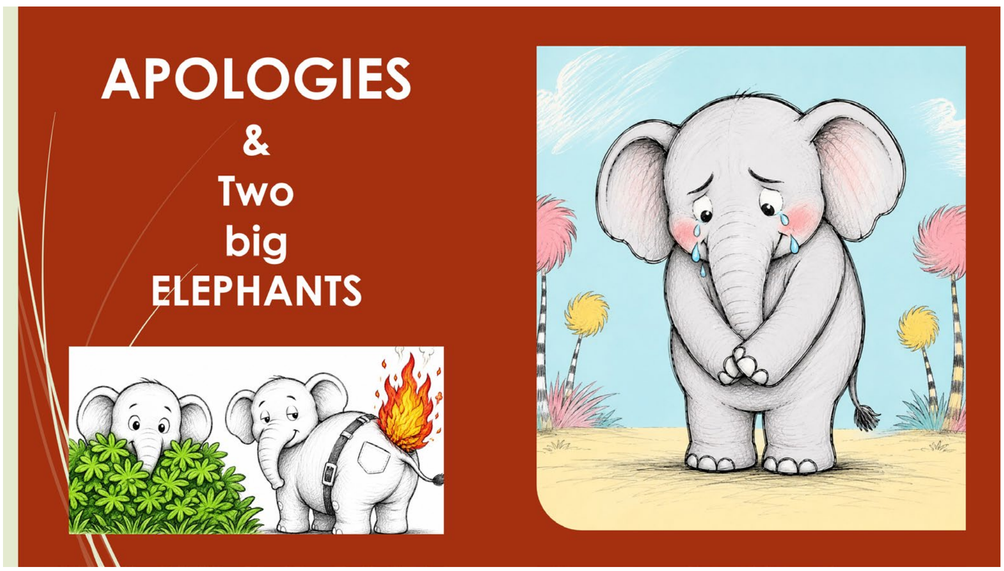
Mr. Harvey then wanted to refer to two (2) big elephants, stating that a third (3rd) elephant was one that had been hiding in the bushes for approximately ten (10) years. He recounted the March 30, 2026 Council Meeting where an alert Council member spotted that elephant trying to sneak past the Council on the Consent Agenda. Mr. Harvey asserted that consent agendas were strictly for routine business items. He continued that while the important public health and major financial concerns were brought to light, the elephant in the room was not outed. Mr. Harvey identified that the elephant in the room was a $2,000,000 oversight by Town Management and the engineering firm that had been hired to develop ten (10) year utility plans. He continued that the utility plans were excellent, with one (1) glaring exception. Mr. Harvey expressed that what was even worse than missing it ten (10) years in a row was that the engineering firm failed to include the cost of that process when applying for Valdese's share of the $21,000,000 grant to upgrade the Water Plant. He expressed that if the cost had been included, it was possible that the Town's share of the grant could have been increased to cover the cost of upgrading the fluoridation process, which had been going on since 1979. Mr. Harvey stated that this was a very costly mistake, possibly costing the Town $2,000,000.

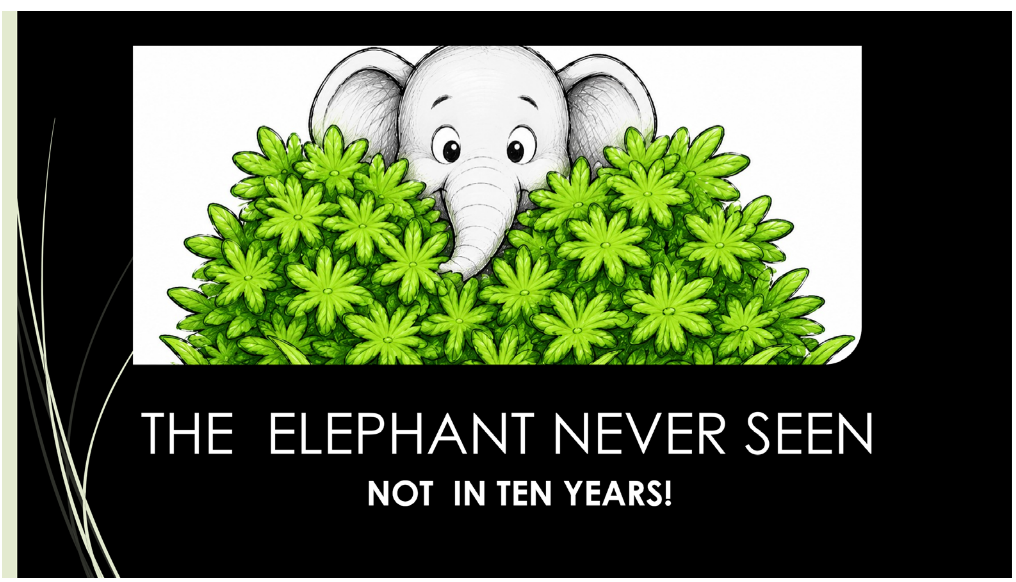
Mr. Harvey reported that if he was able to revise his slides, rather than one elephant, there would be a herd of elephants that represented misinformation. He continued that the big one was that the Town had some kind of financial problem due to the 2024 tax cut and that the other one was the salary situation. Mr. Harvey expressed that everyone loved the Town's staff, noting that the police did a great job and should all be paid more. He stated that that problem happened in 2020. Mr. Harvey reported that in 2019, the Town did a comprehensive pay study and the consultant recommended bringing people up to the midpoints, which would have cost the Town $500,000. He noted that the Council in 2020 only added $270,000 in salary expenses, which was approximately half of what was recommended. Mr. Harvey stated this was why, even though Valdese's cost of living increases were greater than almost every surrounding Town, the police force and other employees' salaries were below the others.

Mr. Harvey moved to discuss the public safety building, stating that the building was virtually condemned in 2018. He reported that three (3) different engineering services recommended that the building be shored up as it endangered the employees who were housed there.

Mayor Huffman informed Mr. Harvey that his time had expired.


APOLOGIES
to
4000+
citizens
&
viewers


APOLOGIES
&
Two
big
ELEPHANTS


THE ELEPHANT NEVER SEEN
NOT IN TEN YEARS!


**CONSENT AGENDA: (enacted by one motion)**

**APPROVED ROAD CLOSURE FOR DHS HOMECOMING PARADE**

Historic VALDESE

TOWN OF VALDESE
NORTH CAROLINA'S FRIENDLY TOWN

P.O.BOX 339
VALDESE, NORTH CAROLINA 28690-0339
PHONE (828) 879-2120 | FAX (828) 879-2139 | TOWNOFVALDESE.COM

**AN ORDINANCE DECLARING ROAD CLOSURE**
**FOR TOWN OF VALDESE SPECIAL EVENTS**

WHEREAS, for many years the Town of Valdese has sponsored the Draughn High School Homecoming Parade; and

WHEREAS, the Town of Valdese desires to schedule the Draughn High School Parade on Tuesday, September 22; and

WHEREAS, part of US 70/Main Street in Valdese will need to be closed for the parade; and

WHEREAS, G.S. 20-169 provides that local authorities shall have power to provide by ordinance for the regulation of the use of highways by processions or assemblages;

NOW, THEREFORE, be it ordained by the Town Council of the Town of Valdese pursuant to G.S. 20-169 that the following portion of the State Highway System be closed during the times set forth below:

DRAUGHN HIGH SCHOOL HOMECOMING PARADE
Date: September 22, 2026
Time: 5:30pm to 7:00pm
Route: Main Street (US 70) from Hoyle Street to Eldred Street

Signs shall be erected giving notice of the limits and times of these street closures as required by G.S. 20-169.

This ordinance shall take effect upon adoption.

THIS, the 28th day of May 2026.

____________________________
Keith Huffman, MAYOR

____________________________
Town Clerk

**APPROVED LEASE AGREEMENT AT THE OLD ROCK SCHOOL WITH DREAM CONNECTIONS**
The lease agreement's total value is in the amount of $14,004, payable in equal monthly installments of $1,167.

**APPROVED OF VALDESE ABC BOARD TRAVEL POLICY**

VALDESE
ABC BOARD
1018 MAIN STREET WEST • VALDESE, NC 28690 • PHONE 828-879-2227 • FAX 828-874-0332

**TRAVEL POLICY**

Proposed Date: May 28, 2026
Effective Date: July 1, 2026

Re: Adoption of Town of Valdese Travel Policy
JULY 01, 2000, "Revised"

The following guidelines will be used as a travel policy for all employees traveling on Valdese ABC Board business:

1. Reimbursement of travel expenses-

   Meals will be covered on a per day rate. (Based on the current Federal Per Diem Rate.) The Federal Per Diem Rates listing (found online at www.gsa.gov) is updated on an annual basis in October. If the traveler's destination is not listed on the website, the standard rate is used.

   When traveling to attend a conference, where some meals are provided by the conference, remaining meals not provided by the conference will be eligible for reimbursement on a reasonable and actual basis (receipts required).

   When on a trip not involving an over-night stay, expenses (i.e. mileage, meals) will be eligible for reimbursement on a reasonable and actual basis (receipts required).

   Lodging will be covered for reasonable and actual cost (receipt required). Unless attending a conference, the Federal Per Diem Listing should be used as a guideline in determining reasonable cost.

2. Board credit cards may be used to reserve lodging. Travel related cost however, should not be charged to the credit cards. All travel expenses will be covered through travel advances and / or reimbursements.

3. It is the responsibility of the General Manager to determine which meal allowances are eligible for reimbursement to employees for partial day travel. Reimbursement will be for reasonable and actual cost (receipt required).

4. All requests for travel expense reimbursement (i.e. meals, lodging, mileage, etc.) must be accompanied by a travel expense report.

5. Other issues-

   - Transportation: As a general rule, it is the Board's policy that an employee is authorized to use a private vehicle and be reimbursed at the current standard mileage rate. The current standard rate shall be the same as paid by the Town of Valdese following the IRS rate.
   - Registration: Registration fees are generally paid in advance directly to the vendor, not from travel advance.
   - Advances: The Board does permit employees to request advances whenever an estimated trip cost exceed $25. If the cost is less than $25, employee must seek reimbursement when the trip is completed.

Adopted this the 18th day of May, 2026

Chairman

Attest:

Secretary/Treasurer

APPROVED

**<u>CALLED FOR PUBLIC HEARING – TEXT AMENDMENT FOR ELECTRONIC MESSAGE SIGN ORDINANCE</u>**

***<u>End Consent Agenda</u>***

**<u>ITEMS REMOVED FROM CONSENT AGENDA:</u>** None.

Mayor Huffman asked for a motion to approve the consent agenda. A motion was made by Councilman Ogle to approve the consent agenda. Seconded by Councilwoman Zimmerman. The vote was unanimous and the motion carried.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

**2025 NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF LABOR SAFETY AWARDS**

Mr. Truman Walton, Fire Chief, began presenting the North Carolina Department of Labor Safety Achievement Awards for the calendar year 2025. Chief Walton stated that these awards were not to be taken lightly, noting that the Silver and Gold Awards were difficult to achieve especially when considering the number of employees that Valdese had. He asserted that even one (1) injury could knock the Town out of consideration for receiving either award.

Chief Walton announced that all eight (8) of the Town's departments received awards, stating that two (2) had received the Silver Award, and six (6) had received the Gold Award. Chief Walton reported that for the Silver Award, days away from work had to be at least 50% below the industry average. Chief Walton stated that the Fire Department and Public Works had received the Silver Award, noting that it was the fourth (4) in a row for Public Works.

Chief Walton reported that for the Gold Award, a department's days away from work, as well as their job transfer restriction, must be at least 50% below the industry average. He announced that the Police Department received the Gold Award for the second consecutive year, the Wastewater Department for the third consecutive year, the Recreation Department for the fourth consecutive year, the Water Department for the ninth consecutive year, the Community Affairs Department for the fifteenth consecutive year, and the Administrative Department for the thirty-eighth consecutive year.

Town Manager Herms reported that throughout his years of experience, he had never seen numbers so high. He stated he was extremely proud of the Town's Staff for achieving those types of numbers.

**APPOINTED/REAPPOINTED TO VEDIC BOARD**

Mayor Huffman stated that the VEDIC Nominating Committee had recommended the following appointment and reappointment. A recommendation for the reappointment of Mr. Weichel to a three (3) year term was put forward, as well as a recommendation to appoint Ms. Jamie Norton to a three (3) year term to fill a vacant position.

A motion was made by Mayor Pro Tem Lowman to accept the appointment and reappointment to the VEDIC Board. Seconded by Councilwoman Radabaugh. The vote was unanimous and the motion carried.

**APPROVED ORDINANCE AMENDING SECTION 8-6029 – URBAN ARCHERY**

Chief Sharpe reported that the ordinance presented was to amend a section of the Town's Ordinances regarding urban archery. He continued that for many years, the Town of Valdese had offered an urban archery program to provide hunting opportunities to qualified participants. Chief Sharpe provided that the program's intention was to manage local deer population, reducing the potential for deer-related vehicle accidents. He reported that the program had been maintained at the Town's expense.

Chief Sharpe stated that over time, the amount of land within the Town limits that was suitable for safe and effective urban archery had decreased significantly. He continued that as a result, the program was no longer able to operate as intended and its effectiveness in achieving its original goals had been greatly reduced.

Chief Sharpe provided that the Town currently incurred an annual cost of approximately $750 in mapping costs to administer and maintain the program. He added that given the limited areas available for participation and the declining effectiveness of the program, the aforementioned costs were increasingly difficult to justify. Chief Sharpe added that he and additional Town Staff had spoken with several individuals who had participated in the program, noting that based on those discussions, there was a general agreement that discontinuing the urban archery program was appropriate given the current circumstances.

Chief Sharpe expressed that the Town would also remain committed to evaluating effective and responsible methods for managing wildlife and ensuring public safety within the community through its Animal Control Officer as well as North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission. He thanked Town Attorney Swanson for assisting with the wording of the new ordinance.

**MOTION:** Councilwoman Zimmerman made a motion to approve the ordinance revision amending section 8-6029 of the Town's Code of Ordinances. Seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Lowman.

**DISCUSSION:** Councilman Ogle asked for clarification on what the amendment was changing. Chief Sharpe provided that the Town had an urban archery program where individuals could hunt deer with a bow and arrow, during a specific time of year, within the incorporated city limits, as long as they adhered to distance separation guidelines. He continued that over time the property that existed within Valdese where one could safely adhere to those distance separation guidelines had dwindled almost entirely. Chief Sharpe stated that as cost-cutting measures were evaluated, this was identified as something the Town simply did not need as there was no place to hunt safely with a bow and arrow. Councilman Ogle thanked Chief Sharpe for his explanation.

**ORDINANCE AMENDING SECTION 8-6029 "WEAPONS – DANGEROUS MISSILES" OF THE VALDESE CODE OF ORDINANCES**

WHEREAS, Section 8-6029 of the Town of Valdese Code of Ordinances prohibits the shooting or projection of stones, rocks, shots, and other hard substances by means of a slingshot, bean shooter, shot shooter, air rifle, popgun, bow, or similar contrivance; and

WHEREAS, the current section includes an exception allowing deer hunting by bow and arrow on private property under specified conditions, which was adopted by Resolution on February 3, 2020; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to North Carolina General Statutes Chapter 160A, municipalities are authorized to adopt and amend ordinances through the exercise of their general police powers for the protection of the public health, safety, and welfare; and

WHEREAS, the Town Council finds it necessary and appropriate to remove the existing deer hunting by bow and arrow exception from Section 8-6029 in order to maintain a uniform prohibition on the discharge of bows and similar contrivances within the Town;

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED BY THE TOWN COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF VALDESE, NORTH CAROLINA, THAT SECTION 8-6029 OF THE TOWN OF VALDESE CODE OF ORDINANCES IS HEREBY AMENDED TO READ AS FOLLOWS:**

Section 8-6029 Weapons - dangerous missiles.
No person shall shoot or project any stone, rock, shot or other hard substance by means of a slingshot, bean shooter, shot shooter, air rifle, popgun, bow or other similar contrivance.

The amendments to this ordinance shall become effective immediately upon adoption.

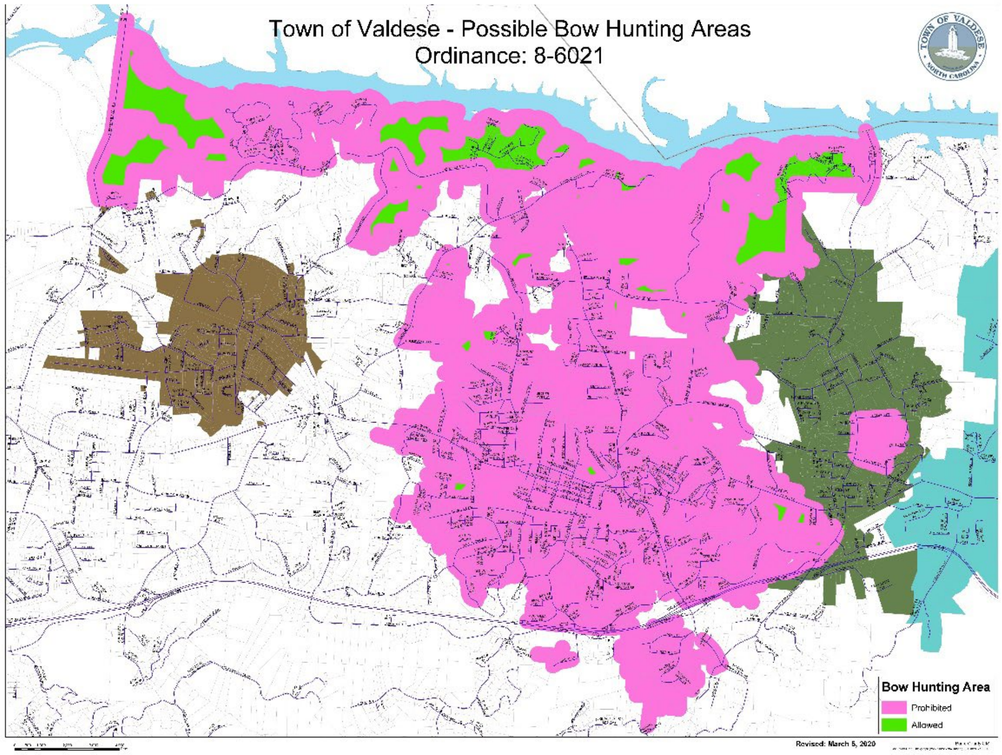
ORDAINED BY THE TOWN COUNCIL FOR THE TOWN OF VALDESE, NORTH CAROLINA, THIS THE ___ DAY OF __________, 2026.

______________________________
KEITH HUFFMAN, MAYOR

ATTEST:

______________________________
JESSICA LAIL, TOWN CLERK

(corporate seal)




**VOTE:** The vote was unanimous and the motion carried.

**NO MOTION - RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING SALE OF REAL PROPERTY – ROW FAET ST SW, VALDESE**

Mr. Weichel recounted that at the March 30, 2026 meeting, Council approved a resolution to start the upset bid process on the piece of property in question. He continued that there were several upset bids, with the most recent offer being for $3,300. Mr. Weichel reported that this most recent bid was not upset within the ten (10) day window. He provided that the offer was from Pineburr Development LLC and that the resolution before Council was to authorize the sale of the subject property.

Councilman Ogle asked if a motion was necessary if the Town did not want to sell the property. Town Attorney Swanson answered that a motion could be made that way, but added that if Council did not want to approve the sale, if there was no motion, or no second, it would fail automatically.

Councilwoman Ward made a motion to authorize the sale of the property to Pineburr Development LLC. No second was provided and the motion failed.

**MANAGER'S REPORT**

Town Manager Herms introduced Ms. Noelle Johnston, the Town's new intern for the summer. He disclosed that her grandfather was on the back wall, referring to portraits of the Town's prior mayors. He added that she was doing a summer internship as she finished up her four (4) year degree and was getting ready to pursue her MPA degree, both with Appalachian State University. Town Manager Herms thanked Ms. Johnston for being present that night and hoped she had an enjoyable summer with the Town.

Town Manager Todd Herms reported:

Numerous events are scheduled throughout the month of June and July. An Event Calendar is included in the reading materials for your review and provides details on upcoming activities

Next Regular Council meeting is scheduled for Monday, August 3, 2026, 6:00 p.m., Council Chambers, Valdese Town Hall

**MAYOR AND COUNCIL COMMENTS:**
Councilwoman Zimmerman shared that Friday Fun Nights started next week, and hoped everyone would be able to participate and enjoy the events.

Mayor Pro Tem Lowman encouraged individuals to come to see the outdoor drama From This Day Forward, which would start in July, and continue through August.

Councilwoman Ward encouraged individuals to go to Lakeside Park to see Lost Wages on Sunday at 3:00 p.m. She provided that she heard it would be a fun shindig, and hoped everyone would check it out.

**ADJOURNMENT:** At 8:26 p.m., there being no further business to come before Council, Councilwoman Zimmerman made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Lowman. The vote was unanimous.

Town Clerk

Mayor

mr