

**TOWN OF VALDESE
TOWN COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING
JANUARY 13, 2025**

The Town of Valdese Town Council met on Monday, January 13, 2025, at 6:00 p.m., in the Town Council Chambers at Town Hall, 102 Massel Avenue SW, Valdese, North Carolina. The Council meeting was live-streamed on YouTube @townofvaldese. The following were present: Mayor Charles Watts, Mayor Pro Tem Gary Ogle, Councilwoman Rexanna Lowman, Councilwoman Heather Ward, Councilwoman Melinda Zimmerman, and Councilman Glenn Harvey. Also present were: Interim Town Manager Bo Weichel, Town Attorney Tim Swanson, Town Clerk Jessica Lail, and various Department Heads.

Absent:

A quorum was present.

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

Reverend Wesley Hendrix from Mount Zion Missionary Baptist Church, Valdese offered the invocation. Following the invocation, Mayor Watts led in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

OATH OF OFFICE: Valdese Town Clerk Jessica Lail administered Oath of Office to Councilwoman Melinda Zimmerman - Ward 2.

OPEN FORUM/PUBLIC COMMENT: Mayor Pro Tem Gary Ogle 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.

SIDEWALK PROJECT – BETH HEILE, 5291 MINERAL SPRINGS MTN AVE, VALDESE: Ms. Heile reported that the Friends of the Valdese Rec were invited to assist with the Lovelady Sidewalk Project. She emphasized their understanding of the dedication required to navigate a complex project with big community impact. Ms. Heile expressed concern that, given the time and effort invested and the benefit the sidewalk would provide to the Town, it would be disappointing if this previously approved project did not move forward.

SEVERAL THINGS – RICK MCCLURD, 408 GARROU AVE SE, VALDESE: Mr. McClurd discussed the Lovelady Sidewalk Project, noting the high pedestrian traffic along Carolina and its potential benefits. However, he expressed concern about designating \$300,000 from the Town's budget at this time. He also addressed the pool cover, questioning its cost-effectiveness based on reported usage numbers. He noted that with only around 61 users from Valdese using the pool in the wintertime, and 50-100 outside the Town, the investment may not be justified at this time. Mr. McClurd suggested reconsidering the project in a future budget cycle, given other financial priorities such as the Fire and Police Department projects. Additionally, he raised concerns about potential tax increases due to upcoming major expenses, emphasizing the importance of maintaining a balanced budget while being mindful of residents' financial burdens.

SIDEWALK – ALLEN KING, 929 MAIN ST W, VALDESE: Mr. King addressed the Council regarding infrastructure spending priorities. He expressed concerns about the lack of sidewalks in his area and suggested a pedestrian bridge over Highway 70 for safety, though he acknowledged its impracticality and high cost. Mr. King noted the allocation of funds for the Lovelady Sidewalk Project, arguing that federal and

local tax dollars should be directed toward more essential needs, such as improving Police and Fire Department facilities and increasing Officer salaries. He also questioned the justification for the proposed pool cover, noting the limited number of users compared to its cost. Mr. King urged the Council to focus on fiscal responsibility, prioritize essential services, and reconsider funding for non-critical projects. Mr. King encouraged the Council to, "JUST SAY NO."

POOL – SUSAN STEVENSON, 1009 CREEKSIDE DR, VALDESE: Ms. Stevenson addressed the Council with several concerns, including the public safety building, road conditions, and the town manager position. However, her primary focus was on the pool structure. She urged the Council to uphold its previous approval of the project and avoid reversing course, emphasizing that many town projects, including the public safety building, have faced delays without progress. She highlighted the extensive work and planning that has gone into the pool project, noting that the existing bubble, originally expected to last 10 years, has remained in use for 25 years. She stressed the importance of maintaining a year-round pool for senior citizens, students, and the community, as it provides critical recreational opportunities and enhances the Town's reputation. Ms. Stevenson also referenced positive recognition Valdese has received for its Recreation facilities and urged the Council to remain committed to their campaign promise of maintaining Town services. She concluded by requesting that the Council move forward with the project so attention can be shifted to other pressing Town needs.

POOL/SIDEWALK – MARGARET SUNDELL, 3018 BEAR PAW AVE NW, VALDESE: Ms. Sundell addressed the Council regarding two key topics: the pool cover and the sidewalk project. She voiced support for the Council's previous vote in favor of a new pool cover, emphasizing that a permanent structure would provide long-term reliability and encourage greater community use. Regarding the sidewalk project, she highlighted the \$1.43 million in federal funding awarded to the Town in June of the previous year. She explained that this is a standard NCDOT agreement, requiring a \$286,000 local match spread over five years. She commended the efforts of Council members and staff in securing the grant and stressed the importance of utilizing the funds. Ms. Sundell warned that rejecting the grant could negatively impact the Town's ability to secure future funding. She urged the Council to move forward with the project, emphasizing its benefits for residents, employees, visitors, and future growth, as well as its alignment with broader state initiatives.

SIDEWALK – MARK SMALL, 712 MARIA AVE, VALDESE: Mr. Small addressed the Council, emphasizing the importance of prioritizing essential infrastructure over discretionary projects. He compared government spending to a wish list, cautioning against committing funds to every proposed initiative. While acknowledging the federal grant's 80/20 funding structure for the sidewalk project, he stressed that the Town's 20% contribution could be better allocated to more pressing needs. He highlighted critical infrastructure concerns, including Police and Fire facilities, water and sewer plant upgrades, street repairs, and the costly pool cover project. Additionally, he warned of potential future financial burdens on residents due to anticipated EPA regulations requiring plumbing replacements. Mr. Small urged the Council to focus on expanding the tax base through new industry and market value housing rather than increasing spending on amenities. He cautioned that underfunding infrastructure in favor of non-essential projects could jeopardize the Town's financial stability. Concluding with a reference to a well-known movie line, "How about no?"

POOL – LINDA CABOT, 822 GARDIOL AVE NE, VALDESE: Ms. Cabot addressed the Council, expressing concern over the town's perceived lack of progress on key projects. She questioned why the town remains stalled on multiple issues, including the pool cover, police and fire facilities, hiring a town manager, and the sidewalk project. Additionally, she voiced frustration over what she sees as excessive spending on the town attorney. She emphasized that the town has historically been admired but now appears unable to move forward, with decisions being revisited repeatedly. Ms. Cabot acknowledged her role as a taxpayer and expressed a willingness to contribute to essential services but stressed the need for responsible action. She warned that failure to make progress could deter qualified candidates from seeking the town manager position. Concluding, she urged the Council to break the cycle of inaction and take decisive steps to advance the town's priorities.

WATER BILL – TERRY MORRIS, 2284 ZION RD, MORGANTON: Ms. Morris, a resident of Morganton, addressed the Council regarding concerns over increased water bills for former Triple Community Water residents. She stated that her base water bill had risen by 50% to \$57.75 and expressed frustration that

nearly 800 affected residents had no input or opportunity to appeal the increase. She also noted that many of her neighbors are on fixed incomes and struggling with the higher costs. Ms. Morris shared that she had met with the County Manager in December and was displeased to learn that while Valdese residents received a property tax reduction, her community was facing significantly higher water bills. She and other residents are now exploring options such as reconnecting their wells to reduce costs. She also described past interactions with town officials, including a town manager's suggestion to run a hose from her house to her barn as an impractical solution. Another town official reportedly stated that the higher water rates were due to the installation of industrial-grade equipment. Ms. Morris concluded by expressing disappointment in the town's handling of the water system transition, stating that it feels like the affected residents are unfairly shouldering the burden of the town's tax cuts.

ADDED ITEM: Councilman Harvey made a motion to add the *Interim Town Manager Contract Amendment* to the agenda, seconded by Councilwoman Ward. The vote was unanimous and motion carried. Mayor Watts noted that would be our first item under new business.

Councilman Harvey made a request to remove items 7 F, G, H from the consent agenda.

CONSENT AGENDA: (enacted by one motion)

APPROVED PRE-AGENDA MEETING MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 18, 2024

APPROVED REGULAR MEETING MINUTES OF DECEMBER 2, 2024

APPROVED CLOSED SESSION MINUTES OF DECEMBER 2, 2024

APPROVED SPECIAL CALLED MEETING MINUTES OF DECEMBER 11, 2024

APPROVED CLOSED SESSION MINUTES OF DECEMBER 11, 2024

APPROVED AMENDMENT TO DATE ON AUDIT CONTRACT Audit contract between the Town of Valdese and Lowdermilk Church & Co., L.L.P. has been updated to reflect a new submission deadline to the LGC, extended from October 31, 2024, to December 31, 2024.

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

End Consent Agenda

ITEMS REMOVED FROM CONSENT AGENDA: *Items 7 F, G, H

***7 F: APPROVED RESOLUTION SUPPORTING HOUSE BILL 971 AND COMPLIANCE WITH NCGS §143-805** Councilman Harvey emphasized that this policy simply ensures that Town employees and officials are prohibited from using Town devices or networks to access inappropriate content, such as pornographic material.

TOWN OF VALDESE
RESOLUTION
PROHIBITING VIEWING OF PORNOGRPAHY
ON TOWN NETWORKS AND DEVICES

WHEREAS, House Bill 971 / North Carolina General Statute §143-805 requires all public agencies to adopt a policy governing the use of its network and devices owned, leased, maintained, or otherwise controlled by the Town of Valdese; and

WHEREAS, the Town of Valdese prohibits the viewing of pornography by its employees on the Town's network or devices owned or maintained by the Town.

NOW, THEREFORE, be it resolved that the following policies shall apply in the Town of Valdese:

No employees of the Town of Valdese, elected officials, or Town appointees shall view pornography on any computer network owned, leased, maintained, or otherwise controlled by the Town, whether on a Town owned and maintained device, or a privately owned or controlled device.

No employee, elected official, or appointee of the Town shall view pornography on a device owned, leased, or maintained or otherwise controlled by the Town. Each year, and no later than August 1, the Town shall report information required in NCGS §143-805 to the State Chief Information Officer.

This policy shall not apply to investigation, law enforcement training, or actions related to law enforcement purpose; identifying potential security or cyber security threats, establishing, testing, and maintaining firewalls, protocols, and otherwise implementation of this policy; or other exceptions as specifically set forth in NCGS §143-805(d).

The terms used herein shall be defined as set forth in NCGS §143-805(g).

Any employee, elected official, or appointee of the Town who has saved pornography to a device owned, leased, maintained or otherwise controlled by the Town shall remove, delete or uninstall the pornography no later than January 1, 2025.

Any employee of the Town who violates any provision of this policy shall be subject to disciplinary action under the Town's personnel policy.

Any appointee of the Town who violates the provision of this policy shall be subject to removal by the Town Board.

Any elected official who violates any provision of this policy shall be subject to censure proceedings. *BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED* that this Resolution shall become effective on the date of its adoption. This the ____ day of _____, 2025.

/s/ Charles Watts, Mayor

ATTEST:

/s/ Town Clerk

***7 G: APPROVED INTERIM MANAGER TO EVALUATE, DEVELOP A PLAN AND REPORT ON THE FOLLOWING:** Councilman Harvey would like to add to *i. Town's opportunity to participate in Federal Disaster Relief Funding, Wildfire Prevention*, given the severity of the ongoing wildfires in California—one of the worst disasters in the nation's history. He believes the federal government may introduce new funding programs and wants to ensure the Town is well-positioned to take advantage of any available assistance.

- i. Town's opportunity to participate in Federal Disaster Relief Funding and Wildfire Prevention;
- ii. Town's need and opportunities for Additional Public Safety Building Funding;
- iii. Town's participation in Patriot Relief program;
- iv. Town's development of a high-level DOT Long-Range Street Resurfacing Program plan;
- v. Town's water quality issues/complaints;
- vi. Town's Employer Visitation Plan for 2025;

***7 H: APPROVED COLLABORATION BETWEEN VALDESE CODE ENFORCEMENT AND WPCOG TO EVALUATE, DEVELOP A PLAN, AND REPORT ON THE TOWN'S CURRENT ENFORCEMENT OF ABANDONED, NONCOMPLIANT AND/OR NEGLECTED PROPERTIES AND RECOMMENDED IMPROVEMENTS** Councilman Harvey noted that many citizens attend Council meetings to report violations related to homes and zoning ordinances. He expressed concern that the current approach is not effective and suggested seeking assistance from the WPCOG to improve enforcement and resolution efforts.

Councilman Harvey made a motion to approve the removed items from the Consent Agenda, seconded by Councilman Ogle. The vote was unanimous and motion carried.

ADDED ITEM: Councilman Ogle made a motion to add a **CLOSED SESSION PURSUANT TO NC GENERAL STATUTE 143-318.11(A)(6)** to consider the qualifications, competence, performance, character, fitness, conditions of appointment, or conditions of initial employment of an individual public officer or employee, seconded by Councilwoman Zimmerman. The vote was unanimous and motion carried.

ADDED ITEM – APPROVED INTERIM TOWN MANAGER CONTRACT AMENDMENT Councilman Harvey stated that Attorney Swanson has presented the Council with an amendment to the Interim Manager’s contract, extending the expiration date beyond December 31, 2024, until a permanent Town Manager is hired and begins their role.

Councilman Harvey made a motion to approve the amendment that Attorney Swanson has drafted and recommended, seconded by Councilwoman Ward. The vote was unanimous and motion carried.

PUBLIC SAFETY FACILITIES UPDATE Interim Town Manager Bo Weichel shared the following update on the Public Safety Facilities:

- i. **Number of General Contractors sent RFQ**
- ii. **Responses or Reactions to Date**
- iii. **Next anticipated Action**

Public Safety Facilities RFQ process update

- i. Request for Qualifications solicitation:
 - ✓ Sent directly to ten General Contractors who have DB experience
 - ✓ Posted on the NC eVP Procurement site for local government project advertisements
 - ✓ Shared with Design Build Institute of America (DBIA)
 - ii. Responses to date
 - ✓ Received one “not interested”
 - ✓ Had three that requested and toured 215 E. Main - although not a requirement for SOQ
 - ✓ Received several acknowledgment responses, but no comment on interest level
 - iii. Next action
 - ✓ SOQ due January 31st
 - ✓ Review of SOQ early February
 - ✓ Select several to interview during late February
-

APPROVED APPOINTMENTS TO BOARDS/COMMISSIONS/COMMITTEES

Planning Board: Councilwoman Lowman made a motion to appoint Mark Rostan to the Planning Board to fill the unexpired term of Roy Sweezy, seconded by Councilman Ogle. The vote was unanimous and motion carried.

Councilwoman Lowman made a motion to appoint Benton Brinkley to the Alternate term on the Planning Board filling the unexpired term of Barry Zimmerman, seconded by Councilwoman Ward. The vote was unanimous and motion carried.

Councilwoman Lowman made a motion to appoint Jordan Greene to the Alternate term on the Planning Board filling the unexpired term of Cindy Stephens who move to the main part of the Planning Board, seconded by Councilwoman Ward. The vote was unanimous and motion carried.

Facilities Review Committee: Councilwoman Lowman made a motion to appoint Tom Oxentine to the Facilities Review Committee who has experience in the Fire Department, seconded by Councilwoman Zimmerman.

Discussion: Councilman Harvey noted that when the Facilities Review Committee presented its final report to the Council, it recommended that the committee be terminated; however, no formal motion was made to do so. He questioned whether the committee still has a role and highlighted that its members brought

valuable construction and facilities management experience. Additionally, he expressed uncertainty about whether the applicant has a background in construction.

Vote: Councilwoman Lowman – Yes, Councilman Harvey – No, Councilman Ogle – Yes, Councilwoman Ward – Yes, Councilwoman Zimmerman – Yes. The motion was approved and carried.

PERSONNEL CONSIDERATIONS RELATIVE TO BUDGET PLANNING Councilman Harvey emphasized the need for a review of the employee benefits program and expressed interest in providing staff development training. Interim Town Manager Bo Weichel noted that \$25,000 is allocated for training, with \$5,000 designated specifically for the Police Department. He explained that the Town had been waiting to see if a Town Manager would be hired before proceeding but stated that staff could move forward if the Council wished. Councilwoman Lowman suggested waiting until a Town Manager is in place, while Councilman Harvey proposed considering process improvement or team-building training.

- i. **Compa-Pay Salary and Position Study RFP** – Councilman Harvey moved this discussion under Management Consulting RFP.
- ii. **Review of Employee Benefits Program**
- iii. **Staff Development Training Plan and Near-term Needs**
 - **Plan for Optimum Use of \$30,000 budgeted for FY 25**
 - **Needs Identified for FY 26 Planning**

Councilwoman Ward made a motion to roll the staff development training over to next budget, seconded by Councilman Ogle. The vote was unanimous and motion carried.

NOT APPROVED - MANAGEMENT CONSULTING RFP Councilman Harvey proposed hiring a consulting firm to assess the Town's organizational structure, staff operations, and make recommendations in collaboration with the Interim or permanent Town Manager. He shared that he reached out to several consulting firms and had a 30-minute conversation with one, which he found insightful. Along with Mr. Weichel and Councilwoman Ward, they discussed the possibility of conducting a Phase I study to identify necessary improvements and determine associated costs.

- i. **Broad Analysis of Organization Structure and Staffing Needs**
- ii. **In-depth Analysis of Operations**
- iii. **Identify Town Control Documents (forms, contracts) for legal counsel review**

Motion: Councilman Harvey made a motion for the Interim Manager to issue a RFP to management consulting firms seeking proposals to study the Town of Valdese operations, seconded by Councilwoman Ward.

Discussion: Councilwoman Lowman inquired whether the consulting firm's assessment would include a salary study. Councilman Harvey clarified that the organizational review would take place before any pay study. He reminded the Council that the last salary study was conducted in 2018, and while the recommendation was to budget \$500,000 to bring all salaries in line, the Council at that time approved only \$130,000 for salary adjustments. Councilwoman Zimmerman shared her past experience with a management consultant firm, noting that the outcome had little impact and essentially "disappeared." She suggested that if the Town moves forward with this, it should focus on firms with expertise in public services and reminded the Council that a pay study is already planned in the CIP for the next few years.

Vote: Councilwoman Lowman – No, Councilman Harvey – Yes, Councilman Ogle – No, Councilwoman Ward – Yes, Councilwoman Zimmerman – No. The motion was not approved.

STATUS OF ONGOING OR APPROVED PROJECTS Interim Town Manager Bo Weichel updated the following:

- i. **Strategic Planning: 2025 Citizens' Priorities Survey** – The survey was mailed out with utility bills in January/February, and an online version will be available through the end of February.

- ii. **Rec Center ADA and Pool Cover Contracts** – These will be discussed later in the meeting.
- iii. **Status of Pool Cover Capital Fund Drive** – This will be discussed later in the meeting.
- iv. **Hoyle Creek Excavating and Trail Contract** - The Town has secured \$2.2 million in discretionary state funding for a side path along Lake Rhodhiss Drive and stream restoration work. An RFQ process was completed to hire engineering design services, with McGill Associates selected for the project. A kickoff meeting was held in mid-December, and their team has already begun an existing conditions survey. Field data collection will continue through January and February, with environmental field surveys scheduled to begin later this month. Coordination with NCDOT is ongoing to ensure a smooth project process.
- v. **Lovelady Road to Crescent Sidewalk** - This will be discussed later in the meeting.

Council members took a five-minute break.

APPROVED ORDINANCE DECLARING ROAD CLOSURES FOR THE TOWN OF VALDESE 2025 ANNUAL EVENTS

AN ORDINANCE DECLARING ROAD CLOSURE FOR TOWN OF VALDESE SPECIAL EVENTS

WHEREAS, the Town of Valdese desires to schedule an Independence Day Celebration; Annual Waldensian Festival; Treats in the Streets; and the Annual Valdese Christmas Parade; and

WHEREAS, part of US 70/Main Street in Valdese will need to be closed for each of these special events; 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:

2025 Independence Day Celebration (*Description of Closure: 1.19 mi. US 70 Main St from Hoyle St to Eldred St*) on July 4, 2025 from 5:00 PM until 11:00 PM.

2025 Waldensian Festival Kickoff Celebration (*Description of Closure: 1.19 mi. US 70 Main St from Hoyle St to Eldred St*) on August 8, 2025 from 5:00 PM until 11:00 PM.

2025 Waldensian Festival Celebration (*Description of Closure: 1.19 mi. US 70 Main St from Hoyle St to Eldred St*) on August 9, 2025 from 5:30 AM until 11:00 PM.

2025 Valdese Treats in the Streets (*Description of Closure: 1.19 mi. US 70 Main St from Hoyle St to Eldred St*) on October 31, 2025 from 3:30 PM until 6:30 PM.

2025 Valdese Christmas Parade (*Description of Closure: 1.19 mi. US 70 Main St from Hoyle St to Eldred St*) on December 6, 2025 from 9:30 AM until 12 Noon.

Signs shall be erected giving notice of the limits and times of these street closures as required by G.S. 20-169. THIS, the 13th day of January, 2025.

/s/ Charles Watts, Mayor

ATTEST:

/s/ Town Clerk

Councilwoman Lowman made a motion to approve the road closures for 2025, seconded by Councilwoman Ward. The vote was unanimous and motion carried.

TABLED FOR SIX MONTHS - AIA DOCUMENT STANDARD FORM AND GENERAL CONDITION CONTRACT – POOL STRUCTURE

Interim Town Manager Bo Weichel presented the most recent financial data covering the period from October to April, along with usage statistics. Membership tracking began this month, with a focus on visitors using day passes, as there is no scan card system in place for that. Early data indicates an average of 75 daily visitors, with attendance rising to around 96 when a covered facility is available for pool parties, especially on weekends. Additionally, swim lessons are offered three times a week, with participation rates ranging between 30 and 32. Councilwoman Lowman pointed out that Silver Sneakers members are not included in these numbers. Mr. Weichel clarified that Silver Sneakers participants are categorized as day visits.

Covered Pool October - April	
Electric	\$3,283
Natural Gas	\$23,614
Part Time Staff	\$87,833
Chemicals	\$11,293
Expenses	\$126,023
Aquatic Day Passes	\$10,796
Pool Parties	\$10,243
Swim Lessons	\$2,262
Aquatics Memberships	\$11,673
Revenue	\$34,974
Net Operational Cost <i>(Expense - Revenue)</i>	\$91,049

Current Aquatics Memberships	
Resident	61
Non-Resident	88
Aquatic Usage	
Avg. Visits Per Day	75 visitors/day
Covered Pool Parties_Saturdays (when available)	96 patrons
Covered Pool Parties_Sundays (when available)	75 patrons
Cover Pool Swim Lessons 5pm (3x per week)	32 per session
Cover Pool Swim Lessons 5pm (3x per week)	30 per session

Mr. Weichel explained that to date, \$97,000 has been spent on the project, including \$90,486 for architectural services and \$6,500 for geotechnical testing. If the project proceeds to construction, the remaining architect contract will cost approximately \$22,000. Additional expenses include ADA compliance work required for grant eligibility.

The total project cost is estimated at just over \$2 million. However, with grant funding and a \$100,000 private donation, the Town’s potential financial obligation stands at approximately \$1.43 million. A capital campaign with a \$300,000 fundraising goal is set to launch. Mr. Compton is available to provide further details on the campaign.

POOL PROJECT IMPACT ON TOWN RESERVES	
Paid to date from Town Reserves	
Architect: Design Development & Construction Documents	\$ 90,486
CVET: Geotechnical Services (soil borings/ analysis report)	\$ 6,500
To be paid from Town Reserves	
Architect: Construction Administration	\$ 21,768
Houck Bid for Cover	\$1,793,930
Moss-Marlow quote for ADA work	\$ 123,000
Total to be Advanced from Reserves	\$2,035,684
Less Amounts of Reimbursement	
NC Grant (portion to be used for ADA accommodations)	\$ (500,000)
Private Donor Contribution	\$ (100,000)
Net Depletion of Reserves	\$1,435,684
Less any amount raised by approved fund drive	
Goal	\$ (300,000)

Scott Compton, Chairperson of the Parks and Recreation Commission, provided an update on the capital funds campaign for the pool structure. A fundraising framework has been established, modeled after previous successful campaigns, such as the Wayne Owens Gymnasium. Key initiatives include:



What's Been Done?:

- Donation Request Letters Drafted
- Donation Tiers Established
- Donor Recognition Established
 - Donor Wall/ Plaques in Pool Lobby
 - Banners in Pool Area
- Donation Events Identified
 - Polar Plunge (February)
 - Swim-a-Thon (August)

What's to Do Before/At Launch?:

- Finalize Website
- Send finalized request letters to community members and patrons
 - Include donation form/letter in water bill mailing in March
- Finalize and send press release announcing the start of the campaign
- Print Posters for the Pool/Fitness Center lobby for users to easily see campaign information and progress.

Mr. Compton noted pending Town Council approval, the campaign is set to launch immediately. The estimated project timeline is approximately 240 days from the start of construction. Councilwoman Ward was concerned about the pool being shut down during the summer. Mr. Weichel reminded Council the grant is effective for three years.

Councilwoman Ward expressed concerns about prioritization and strategic planning for town projects. She noted that while the pool enclosure is important to many residents, the town must first address critical public safety needs, including facilities for police and fire personnel. She emphasized the importance of following the town's strategic plan, which prioritizes public safety and hiring a new town manager before taking on additional projects. She acknowledged the council's efforts in the manager search and stressed the need for patience and focus to ensure effective governance. Councilwoman Ward also highlighted concerns from residents in Ward 5 regarding lack of investment in their area, citing past removals of recreational amenities and unmet infrastructure needs. She firmly opposed any tax increases and urged the council to stay committed to the strategic plan, advocating for a temporary pause on the pool enclosure project until public safety priorities are addressed.

Councilman Harvey expressed surprise that discussions on the pool cover project were moving forward despite the Council's unanimous vote on October 7 prioritizing public safety facilities, specifically the police station. He reiterated that this was communicated to the town and the Parks and Recreation Commission. He emphasized the importance of making fact-based decisions, citing his background in management and finance. He referenced previous budget discussions from June 2022, noting that at the time, the pool bubble was deemed structurally sound for another decade, yet it collapsed multiple times within months. He highlighted the irony that on Election Day, when a new majority was elected due to concerns over a 67% tax increase, the pool bubble collapsed again. Councilman Harvey recalled a December 2023 meeting where the Rec Center Director proposed a \$423,000 solution for a new bubble and ventilation system, which could have been largely covered by a \$500,000 ADA grant. However, the Parks and Recreation Commission pursued a different approach, leading to the current proposal costing approximately \$1.435 million. He expressed concerns about the financial impact of using reserves for this project, questioning how it might affect funding for the public safety building. He concluded by seeking clarity on whether delaying the pool cover project would also delay necessary ADA compliance upgrades at the Rec Center.

Mr. Weichel discussed the separation of ADA compliance work from the main bid package, ensuring it can proceed independently under the grant with updated quotes. This work falls below the formal bidding

threshold, allowing for direct contractor engagement and reimbursement under the grant. The discussion then shifted to the indoor pool cover project, with concerns raised about previous data inconsistencies on pool usage and cost estimates. Some council members expressed frustration over evolving figures and the urgency of the decision. The Parks and Recreation Commission's efforts to secure grant funding for the project were acknowledged, but members debated the financial impact of allocating \$1.4 million from reserves. Council members deliberated on whether borrowing funds for the pool cover was a viable alternative to depleting reserves, weighing the impact on future borrowing capacity for the public safety building. Some argued that delaying the project could increase costs, while others stressed prioritizing public safety infrastructure, citing a previous unanimous vote to make it the town's top priority. Concerns were raised about the town's fund balance and maintaining financial stability for unforeseen emergencies. Historical context was provided regarding the ongoing delays in addressing the deteriorating public safety building, including past engineering recommendations that were not acted upon. The conversation concluded with calls to refocus on the public safety project before committing significant funds to other expenditures.

Motion: Councilman Harvey made a motion to table this item for six months, which will give us an opportunity to responses back from the RFQ for the Public Safety Facilities, seconded by Councilwoman Ward.

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

NO ACTION CAPITAL PROJECT ORDINANCE AMENDMENT – POOL STRUCTURE Mayor Watts said there would not be a need to address this item that went in conjunction with the pool structure.

NO MOTION MUNICIPAL AGREEMENT APPROVAL – LOVELADY ROAD SIDEWALK PROJECT

Interim Town Manager Bo Weichel provided an overview of Phase 1 of the project, which is funded through an 80/20 match, with \$1.14 million in federal grant funds and approximately \$286,000 from Town reserves. Phase 1 extends from Laurel to Crescent. Mr. Weichel noted if Phase 1 moves forward, Phase 2 would be considered, extending the project from Crescent to Lake Rhodhiss Drive. The estimated town contribution for Phase 2 would be around \$500,000. Mr. Weichel noted the application process for Phase 2 would be in the spring.

Councilman Harvey highlighted when they learned they had a 30-day window for applying for available federal LAPP funds totaling \$3.5 million, open to municipalities within the Greater Hickory Metropolitan Organization, covering four counties. He noted that WPCOG warned us that there was a requiring 20% local match and intensive project management. As a member of the Transportation Advisory Committee, he became aware of the opportunity and discussed it with Interim Manager Steen and Planning Director Johnson, advocating for a modest application. However, instead of pursuing his recommendations like bicycle paths, updating traffic controls, redoing intersections, etc., a two-phase project was submitted, requesting \$3.6 million—exceeding the total available funding. By the time the application reached the Council, it was too late to modify. He supported the request but expressed concerns about the project's feasibility, likening it to Pittsburgh's "Bridge to Nowhere."

Councilwoman Zimmerman emphasized that demonstrating a commitment to the project could enhance Valdese's standing with the Greater Hickory Metropolitan Organization (GHMO), increasing the likelihood of securing future grant funding. Conversely, failing to follow through might negatively impact the Town's ability to receive grants moving forward.

Mayor Watts asked Council what there pleasure was and no one made a motion.

NO ACTION CAPITAL PROJECT ORDINANCE – LOVELADY ROAD SIDEWALK PROJECT Mayor Watts said there would not be a need to address this item that went in conjunction with the sidewalk project.

INTERIM MANAGER'S REPORT:

Correction on Valdese Recreation Center pool availability on July 4th

JANUARY 13, 2025, MB#33

Town Offices Closed Monday, January 20, 2025 in Observance of Martin Luther King Day

OCP Production: Willy Wonka Jr., Show Dates: January 23 - February 2, 2025, Thursdays, Fridays, Saturdays at 7:30 p.m. & Sundays 2:30 p.m. Visit www.oldcolonyplayers.com for more information and to purchase tickets.

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

Public Input Meeting – Parks & Rec Comprehensive Plan, Tuesday, January 28, 2025, 11:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m., Splash Pad Multi-Purpose Room, 408 Hill St. SE, Valdese

Public Input Meeting – Parks & Rec Comprehensive Plan, Saturday, February 1, 2025, 10:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m., Splash Pad Multi-Purpose Room, 408 Hill St. SE, Valdese

Next Regular Council meeting is scheduled for Monday, February 3, 2025, 6:00 p.m., Council Chambers, Valdese Town Hall

Bluegrass at the Rock welcomes Joe Mullins & The Radio Ramblers - February 8, 2025 at 7:30pm Old Rock School Auditorium - tickets available at visitvaldese.com

MAYOR AND COUNCIL COMMENTS

Mayor Watts expressed appreciation for the Public Works Department's excellent work on the streets. He also acknowledged the Old Rock School staff for hosting events that brought many visitors to town, highlighting his enjoyment of the Hatley Memorial Tree Lighting Ceremony. Regarding the town manager search, he noted that progress has been slower than hoped, and no candidate has been selected yet. He reminded the Council to be cautious about conducting town business via email and text.

Councilwoman Zimmerman acknowledged the town's public safety staff, including firefighters and police. She noted that last Thursday was Law Enforcement Appreciation Day and expressed her hope that officers received recognition from the community. She publicly thanked them for their service and reiterated the town's appreciation for their work.

ADDED - CLOSED SESSION PURSUANT TO NC GENERAL STATUTE 143-318.11(A)(6) to consider the qualifications, competence, performance, character, fitness, conditions of appointment, or conditions of initial employment of an individual public officer or employee.

At 8:30 p.m., Councilman Ogle made a motion to go into closed session, seconded by Councilwoman Ward. The vote was unanimous and motion carried.

At 8:41 p.m., Councilman Ogle made a motion to return to open session, seconded by Councilwoman Ward. The vote was unanimous and motion carried.

ADJOURNMENT: At 8:43 p.m., there being no further business to come before Council, Councilman Harvey made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Councilwoman Ward. The vote was unanimous and motion carried.

Town Clerk

Mayor

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