

**TOWN OF VALDESE
TOWN COUNCIL PRE - AGENDA MEETING
APRIL 28, 2025**

The Town of Valdese Town Council met on Monday, April 28, 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 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: Councilwoman Heather Ward

A quorum was present.

Mayor Watts called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m., he offered the invocation and led in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

CONSIDERATION OF REVISION TO INTERIM TOWN MANAGER CONTRACT: Councilman Harvey made a motion to defer this item until after the Closed Session at the end of the meeting, seconded by Councilwoman Zimmerman. The vote was unanimous and motion carried.

REVIEW AND DISCUSSION OF MAY 5, 2025, PRELIMINARY AGENDA:

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

APPROVAL OF PRE-AGENDA MEETING MINUTES OF MARCH 31, 2025

APPROVAL OF CLOSED SESSION MINUTES OF MARCH 31, 2025

APPROVAL OF REGULAR MEETING MINUTES OF APRIL 7, 2025

APPROVAL OF CLOSED SESSION MINUTES OF APRIL 7, 2025

APPROVAL OF RECESSED MEETING MINUTES OF APRIL 21, 2025

APPROVAL OF CLOSED SESSION MINUTES OF APRIL 21, 2025

NEW BUSINESS:

APPROVAL OF AWARD OF BID – AERATORS AT WWTP Mr. Weichel reminded Council that funding for replacing three aerators at the Wastewater Treatment Plant was included in the current budget as a CIP item. Although they intended to present bid results at this meeting, only one bidder responded to the initial advertisement, requiring a re-bid. The project will be re-advertised, with bid results expected by the next Council meeting. No budget amendment is needed, as funding is already allocated.

RESULT: MOVED WITHOUT OBJECTION TO THE NEXT MEETING ON MAY 5, 2025, AT 6:00 P.M.

VALDESE BLUFF'S SEWER LINE BID RESULTS AND DISCUSSION Mr. Weichel provided an update on the Valdese Bluff's subdivision sewer line project, which has been in development for several years. The Town was awarded \$801,983 in ARPA funds for the project during COVID, but recent bids came in at approximately \$1.57 million—nearly double the original estimate—leaving a funding gap of about \$770,000. Burke County, while initially considered a potential partner, has expressed limited interest due to minimal return on investment. Discussions with the developer have not yielded significant financial commitments beyond a security offer of 20 homes over four years, which Council considered insufficient. Concerns were raised about investing heavily in infrastructure without stronger guarantees of development, especially given the Town's prior experience with the Settings subdivision. No action is needed right now, but Council agreed to continue discussions at the next meeting.

RESULT: MOVED WITHOUT OBJECTION TO THE NEXT MEETING ON MAY 5, 2025, AT 6:00 P.M.

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

RESULT: PLACED ON THE CONSENT AGENDA AT THE NEXT MEETING ON MAY 5, 2025, AT 6:00 P.M.

APPROVAL OF AMENDMENT TO THE VALDESE TOWN COUNCIL RULES OF PROCEDURES Council discussed proposed amendments to its Rules and Procedures, including a reduction in public comment time from five to three minutes. Concerns were raised about limiting public input and the timing of public comments during meetings. Suggestions included keeping the five-minute limit, moving public comment to the end of the meeting, or holding it during the pre-agenda meeting to allow more time for Council consideration. Due to these concerns and a desire to allow the incoming Town Manager time to review the proposed changes, Council agreed to pull the item from the agenda and revisit it at a later date.

RESULT: ITEM WAS REMOVED FROM THE AGENDA AND WILL BE REVISITED AT A LATER DATE

APPROVAL OF SANITATION VENDOR FOR FY 25-26 Mr. Weichel reviewed a proposal to switch sanitation vendors from Republic Services to Simply Green Recycling, citing ongoing service concerns. The change would not increase customer sanitation fees and could save the Town approximately \$26,000–\$28,000 annually. New sanitation carts would be required for the transition, with an estimated 8–12 week delivery time. Council was asked for direction to proceed with ordering carts to ensure a July start date, though the final contract with Simply Green is still under legal review. Sample cart colors were also presented for consideration. No formal vote was taken, but discussion indicated general support.

RESULT: MOVED TO THE BUDGET REVIEW #2 MEETING ON MAY 12, 2025, AT 6:00 P.M.

FY 24-25 YEAR-TO-DATE FINANCIALS Mr. Weichel presented the Town's financial update through March, representing 75% of the fiscal year. General Fund expenditures are at 72% and revenues at 86%, with strong performance in ad valorem tax collection and interest income (up 239% over budget). Utility Fund expenditures are at 67% and revenues at 71%, with minor savings from staffing vacancies and increased revenue from utility bill penalties (\$27,000). He also reviewed savings from the vacant manager position (approx. \$84,000) and discussed idle investment account balances and project fund trial balances. Council was reminded that some restricted funds are not in separate project accounts but are reflected in the audit.

RESULT: MOVED WITHOUT OBJECTION TO THE NEXT MEETING ON MAY 5, 2025, AT 6:00 P.M.

CONSIDERATION OF FY 25-26 BUDGET WORKSHOP FOLLOW-UP RESOLUTION Councilman Harvey requested a resolution be added to the agenda for discussion regarding the final budget outcome. He noted the budget appeared to be in good shape after the workshop, but acknowledged the need to account for the new manager's compensation in both the current and upcoming fiscal year. He asked to keep the item on the May 5 agenda for further discussion, with more in-depth review and input expected at the May 12 final budget workshop.

RESULT: MOVED WITHOUT OBJECTION TO THE NEXT MEETING ON MAY 5, 2025, AT 6:00 P.M.

CONSIDERATION OF POLICY GUIDELINES FOR CITIZEN AND PUBLIC ACCESS TO COMMUNITY CENTER FACILITIES Councilman Harvey raised concerns about inconsistent public access to the Town's two community centers—the cultural center (Old Rock School) and the Jimmy C. Draughn Community Center. He recommended both facilities be open on the same days as a matter of policy, with staffing handled by the manager. He also advocated for the tourism office and art gallery at the Old Rock School to be open on Saturdays and during special events, noting that large crowds pass by when those spaces are currently closed. He emphasized aligning operations with the Town's investments in signage and tourism promotion.

RESULT: MOVED WITHOUT OBJECTION TO THE NEXT MEETING ON MAY 5, 2025, AT 6:00 P.M.

STATUS OF ONGOING OR APPROVED PROJECTS

April 28, 2025, MB#33

- i. **Public Safety Facilities Update** Mr. Weichel reported that interviews with three firms regarding the public safety buildings project are scheduled for May 22 from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. No further updates were provided at this time.
- ii. **Water Plant Upgrade Project/Lenoir Interconnect Project** Mr. Weichel reported no updates since the last meeting.
- iii. **Recreation Center ADA and Pool Cover** Mr. Weichel reported that the ADA improvements at the recreation center are set to begin later this week, starting with demolition work and removal of the awning and fencing. Concrete work will follow as the contractor becomes available.

Regarding the pool dome structure, contracts and down payment are complete, drawings are in progress, and key long-lead materials (fabric, fans, etc.) have been pre-ordered. Yeadon has assigned a project manager, and biweekly project meetings will begin with all relevant parties.

Mr. Weichel also reported that the Town received verbal confirmation of a \$500,000 grant for the dome structure, pending a formal amendment to the project scope. Once finalized, this will reduce the amount needed from fund balance. There's also a \$100,000 matching private donation that may be used but is still under consideration. He noted that council input is needed on whether to launch a capital campaign for the dome project and whether to engage a firm to lead it, especially given its countywide usage.

RESULT: MOVED WITHOUT OBJECTION TO THE NEXT MEETING ON MAY 5, 2025, AT 6:00 P.M.

Mayor Watts announced the hiring of Mr. Todd Herms as the new Town Manager. Mr. Herms, who has served as the long-time manager for the Town of Maiden, will be at the May 5, 2025 Council meeting.

INTERIM MANAGER'S REPORT Interim Town Manager Bo Weichel will report at the May 5, 2025 meeting.

CLOSED SESSION: At 6:42 p.m., Councilman Ogle made a motion to go into 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.

At 6:48 p.m., Councilwoman Lowman made a motion to go out of Closed Session, seconded by Councilwoman Zimmerman. The vote was unanimous.

CONSIDERATION OF REVISION TO INTERIM TOWN MANAGER CONTRACT: Councilwoman Zimmerman made a motion to approve the second amendment to the Interim Town Managers employment agreement, seconded by Councilwoman Lowman. The vote was unanimous and motion carried.

ADJOURNMENT: At 6:50 p.m., there being no further business to come before Council, Councilwoman Zimmerman made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Councilwoman Lowman. The vote was unanimous.

Town Clerk

Mayor

jl