



TOWN OF WEDDINGTON
TOWN COUNCIL AGENDA
2026 RETREAT WORK SESSION
Rolling Hills Country Club Monroe NC
February 12, 2026
9:00 a.m.

Call to Order
Review and Adoption of the agenda

Define Expectations

Administrative Topics

1. Town Event Calendar
2. Weddington branded clothing/products discussion
3. Public Services
 - a. Town Hall/Staff Operational Hours
 - b. Solid waste reporting
4. Website discussion
5. Council iPads
6. **Charter discussion**
 - a. Mayoral Term
 - b. Council vacancy
7. **Ban on Solicitation**
8. **Public comment rules discussion**
9. **Remote Participation Policy**

Finance Discussion

1. FY 2026-2027 Budget Discussion

Facilities Discussion

1. Park
 - a. Event Sponsorship Agreement
 - b. Possible Grants
 - c. Park and Events committee
2. Landscaping RFP

Planning Discussion

1. Text Amendments/UDO
 - a. UDO Audit by Subcommittee
2. Fee Schedule Review
 - a. Increasing engineering review fees
 - b. Add fees for demolition letters and others
3. Updating Maps of subdivisions
4. Development Projects Process/Tracking

Review Action Items/Goals



**TOWN OF WEDDINGTON
TOWN COUNCIL 2026 RETREAT WORK SESSION
ROLLING HILLS COUNTRY CLUB MONROE NC
FEBRUARY 12, 2026
MINUTES
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Call to Order

Mayor Jim Bell called the 2026 Retreat Work Session to order at 9:00 a.m. at Rolling Hills Country Club in Monroe, North Carolina.

Quorum was determined with all Councilmembers present: Mayor Jim Bell, Mayor Pro Tem Tom Smith, Councilmembers Darcey Ladner, Ellen McLaughlin, and Clayton Jones

Planning Board members present: Vice Chair Rusty Setzer, Board members Amanda Jarrell, Bill Deter, Scott Buzzard, and Steve Fellmeth

Staff present: Town Administrator/Clerk Karen Dewey, Town Planner Gregory Gordos, Finance Officer Leslie Gaylord, Deputy Clerk/Administrative Assistant Debbie Coram, and Town Attorney Karen Wolter (via ZOOM from 10 a.m. to 12 noon)

Review and Adoption of the Agenda

Motion: Councilmember Ladner moved to adopt the agenda as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

Define Expectations

Ms. Dewey confirmed that the Council wished to maintain flexibility during the retreat to allow for open discussion among the councilmembers and planning board members present.

Administrative Topics

1. Town Event Calendar

Ms. Dewey listed possible events for the Town calendar, which included National Night Out, School Tools Drive, Toys for Tots, and the Tree Lighting Ceremony. Council discussed potentially reinstating previous community events including an Easter egg hunt or spring festival, a litter sweep cleanup event, and possible partnership opportunities with the Weddington Garden Club. The Council noted that many of these initiatives would be appropriate for the future Park and Events Advisory Board to evaluate and implement. Staff was directed to add

suggested events to the planning list and explore coordination with existing community organizations.

2. Weddington Branded Clothing/Products Discussion

Councilmember McLaughlin presented the idea of offering Weddington-branded merchandise to enhance town pride and community identity. Examples included ornaments, apparel, and other items featuring the town hall or Weddington logo. Council discussed the historical challenges of managing inventory and cash transactions at events. The consensus favored establishing an online store with pre-paid orders to eliminate inventory management and accounting concerns. Staff was directed to explore options for an online platform where residents could purchase Weddington-branded merchandise without requiring town staff to maintain physical inventory or handle transactions directly.

3. Public Services

a. Town Hall/Staff Operational Hours

Council discussed whether to extend current town hall public hours, which are Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Councilmember McLaughlin expressed concern about accessibility for residents, particularly those unable to visit during current hours. However, extending hours would require Deputy Clerk Debbie Coram to move from part-time to full-time status, triggering retirement benefit obligations at approximately 17% of salary. Council discussed the tradeoff between improved accessibility and the productivity staff achieves during non-public hours when working remotely. The decision was made to maintain current public hours and focus instead on improving the town website to enable more self-service transactions and reduce the need for in-person visits.

Council discussed the remote work policy for town employees. Following discussion about productivity, accessibility, and cost implications, by majority consensus (Mayor Pro Tem Smith and Councilmembers Ladner and Jones), Council determined that the current arrangement of staff working remotely on Tuesdays and Thursdays while being available in the office Monday, Wednesday, and Friday adequately serves the town's needs. An official remote work policy will be on the consent agenda at the March Town Council meeting for adoption.

b. Solid Waste Reporting

Staff will receive and distribute monthly tonnage reports from Active Waste to Councilmembers in the monthly packets.

4. Website Discussion

Ms. Dewey presented proposals from two website vendors: Revize and CivicPlus. Both proposals include ADA accessibility compliance, which is required by April 2027, and AI-enabled chatbot functionality to assist residents. CivicPlus is a larger company with more comprehensive services but at a higher cost, while Revize offers a more affordable option with comparable functionality. Council emphasized the need for improved user experience, easier navigation, and better integration with the town's permitting software. Staff was directed to continue evaluating both proposals, with Council members reviewing example websites and providing feedback. A decision is expected by March or April to allow adequate time for implementation before the ADA compliance deadline.

5. Council iPads

Council discussed challenges with the current iPads, including difficulty viewing and annotating meeting documents, inability to print, and general functionality limitations. Councilmember McLaughlin suggested that when iPads become obsolete, the town should consider replacing them with Chromebooks, which would be less expensive and more functional for reviewing meeting materials. Staff noted they would explore solutions to improve the current iPad functionality and consider alternatives for future procurement.

6. Charter Discussion

a. Mayoral Term

Councilmember McLaughlin raised the question of whether the mayoral term should be extended from two to four years to provide more continuity. After discussion, Council determined that the current two-year term provides appropriate accountability and flexibility. The decision was made to maintain the status quo with no changes to the mayoral term length.

b. Council Vacancy

Councilmember McLaughlin sought clarification on the process for filling council vacancies, particularly regarding whether a councilmember moving out of their district would automatically create a vacancy. Town Attorney Karen Wolter confirmed that the town charter requires councilmembers to reside in their district both for election and for service. If a council member moves out of their district, the seat automatically becomes vacant by operation of state law. The Council then has the authority to appoint a qualified individual who resides in that district to fill the vacancy. This process is clearly established in state statutes and the town charter.

7. Ban on Solicitation

Councilmember McLaughlin proposed exploring a ban on door-to-door solicitation due to safety concerns, including solicitors using the opportunity to case homes for potential burglaries. Town Attorney Wolter explained that a complete ban on solicitation would likely be unconstitutional based on Supreme Court precedent protecting door-to-door solicitation as free speech. However, the town could implement time, place, and manner restrictions, and could establish a civil penalty for solicitors who violate "no solicitation" signs posted by individual property owners. The attorney recommended that rather than attempting a comprehensive ban, the town could adopt an ordinance imposing a civil fine (such as \$100) for solicitors who ignore posted no-solicitation signs on private property. This would give residents enforcement options without requiring them to personally confront solicitors. Council directed Councilmember McLaughlin to meet with Union County Sheriff's Office Lieutenant May to determine how the department would enforce such an ordinance. Based on that feedback, staff and the town attorney will draft an appropriate ordinance for Council consideration.

8. Public Comment Rules Discussion

Town Attorney Wolter presented proposed amendments to the public comment policy to clarify that comments must be relevant to topics within the town's jurisdiction. The amendments would allow the mayor to stop comments on topics the Council has no authority to address, such as national political issues or campaigning, while still permitting discussion of any matters the town

can vote on or make decisions about. The policy also reinforces that personal attacks on staff members will not be permitted during public comment, though elected officials must tolerate a higher level of criticism as public figures. The amendments aim to prevent disruption while protecting appropriate public comment.

Motion: Councilmember Ladner moved to adopt the revised rules for public hearing and comments. The motion passed unanimously.

9. Remote Participation Policy

Town Attorney Wolter explained that under state law, councilmembers may participate remotely in meetings pursuant to a policy, but they cannot count toward a quorum and cannot vote unless participating during a declared state of emergency. Remote participants can, however, make comments and provide input on agenda items. The policy requires two business days advance notice for remote participation, with exceptions for emergency situations such as sudden illness. Council discussed the importance of in-person attendance for voting purposes.

Motion: Councilmember Ladner moved to adopt the remote participation policy for the Town of Weddington. The motion passed unanimously.

Finance Discussion

1. FY 2026-2027 Budget Discussion

Ms. Gaylord presented a preliminary operating budget showing estimated operating revenues of \$308,875 at the current 3.5-cent tax rate. She explained her process of starting with known revenues and mandatory expenditures, then identifying discretionary items for Council consideration. The preliminary budget includes potential increases for sheriff's services (estimated 6%), solid waste services (up to 3% per contract), and salary adjustments to be determined by Council. Leslie presented a separate list of potential non-operating revenues and expenditures totaling approximately \$479,875, including items such as conditional zoning fees, park improvements, mast arm traffic signals, watershed studies, and website development. Council discussed several significant budget items:

- **Engineering Fees:** Staff reported that the on-call engineering budget of \$75,000 is insufficient given recent monthly invoices of \$16,000. Mr. Gordos explained that the town needs to improve fee recovery by charging applicants upfront for plan reviews and inspections rather than billing after services are rendered. The town also discussed eliminating the requirement for the engineers to attend bond release meetings, which would save approximately \$400-500 per meeting. Council agreed that the engineer's written reports are sufficient for most bond releases.
- **Fee Schedule:** Staff recommended adding a \$50 fee for demolition permit letters and adjusting other fees to ensure cost recovery. Gordos noted that the new conditional zoning application fee of \$2,000 plus \$300 per acre, implemented in July, has already generated significantly more revenue than the previous flat \$1,650 fee and better reflects actual staff time.
- **Mast Arm Traffic Signals:** The budget includes estimated costs for decorative mast arm traffic signals at several intersections including Providence Road and Highway 84, and potentially at the Rea Road extension and Hemby Road intersections. Costs range from

\$50,000 to \$100,000 per intersection depending on whether the town pays the full cost or only the incremental upgrade cost above standard signals. NCDOT has also offered to plant trees along the median of the Rea Road extension at no cost if the town agrees to maintain them, similar to the existing arrangement on Providence Road.

- **Park Funding:** No specific park funding is included in the preliminary operating budget pending receipt of cost estimates from LaBella. The town has approximately \$250,000 in state grant funds that must be obligated by June 30, 2026, or risk being lost. Staff is working to amend the grant scope to apply previously spent LaBella planning costs toward this grant requirement. Council emphasized that any park development will not be funded through tax rate increases but rather through available reserve funds and matching grants.

Ms. Gaylord reminded Council that the town has healthy fund balances, including restricted reserves and general reserves, that could be used for one-time capital projects without impacting the tax rate. She noted that using reserves for matching grants would show as an appropriation of fund balance in the budget but would not require a tax increase.

Council also discussed the need to identify operating budget priorities for park maintenance once a park is developed, noting that one-time capital items in the current budget (such as mast arms) could be reallocated to ongoing park operations in future years.

Facilities Discussion

1. Park

a. Event Sponsorship Agreement

Ms. Dewey presented the existing Event Sponsorship Agreement policy, originally adopted in October 2019, which provides a framework for organizations to sponsor or host events at town facilities. The policy establishes different sponsorship levels and outlines what is permitted. Council discussed whether to allow outside organizations to apply to hold events at town facilities or to limit events to only town-sponsored activities. Concerns were raised about the town's ability to decline certain event applications without facing discrimination claims. The consensus was to focus initially on town-sponsored events and fundraising for those events, with the future Park and Events Advisory Board potentially revisiting broader event sponsorship opportunities. Council agreed this item required further consideration before making policy changes.

b. Possible Grants

Ms. Dewey reported that the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund grant application is due May 1, 2026, and staff is working toward submitting an application. A resolution supporting the grant application will be placed on a future consent agenda. She also noted that other state grant opportunities (GoGrants) remain on hold pending state budget approval. Senator Todd Johnson and Representative David Willis have both indicated that the town's \$250,000 state appropriation for the park is at risk of expiring on June 30, 2026, if not obligated. Staff is working with the state to either spend the funds or obtain an extension, with the possibility of applying previously spent LaBella planning costs toward satisfying the grant spending requirement.

c. Park and Events Committee

Mayor Bell outlined plans to establish a seven-member Park and Events Advisory Board, structured similarly to the Planning Board with a chair and vice-chair selected by Council. The board will handle event planning, sponsor recruitment, and provide recommendations to Council on park and recreation matters. Councilmember McLaughlin was identified as the likely Council liaison to the committee. The mayor emphasized that having this advisory board is necessary to qualify for additional grant opportunities and provides the town with increased scoring on competitive grant applications. Four applications have been received to date, with verbal interest from additional residents. Council discussed the committee's role in planning events such as the tree lighting ceremony, food truck events, and other community activities, which would relieve staff of these duties. The mayor clarified that the committee will not be involved in reviewing or providing input on the park design from LaBella, which will come directly to Council. The committee's primary functions will be event planning and management once park facilities are available.

2. Landscaping RFP

Ms. Dewey reported dissatisfaction with the current structure of the landscaping contract, noting issues with being charged separately for services previously included. She is preparing a new Request for Proposals (RFP) for landscaping services that will more clearly specify requirements including seasonal flowers (pansies, begonias) and other maintenance items that were missed in the previous contract. Staff has received one estimate of \$3,100 for landscaping the roundabouts with low-maintenance native plants and crape myrtles. Ms. Dewey is also obtaining estimates for monthly maintenance costs for the roundabouts if they are landscaped. Council suggested considering redbud trees as an alternative to crape myrtles at roundabouts, noting they are native, low-maintenance, and work well in similar applications. Staff will continue developing the RFP for Council review.

Planning Discussion

1. Text Amendments/UDO

a. UDO Audit by Subcommittee

Mayor Bell directed the Planning Board subcommittee, led by Chairman Bill Deter, to conduct a comprehensive audit of the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) to remove vague language such as "to the greatest extent feasible," "should," "could," and similar discretionary terms. The goal is to establish clear, enforceable standards that prevent developers from using loopholes or subjective language to avoid requirements. Planning Board members and staff discussed several specific areas needing clarification:

- **Steep Slope Definition:** Planning Board member Rusty Setzer demonstrated that the current 25% steep slope threshold is too restrictive and could constitute a regulatory taking. He recommended changing the definition to 35-40% slope, which is more reasonable and still addresses erosion and environmental concerns while allowing property owners to build walkout basements and utilize hillside lots. Council and Planning Board agreed this needed to be reviewed.
- **Neighborhood Greens:** The Keystone development highlighted confusion about when neighborhood greens are required, with the ordinance stating they are required but adding "to the greatest extent feasible," which developers interpreted as optional if it reduced their lot yield.

- **Primary and Secondary Conservation:** Staff explained that clearer definitions and visual exhibits to distinguish between "primary conservation" areas (floodplains, hydric soils, steep slopes) that should be excluded from lot yield calculations versus "secondary conservation" areas (the required open space set-aside in developments) are being developed.

Planning Board member Bill Deter reported that the Planning Board's February meeting will address many of these issues with updated text and graphics from staff. Mayor Bell emphasized the importance of tightening the UDO in anticipation of the state potentially limiting or eliminating conditional zoning authority in the future. The subcommittee was directed to work with Mr. Gordos to identify all areas needing clarification and to batch amendments together for comprehensive updates rather than making piecemeal changes. Planning Board member Bill Deter suggested potentially using AI tools with large language model capabilities to identify redundancies and inconsistencies in the UDO text, though Council emphasized that human review would still be essential.

2. Fee Schedule Review

a. Increasing Engineering Review Fees

Mr. Gordos explained that the town's current fee structure does not adequately recover costs for engineering plan reviews and inspections. Previously, the town charged developers a flat fee of \$1,650 for projects like Toll Brothers' Deal Lake, which took over two years of staff time before ultimately being denied. The new conditional zoning fee of \$2,000 plus \$300 per acre, implemented in July, has already generated five-figure revenues that better reflect actual costs. Mr. Gordos recommended requiring all fees to be paid upfront rather than after services are rendered, which will improve cash flow and ensure cost recovery. He also noted that inspection fees for items like erosion control need better tracking so that when LaBella performs inspections, those costs are billed directly to the responsible party rather than absorbed by taxpayers. Ms. Gaylord confirmed that moving to upfront fee collection is important for budget management.

b. Add Fees for Demolition Letters and Others

Ms. Dewey requested adding a \$50 fee for demolition permit letters, which the county requires but the town currently provides without charge despite the staff time involved. This would be consistent with the existing \$50 zoning confirmation letter fee. Council supported adding this fee. Staff will present an updated fee schedule for approval with the FY2026-2027 Budget incorporating these and other adjustments.

3. Updating Maps of Subdivisions

Councilmember McLaughlin requested updated maps showing all subdivisions in Weddington to assist with law enforcement coordination and Weddington Watch neighborhood crime prevention efforts. Mr. Gordos explained that the GIS software previously used (ArcMap) has been sunset and replaced with a subscription-based service that costs thousands of dollars annually. All existing shapefiles and maps would need to be completely recreated from scratch in the new software. Staff will first contact Union County GIS to see if they can provide updated maps at no cost since the county maintains parcel data for tax purposes. If the county cannot provide the maps, staff will explore the cost of subscribing to the new GIS software or hiring a consultant to

create updated subdivision maps. Council emphasized the need to know this information but wanted to explore the most cost-effective solution before committing to expensive software subscriptions.

4. Development Projects Process/Tracking

Mr. Gordos confirmed that Section D-607 of the UDO outlines up to eleven steps in the development review process, which provides a framework for tracking project progress. However, staff cannot provide firm timelines to developers due to variables such as items being tabled or requiring multiple revisions. Council discussed the need to better understand the total amount of undeveloped land in Weddington that could potentially be developed, though this would require GIS analysis capabilities the town does not currently have. Staff will explore whether Union County can provide this data.

Council also discussed the challenge of developers submitting incomplete applications or going silent during the review process. Ms. Wolter and staff will develop a policy for closing out inactive applications after a reasonable period of no communication, requiring developers to restart the process if they later wish to proceed.

Review Action Items/Goals

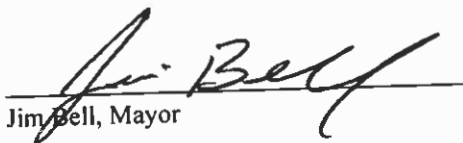
The Council directed staff to proceed with the following action items:

- Continue developing the Park and Events Advisory Board with applications to be reviewed at the March Council meeting
- Find vendors for branding merchandise
- Prepare a resolution supporting the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund grant application
- Develop updated fee schedule including demolition letter fees and upfront payment requirements
- Explore options for website replacement with decision by March or April
- Coordinate with Union County regarding GIS mapping and subdivision data
- Draft solicitation ordinance after meeting with Union County Sheriff's Office
- Continue working with LaBella to obtain park cost estimates within three weeks
- Develop updated landscaping RFP with clearer service specifications
- Prepare comprehensive UDO amendments to remove vague language and clarify standards
- Work with NCDOT on Rea Road extension tree planting and mast arm signal upgrades
- Amend state grant scope to apply LaBella planning costs toward \$250,000 2023 grant obligation

Motion: Mayor Pro Tem Smith made a motion to adjourn the February 12, 2026 Town Council Work Session Retreat at approximately 2:50 p.m.

4/13/2026

Karen Wiley


Jim Bell, Mayor