



**TOWN OF WEDDINGTON
REGULAR TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
MONDAY, JUNE 8, 2026 – 7:00 P.M.
WEDDINGTON TOWN HALL
MINUTES
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1. Call to Order

Mayor Bell called the June 8, 2026, Regular Town Council Meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

2. Determination of Quorum

Quorum was determined with Mayor and two Councilmembers present: Mayor Jim Bell, Mayor Pro Tem Tom Smith, and Ellen McLaughlin. Council Member Darcey Ladner was absent.

3. Pledge of Allegiance

Council led the Pledge of Allegiance.

4. Additions, Deletions and/or Adoption of the Agenda

Mayor Bell requested the following amendments to the agenda:

- Consent Agenda Item 9 (Project Presentation – “Estates at Weddington”) was removed.

Motion: Mayor Pro Tem Smith made a motion to approve the agenda as amended.

Vote: The motion passed with a unanimous vote.

5. Conflict of Interest Statement: *In accordance with state law, it is the duty of every Council member to avoid conflicts of interest. Does any Council member have any known conflict of interest with respect to any matters on the agenda? If so, please identify the conflict and refrain from any participation in the matter involved.*

Mayor Bell read the Conflict of Interest Statement. No Councilmember had a conflict of interest.

6. Mayor/Councilmember Reports

Council Member McLaughlin discussed a productive meeting with Mayor Bell and the Union County Public Schools Superintendent on a students-on-council program and detailed a regional council meeting's discussions on the I-77 South Expansion, state property tax cap proposals, and Flat Creek sewer capacity, which is nearing its limit. She noted challenges in Wesley Chapel's dam repair

and Marvin's town manager departure, alongside Marvin's park project partnership with Pondscapes. She attended a planning board training and warned about drought impacts on well water.

Mayor Pro Tem Smith highlighted an NCDOT contract for resurfacing over six miles of roads in Union County, including several in Weddington, starting mid-July. He raised concerns about Senate Bill 1047, which affects zoning authority and urged state legislators to oppose it, labeling it a threat to local control. Regarding finances, he affirmed the Town's solid financial status with cash reserves reporting \$9,340,058 as of June 1.

Mayor Bell addressed several items of public concern that had been circulating on social media, including inaccurate claims that the Town had failed its audit and that campaign contributions reflected improper developer influence. Mayor Bell indicated that the Council would begin more actively correcting inaccurate public statements going forward. He noted that the Town's ad valorem tax rate remained unchanged and that no new taxes had been levied.

7. Public Comments

Mayor Bell read the rules governing public comment into the record prior to hearing speakers.

Ann Marie Anderson addressed the Council and the public on the topic of civic division within the community. She acknowledged that the town has experienced significant discord in the months surrounding and following the most recent election, resulting in the departure of a council member, the town planner, and the longtime town administrator. She offered that neither side of the divide is "winning," noting that productive disagreement is healthy and constructive, but that the current environment has devolved into personal attacks, unverified assumptions, and the spread of misinformation. She called on community members to reflect on their own role in the deterioration of civic discourse, acknowledging that individuals on all sides have both suffered grievances and caused them. She specifically addressed a situation from the prior October in which a social media post had characterized a genuine interaction between her mother, former Mayor Nancy Anderson, and Gail Butler as disingenuous and attention-seeking following a tribute to Sergeant Michael Verardo. Anderson stated that she had prepared a correction at the time but did not deliver it, a decision she described as wrong. She offered a public apology to Ms. Butler, calling the moment one of authentic connection and mutual respect. She concluded by urging the community to take ownership of its conduct, to build rather than tear down, and to be mindful of the example being set for young people.

Bill Deter, a former mayor and current Planning Board member, responded to statements made about him during a prior Council meeting's public comment period. He described the prior comments as containing falsehoods and innuendo, specifically allegations that he had purchased influence with the Council through campaign contributions and that he had violated Planning Board ethics by discussing pending projects. Mr. Deter addressed each claim directly, stating that his campaign contributions are consistent with civic participation common across the country and do not

constitute undue influence, and that the allegation regarding planning board ethics discussions was, in his words, "fiction." He characterized the pattern of personal attacks in recent months as counterproductive to the community's interests and cited the Teddy Roosevelt "man in the arena" speech to recognize the volunteer service of Council members, Planning Board members, and staff. He urged residents to direct civic energy toward substantive issues.

8. Presentation from UCSO Chief Deputy Underwood and Public Safety Report

Lieutenant James May of the Union County Sheriff's Office presented the monthly public safety statistics. He noted that preventive patrols and traffic enforcement remain at elevated levels, and encouraged residents to slow down on Providence Road. He clarified that a gunshot wound call appearing in the crime mapping software was in fact a swatting incident — a prank call made using a spoofed phone number — and that no one was injured. The investigation is ongoing. Lieutenant May also addressed a significant volume of calls related to aggressive door-to-door solicitation by Acxiom Pest Control, noting that the company was advised to cease operations in the area after being warned that continued high-pressure sales conduct could result in trespassing charges. He concluded by expressing appreciation for outgoing Town Administrator Karen Dewey's support of law enforcement.

Mayor Pro Tem Smith noted concerns about e-bikes and electric scooters being operated unsafely on public roads, including an incident he personally witnessed on Providence Road. He also encouraged residents to be considerate of neighbors and animals during the upcoming Fourth of July holiday by refraining from the use of illegal, high-concussion fireworks.

Chief Deputy Tony Underwood provided context for the increase in the Town's law enforcement service costs for the upcoming fiscal year. He explained that the increase is primarily attributable to the addition of a shared sergeant position to provide direct supervision over the small town contract unit, which now comprises fourteen deputies serving five municipalities: Weddington, Wingate, Marvin, Lake Park, and Wesley Chapel. He apologized for the lack of advance communication regarding the cost increase, acknowledging that county finance staff notified the towns without coordinating with the Sheriff's Office beforehand. The cost is allocated proportionally by the number of deputies assigned to each municipality, with Weddington's share at approximately 35–36 percent. Chief Deputy Underwood confirmed that implementation of the sergeant position is targeted for October 1, which will remove the first quarter cost from the current fiscal year, reducing Weddington's share by approximately \$14,000. The remaining increase also reflected the full-year cost of two deputies added mid-year in the prior cycle, as well as salary adjustments. Chief Deputy Underwood and Mayor Bell both expressed strong support for the flock camera system, describing it as a force multiplier that has led to rapid apprehension of individuals sought by law enforcement.

Council Member McLaughlin raised the topic of door-to-door solicitation, noting community concern about individuals who appear to be canvassing properties. Chief Deputy Underwood advised that ordinances requiring posted no-solicitation signage can create an enforcement mechanism, but that the most effective response remains calling 911 when individuals persist after being told no, as deputies are available 24/7 and can respond quickly.

9. Project Presentation – “Estates at Weddington”

This item was removed from the agenda prior to the meeting. The presentation was deferred pending the hiring of a town planner.

10. Consent Agenda

- A. Approve May 11, 2026 Town Council Regular Meeting Minutes
- B. Approve May 19, 2026 Town Council Special Meeting Minutes
- C. Approve April 20, 2026 Town Council Special Meeting Minutes
- D. Approve Closed Session minutes from May, 11, 2026; April 20, 2026; April 13, 2026; Oct 13, 2025; Aug 11, 2025; March 10, 2025
- E. Approve FY2025-2026 Budget Amendment

Motion: Mayor Pro Tem Smith made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda.

Vote: The motion passed with a unanimous vote.

11. Old Business

A. FY2026-2027 Budget Ordinance and Set the Tax Rate at \$0.035 and 2026-2027 Fee Schedule

Finance Officer Leslie presented the proposed FY2026–2027 budget, totaling \$3,160,000. The ad valorem tax rate remains unchanged at \$0.035 (3.5 cents per \$100 of assessed value). The budget was described as relatively straightforward, with no new deputies added and no tax rate revaluation occurring in the current cycle. The budget was noted to be balanced and to reflect conservative revenue estimations, with expenditures budgeted at the higher end of projected ranges.

Leslie noted that salaries for the town planner and town administrator/clerk positions are budgeted at full annual amounts; once staffing transitions are resolved, a budget amendment will reallocate funds between the permanent positions and interim consulting services as appropriate.

Council Member McLaughlin presented a comparative analysis of elected official stipends, drawing on NCLM data from 28 municipalities with populations under 5,000 and neighboring municipalities in the area. The current mayor stipend of \$6,000 annually and council member stipend of \$4,800 annually had not been adjusted since 2012. The proposed adjustments, calculated conservatively based on cumulative CPI increases since 2012 rather than targeting the NCLM average, set the mayor's stipend at \$8,700 annually and council member stipends at \$6,960 annually. The planning board member per-meeting

stipend was proposed to increase from \$50 to \$75. Council discussed the nature of these stipends as functional reimbursements for time and expenses rather than salaries, and noted that the total fiscal impact was minimal within a \$3.16 million budget. The Town Attorney confirmed that under North Carolina law, stipend adjustments may only be made at budget adoption, and directed that the motion to adopt the budget include the specific new amounts.

i. Public Hearing

Mayor Bell opened the public hearing. One member of the public, former Mayor Nancy Anderson, spoke briefly to thank Finance Officer Leslie for her work and to express support for the long-overdue stipend adjustments.

Mayor Bell closed the public hearing.

ii. Discussion and Consideration

Motion: Council Member McLaughlin made a motion to adopt the FY2026–2027 Budget Ordinance as presented including the 2026–2027 Fee Schedule, with the ad valorem tax rate set at \$0.035, and with elected official stipends set as follows: Mayor at \$8,700 annually; Council Members at \$6,960 annually; and Planning Board members at \$75 per meeting attended.

Vote: The motion passed with a unanimous vote.

B. Zip Code Resolution

Mayor Bell provided an update on efforts to obtain a unique ZIP code for Weddington. The matter requires an act of Congress to change. Senate Bill 4505, which consolidates two prior bills (S.B. 1455 and S.B. 2961) and includes a number of municipalities without unique ZIP codes, is anticipated to come before the U.S. Senate in June or July 2026. The bill is sponsored by Senators Joni Ernst, Alex Padilla, John Barrasso, and Michael Bennet. Mayor Bell noted that Congressman Mark Harris has been instrumental in the effort, including speaking on the House floor on behalf of Weddington's inclusion, and that the House passed the prior bill with a two-thirds majority on July 21, 2025. Mayor Bell urged residents to contact U.S. Senators Burr and Tillis in support of S.B. 4505. A resident inquired about the practical impact on businesses and addresses; Mayor Bell confirmed that if passed, there would be a multi-year phase-in period and that the prior ZIP code would not cease to function immediately. S.B. 4505 was confirmed to be a stand-alone bill solely addressing ZIP codes for multiple municipalities.

Motion: Mayor Pro Tem Smith made a motion to adopt the ZIP Code Resolution

Vote: The motion passed with a unanimous vote.

C. Discussion and Consideration of Town Administrator/Clerk Job Description

The Council reviewed the proposed job description for the combined Town Administrator/Clerk position. Mayor Pro Tem Smith confirmed the position would be posted as a single combined role, consistent with the Town's longstanding practice, while noting that the description delineates the distinct duties of each function to allow for potential separation in the future as the Town grows. The Town Attorney confirmed that the description appropriately reflects both roles, and Finance Officer Leslie noted that the combined administrator/clerk model has been the standard for the Town for the majority of its history. Council Member McLaughlin raised the question of whether candidates would typically hold clerk certification; the Town Attorney indicated that the clerk's role does carry a specific certification, and that the search may attract candidates with MPA backgrounds seeking the breadth of experience the combined position provides.

Motion: Mayor Pro Tem Smith made a motion to adopt the Town Administrator/Clerk Job Description as presented and to authorize its posting for the open position

Vote: The motion passed with a unanimous vote.

D. Update on Vacancy of District 3 Seat

Mayor Bell reported that the application deadline for the District 3 Council seat vacancy has been extended to Friday, June 12, 2026. He indicated that the Town currently has five to six qualified candidates, and that no further extensions would be granted. Following the deadline, the Council will proceed to interviews. Council members encouraged interested residents to submit applications and to contact Council members with any questions, noting that contact information is available on the Town's website.

No vote was required; this item was presented as an informational update.

12. New Business

A. Discussion and Possible consideration of public engagement with LaBella

The Council considered a proposed scope of work from LaBella Associates for public engagement services related to the Town's park project. Council Member McLaughlin raised substantive concerns regarding the adequacy of the proposed scope, drawing on her professional background in market research. She noted that the document lacks clearly defined research

objectives, methodology, scope of outreach, implementation details, and an achievable timeline. She specifically questioned the use of quotation marks around the word "survey" in the proposal and expressed that the phase-one vision alignment timeline of two weeks was insufficient for meaningful community engagement. Council directed that her specific written questions be provided to LaBella for a revised proposal before the Council would consider further action. Mayor Pro Tem Smith noted that the purpose of the engagement is to respond to community requests for additional input on the park design, which must be finalized before the Town can apply for a matching parks and recreation grant. He confirmed that the survey component represents only a portion of the total contract value, with the larger portion being architectural redesign work to better reflect the Town's character.

Motion: Mayor Pro Tem Smith made a motion to table the item pending receipt of a revised scope of work from LaBella.

Vote: The motion passed with a unanimous vote.

B. Discussion of SWCA Scope of Work for environmental survey.

The Council discussed a proposed scope of work from SWCA Environmental Consultants for a comprehensive environmental survey of the Town. Mayor Pro Tem Smith expressed strong support for the concept, describing it as a critical resource for future planning and development review, particularly as it would allow a future town planner to identify sensitive environmental areas — including wetlands, floodplains, and watershed features — before development applications are submitted. However, he moved to table the matter, stating that the scope of work should be reviewed by an incoming full-time town planner to ensure it captures what the professional considers necessary, to avoid spending funds on deliverables that may not align with the planner's needs. Council Member McLaughlin added that having the planner involved from the outset would ensure greater ownership of the data and a more holistic understanding of development impacts across the town. Staff confirmed to SWCA that the matter is on hold pending the planner hire, not a rejection.

Motion: Mayor Pro Tem Smith made a motion to table the SWCA environmental survey scope of work.

Vote: The motion passed with a unanimous vote.

C. Acceptance of Resignation of Town Administrator/Clerk Karen Dewey effective June 12, 2026

Town Administrator/Clerk Karen Dewey addressed the Council prior to the formal vote on her resignation. She expressed gratitude for the opportunity to serve the Town of Weddington for nine years, acknowledged the dedication of Town staff, and encouraged the Council to continue valuing professionalism, expertise, and civility in local government. She thanked her team — Jasmine, Leslie, Kim, Debbie, Karen, and the Town's deputies — and expressed appreciation for

the support she received from the Council and from quiet community supporters throughout her tenure.

Mayor Bell, Mayor Pro Tem Smith, and Council Member McLaughlin each offered remarks expressing appreciation for Ms. Dewey's service, acknowledging the difficulty of filling the position, and expressing confidence in the remaining staff to support the transition.

Motion: Mayor Pro Tem Smith made a motion to accept the resignation of Town Administrator/Clerk Karen Dewey, effective June 12, 2026

Vote: The motion passed with a unanimous vote.

13. Code Enforcement Report

Town Administrator Dewey reported that the Council received an email that morning summarizing the inspection report from the prior Friday. Staff is proceeding with issuance of certain notices of violation, with additional inspections scheduled for later in the month.

14. Update from Finance Officer and Tax Collector

Finance Officer Leslie Gaylord reported that monthly financial statements were included in Council packets. The Town is in the final month of the fiscal year. Ms. Gaylord reported that she is in active contact with the Local Government Commission (LGC) regarding approval of the audit contract for the newly engaged auditor, who has expressed confidence she can complete and submit the audit by June 30, 2026, pending prompt LGC approval. Ms. Gaylord noted that if the audit cannot be submitted by June 30, an appeal for late filing would be required and that this could potentially be accomplished through a special meeting. The Council authorized Ms. Gaylord to prepare such an appeal preemptively in the event one is needed.

Motion: Mayor Pro Tem Smith made a motion to authorize the Finance Officer to prepare and file an appeal for late audit submission to the LGC in the event the audit cannot be submitted by June 30, 2026

Vote: The motion passed with a unanimous vote.

15. Updates from Town Planner and Town Administrator

Town Administrator Dewey reported that at the May Planning Board meeting, the Board forwarded the Toll Brothers Morris Farm project to the Town Council with a recommendation for approval. That item will come before the Council once a town planner is in place.

She also provided an update on the Potter Road and Forest Lawn Drive roundabout project. Right-of-way acquisition is complete, and utility relocation commenced this month. Preliminary engineering is expected to be completed in December 2026. Construction is now anticipated to begin in June 2027,

approximately two years later than originally projected, due to complications encountered during right-of-way acquisition.

16. Update from Park and Events Committee

Park and Events Committee Chair Gail Butler reported on the Committee's inaugural meeting held on June 1, 2026, noting the full board was in attendance. She announced that the Committee's first event will be held on July 31 and August 1, 2026, under the name "Weddington's Revolutionary Legacy and Camp New Providence." The event will feature John Houston, who will display revolutionary-era artifacts, a replica of the Declaration of Independence, and a map identifying Camp New Providence — the site across from Town Hall at Hunter Farm where the Continental Army encamped and strategized following the Battle of Kings Mountain. Ms. Butler described the event as an opportunity to celebrate Weddington's unique history and to coincide with the nation's 250th anniversary.

Council Member McLaughlin noted that the Committee intentionally held one seat open on the six-member board for a student representative from Weddington High School or a local school's youth council, to engage young people in town government.

17. Transportation Report

Mayor Bell reported that NCDOT has indicated the traffic signal installation at Forest Lawn Drive and Antioch Church Road is expected to begin in August or September 2026. He noted this timeline has been stated previously and encouraged cautious optimism.

Mayor Bell also reported on the recent CRTPO meeting at which the I-77 South Expansion project was voted down, resulting in the loss of approximately \$700 million in federal funding. He stated that he voted in favor of advancing the project, and expressed disappointment with the outcome, citing significant ongoing population growth in the Charlotte region as underscoring the need for infrastructure investment.

18. Council Comments

Council Member McLaughlin expressed agreement with the sentiments shared earlier in the meeting regarding the need for unity and collaboration. She reaffirmed her commitment to constructive engagement and expressed sadness at the departure of Town Administrator Dewey while wishing her well.

Mayor Pro Tem Smith thanked Ms. Dewey for her service and reiterated his earlier remarks about the importance of treating Town staff with respect. He expressed confidence that the staff will support the

transition and emphasized that filling the administrator position with someone the staff can work with will be a top priority.

Mayor Bell thanked Town Administrator Dewey for her guidance, professionalism, and patience throughout his tenure. He expressed appreciation for the entire Town staff, acknowledged the difficulty of the road ahead, and encouraged the community to continue working toward unity and constructive engagement.

Adjournment

Motion: Mayor Pro Tem Smith made a motion to adjourn the June 8, 2026 Regular Town Council meeting at 9:19 p.m.

Vote: The motion passed with a unanimous vote.

Approved: _____

Jim Bell, Mayor

Karen Dewey, Town Administrator/Clerk