



**TOWN OF WEDDINGTON
REGULAR TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
MONDAY, MAY 11, 2026 – 7:00 P.M.
WEDDINGTON TOWN HALL
MINUTES
PAGE 1 OF 10**

1. Call to Order

Mayor Bell called the May 11, 2026, Regular Town Council Meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

2. Determination of Quorum

Quorum was determined with Mayor and Council all present: Mayor Jim Bell, Mayor Pro Tem Tom Smith, Councilmembers Darcey Ladner, and Ellen McLaughlin. One council seat was vacant.

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:

- A closed session was added at the end of the meeting pursuant to NCGS 143-318.11(a)(3) to consult with the Town Attorney, to be designated as Item 17.
- Consent Agenda Item 9A (Approve April 13, 2026, Town Council Regular Meeting Minutes) was moved to Old Business as Item 10B.
- Consent Agenda Item 9D (Approve Planner and Town Administrator/Clerk Job Descriptions and authorize staff to advertise for Planner Position) was moved to New Business as Item 11D.

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

Mayor Pro Tem Smith reported on behalf of the Western Union Municipal Alliance (WUMA), noting that neither he nor Ellen was able to attend the April meeting due to prior scheduling conflicts. He advised that the next WUMA meeting is scheduled for June 25 at the Village of Marvin Town Hall. Mayor Pro Tem Smith also provided an update on street repaving contracts, stating that the bid period closed on May 6 and that, following processing over the coming weeks, a list of streets identified for resurfacing after July 1 would be made available prior to the next council meeting.

Mayor Bell reported that he had spoken with the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) earlier that day regarding the pending traffic signal installation at the intersection of Antioch Church Road and Forest Lawn Road. The project, which had been delayed several times, is now anticipated to be completed sometime in August or September.

Councilmember McLaughlin raised a concern regarding incorrect highway signage along the I-485 corridor between Ballantyne and Weddington. She noted that the green directional signs reference "Weddington Road" rather than the correct designation of "NC-16/Providence Road," and requested that the matter be brought to the attention of CRPTO at the upcoming end-of-month meeting. Mayor Bell agreed to raise the issue at the next CRPTO meeting.

7. Public Comments

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

Sarah Juhl, 4132 Horseshoe Bend, spoke in strong opposition to any resolution to remove fluoride from the public water supply. As a retired physical therapist with family members in the medical and dental professions, she stated that fluoridation is well-supported by science and represents one of the most significant public health achievements since the 1970s. She noted that communities that have removed fluoride have seen measurable increases in tooth decay and expressed concern for residents who lack access to regular dental care. Ms. Juhl urged the Council not to adopt a resolution in favor of fluoride removal and indicated that, in over 20 years as a Weddington resident, she had never heard fluoride raised as a community concern until recently.

Clayton Jones, 5147 Panhandle Circle, addressed the Council regarding what he characterized as a structural governance concern. He stated that in September 2021, the job descriptions for the Town Administrator and Town Planner were revised such that the Town Planner reported directly to the Town Administrator rather than to the Mayor and Council. He argued that this arrangement constituted a de facto council-manager form of government, which he contended was inconsistent with Weddington's adopted mayor-council form. Mr. Jones expressed his view that no Council member exercised direct supervisory authority over staff, including oversight of matters such as leave usage and accrued time. He stated that he had been pleased to see Agenda Items 9D and 11D placed on the current agenda for discussion and expressed hope that the Council would clearly explain to residents why the job descriptions were being rewritten. He also referenced the January 2023 vote by the then-council to formally adopt a manager form of government, which was

subsequently overturned by a citizen referendum in November 2023, and noted that accountability for day-to-day operations remained his primary concern.

Christopher Neve, 110 Chasetone Court, addressed what he described as ethics violations by former Mayor and current Planning Board member Bill Deter. Mr. Neave recounted that Mr. Deter had publicly stated, during discussions over a revised code of ethics agreement for advisory board members, that he did not engage with social media in his capacity as a board member. Mr. Neave alleged that Mr. Deter has since regularly violated the adopted code of ethics by publicly commenting on pending development projects through social media and in person, and by engaging in conduct he characterized as disrespectful and untrustworthy toward residents with differing views. Mr. Neave also referenced a public social media post in which Mr. Deter allegedly used the word "bribe" to describe a publicly reported financial transaction involving the mayor and a developer with a current project proposal and called the shared information "an undocumented conspiracy." Mr. Neave cited the code of ethics provision stating that violations may subject advisory board members to discipline up to and including removal and called on the Council to take corrective action to restore public trust and uphold the integrity of the town's advisory boards.

Anne Marie Cruz, 13624 Providence Road, expressed appreciation that former Councilmember Jones had attended the meeting to share his perspective, noting that the lack of information regarding recent personnel changes had caused significant anxiety among residents. She called on the Council to provide a clear and transparent plan for filling the vacant District 3 seat and to work with legal counsel to ensure the process is properly communicated. Ms. Cruz also requested greater transparency regarding the park project and its funding, and encouraged Council members to publicly and privately dispel misinformation when known. She stated her hope that the Council would work toward rebuilding trust with the community, which she felt had become increasingly divided.

David Vanderlip, 219 Cary Lane, spoke regarding the proposed Bonner Drive cut-through that had been under discussion. He described the affected roads including Amanda Drive, Cary Lane, and Barnard Drive as being only approximately 18 feet wide and already subject to significant cut-through traffic traveling well above the posted 25 mph speed limit. He expressed safety concerns given the volume of pedestrian activity in the area, including walkers, children, and pets. He requested that the Council override the planner's prior approval of the cut-through and noted that Toll Brothers appeared to have sufficient road frontage to accommodate alternative access without routing traffic through the residential streets.

Dr. Margaret Lockrey, 227 Chaucer Lane, spoke in strong support of water fluoridation. Dr. Lockrey noted that she has been practicing in Union County since 1991 and serves a patient population that includes special needs adults and children with complex medical conditions, many of whom rely on Medicaid and have limited access to professional dental care. She stated that fluoride's incorporation into tooth enamel provides long-term cavity protection that is especially critical for vulnerable populations. She noted that studies suggesting a correlation between fluoride and decreased IQ were conducted in countries where fluoridation levels are three to five times higher than those used in U.S. public water systems, and she cited a recent large-scale Midwestern study

that found no such correlation at standard fluoridation levels. Dr. Lockrey urged the Council to consider the needs of the full community and to support continued fluoridation.

8. Public Safety Report

Lieutenant James May of the Union County Sheriff's Office presented the monthly public safety report on behalf of Sheriff Eddie Cathey. He noted that he personally supervises five small-town contracts, including the Town of Weddington. Key highlights included:

- 663 preventative patrols conducted by Weddington deputies during the reporting period.
- 31 business checks performed, involving door checks and inspections for signs of breaking and entering.
- 6 residential checks completed. Lieutenant May emphasized that this number is low not due to lack of effort, but because many residents depart for vacation or seasonal homes without submitting a residential check request. He strongly encouraged residents to complete the free residential check form available on the Sheriff's Office website prior to leaving their homes for extended periods.

E-bikes and e-motorcycles continue to generate a notable volume of 9-1-1 calls, though slightly fewer than the prior month. Deputies have begun impounding illegal e-motorcycles and have, in some cases, issued citations to parents. Lieutenant May referenced a serious incident that occurred earlier that day in Indian Trail in which a 12-year-old child was struck while riding a scooter at approximately 20–25 mph and required air medical transport. He indicated the child was expected to recover. He encouraged residents to continue calling 9-1-1 for unsafe e-vehicle activity on roadways.

Lieutenant May highlighted a stolen motorcycle recovery case investigated by Deputy Plyler. A FLOCK camera along Weddington Matthews Road detected a stolen motorcycle, and Deputy Plyler moved quickly to identify the likely destination, set up surveillance at a residence, and recover the vehicle. Felony charges were filed against the identified suspect within approximately two hours of the initial camera alert, and the motorcycle was returned to the victim in Charlotte. Lieutenant May commended the coordination between the town, the council, and staff that made the FLOCK camera network possible, and credited its installation as essential to the rapid resolution of the case.

Lieutenant May thanked the Council, staff, and residents for their continued support.

9. Consent Agenda

- ** ~~A. Approve April 13, 2026 Town Council Regular Meeting Minutes~~
- B. Acceptance of Resignation of Town Planner Greg Gordos effective April 30, 2026**
- C. Call for Public Hearing for the FY2026-2027 Budget and 2026-2027 Fee Schedule to be held on Monday, June 8, 2026, at 7:00 p.m. at Weddington Town Hall**
- ** ~~D. Approve Planner and Town Administrator/Clerk Job Descriptions and authorize staff to advertise for Planner Position~~
- E. Appoint Jazlyn Moock as Assistant Zoning Administrator**
- F. Approve Audit Contract for FY Ending June 30, 2025 with Ann Craven, CPA not to exceed \$11,880.00**

Motion: Councilmember McLaughlin made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda as amended.

Vote: The motion passed with a unanimous vote.

10. Old Business

A. Discussion of resolutions in support of proposed legislation to prohibit the addition of fluoride to public water systems

Mayor Pro Tem Smith explained that the Western Union Municipal Alliance (WUMA) had asked member towns to consider a resolution in favor of fluoride removal from public water systems. He clarified that the item was brought forward to solicit community input rather than to advocate for a particular position. He noted that the towns of Marvin, Waxhaw, and Wesley Chapel had each adopted such a resolution, and that the western portion of Union County including Weddington is served by the Lancaster Water System, which does fluoridate its water, while the eastern portion is served by Union County Water, which does not.

The Mayor reported that of the residents who contacted him regarding the matter, approximately 68 percent expressed a preference to leave fluoridation as-is, while approximately 32 percent supported removal.

Councilmember McLaughlin stated that she had tracked all incoming feedback and that her recommendation was not to adopt a resolution. Council members noted that because neighboring towns had acted did not obligate Weddington to do the same.

No motion was made to adopt a fluoride resolution. The matter was considered closed without further action.

**** B. *Approve April 13, 2026 Town Council Regular Meeting Minutes***

Councilmember McLaughlin noted one correction to the April 13, 2026 minutes: the fifth Park Advisory and Events Committee member appointment was not unanimously approved, as she had dissented from that vote. The minutes were amended to reflect this clarification.

Motion: Mayor Pro Tem Smith made a motion to approve the April 13, 2026 Town Council Regular Meeting Minutes as amended.

Vote: The motion passed with a unanimous vote.

11. New Business

A. Discussion of Municipal Forms of Government

The Mayor introduced this item and invited Kevin Bringewatt, serving as Town Attorney in the absence of Karen Wolter, to address the Council on the subject.

Mr. Bringewatt explained the distinction between Weddington's current mayor-council form of government and the council-manager form. He stated that under the mayor-council form, the

Council retains both legislative and executive authority and may delegate administrative duties to a staff administrator in a variety of ways. He emphasized that the assignment of specific responsibilities to the Town Administrator or Town Planner, including day-to-day supervisory functions, does not alter the town's form of government. He confirmed that the Council retains ultimate authority over all hiring and firing decisions and that the town is operating fully within the bounds of applicable state statutes. He indicated he would raise concerns if he believed otherwise.

Mayor Pro Tem Smith noted that Weddington, with a population of approximately 14,000–15,000, is by far the largest municipality in North Carolina operating under a mayor-council form of government, with the next largest such town having a population of approximately 2,000. He distinguished between the mayor-council form with an administrator and the mayor-council form without one, noting that some public commentary appeared to conflate the two.

The Mayor noted that the Council actively provides direction to staff through council meetings and regular communications, and that the current administrative structure is a natural evolution of governance in a town of Weddington's size. He referenced the November 2023 citizen referendum in which approximately 80 percent of voters rejected conversion to a formal council-manager government.

Councilmember McLaughlin raised the question of whether certain references to "administrator" in the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) and on the town website might be creating confusion regarding the roles of the Town Administrator versus the Zoning Administrator (the Town Planner). Town Administrator Karen Dewey clarified that references to "administrator" within the UDO are understood by staff to refer to the Zoning Administrator, which is the Planner's role. Mr. Bringewatt acknowledged his role in drafting the UDO and noted that the terminology tracks state statute 160D. He recommended that once the Council settles on finalized job descriptions, a legal review of the UDO and other relevant ordinances be conducted to ensure consistency and clarity.

B. Discussion of Council District 3 Vacancy

The Mayor acknowledged the departure of former Councilmember Clayton Jones and expressed appreciation for his service. He invited residents of District 3 to consider applying to fill the vacant seat.

Mr. Bringewatt cited North Carolina General Statute, which provides that vacancies in elective municipal offices are filled by appointment of the City Council. He confirmed that no special election is held and that the appointed individual would serve until the next municipal election, at which point the seat would be placed on the ballot. The Mayor Pro Tem confirmed this understanding, and Councilmember McLaughlin asked how this process would affect the staggering of council terms. It was confirmed that the appointee's term, followed by a two-year election cycle, would restore the staggered rotation.

Councilmember McLaughlin delivered a formal statement addressing the broader circumstances surrounding the District 3 vacancy and the departure of the Town Planner. She stated that the changes reflected a difference in leadership philosophy rather than any impropriety and called on

residents to distinguish between factual reporting and political allegation. She addressed campaign finance matters directly, clarifying that expenses shared among a campaign slate are properly allocated and documented per applicable campaign finance guidelines and do not result in commingled funds. She affirmed that no campaign contribution influences her judgment or vote, and that her obligation is solely to the residents of Weddington. She expressed genuine regret over the loss of Councilmember Jones's partnership and stated her commitment to continuing the work of the Council from within.

The Mayor and Councilmember Darcey Ladner also commented on the challenges of public service in an environment of persistent misinformation, noting the limitations on elected officials' ability to publicly respond to inaccurate statements and personnel-related matters governed by state law. Councilmember Ladner acknowledged the significant administrative burden created by extensive public records requests and emphasized the dedication of town staff. She encouraged residents who wish to participate in governance to consider running for office.

C. Discussion and consideration of proposal for interim planner and authorize staff to enter into contract for position

Ms. Dewey reported that she had reached out to three firms, Benchmark, NFocus, and Centralina, to obtain proposals for an interim planning consultant. Proposals had been received from NFocus and Centralina as of the meeting date, and a response from Benchmark was still pending. Ms. Dewey noted that the two received proposals differed in structure, with one billing hourly and one offering an à la carte arrangement, and that they also varied in the level of planner expertise provided. She had not yet had sufficient time to conduct a full comparative analysis and indicated she was not prepared to bring a recommendation forward at this meeting.

Mayor Pro Tem Smith stated his position that no development applications should be brought before the Council until a qualified interim planner is in place to provide professional guidance, noting that a delay of one to two months is reasonable and appropriate. The Mayor and other Council members expressed agreement. No action was taken at this meeting; the item will return once all proposals have been received and reviewed.

**** D. Discussion of Town Planner and Town Administrator/Clerk Job Descriptions and authorize staff to advertise for Planner position**

The Council discussed the revision of job descriptions for both the Town Planner and the Town Administrator/Clerk. Councilmember McLaughlin presented proposed modifications to the Town Planner job description that she had developed, including language defining the Planner's role as custodian of the town's long-term vision, community character, and development quality. She also proposed additional duties related to early coordination with applicants to identify potential concerns regarding neighborhood compatibility, traffic, infrastructure, and architectural quality. Discussion followed regarding whether certain responsibilities including coordination with the town's contracted engineering firm, LaBella Associates were appropriately characterized in the job description. Town Administrator Dewey clarified that both she and the former Planner directed the LaBella contract, and that LaBella operates independently on certain items such as erosion control inspections under

the terms of the contract. The Council agreed that language should reflect "coordination with" rather than "oversight of" contracted parties.

Councilmember McLaughlin also raised the need to reconcile any discrepancies between the job descriptions and existing UDO language and ordinances. Mr. Bringewatt reiterated his earlier recommendation that once job descriptions are finalized, a legal review of relevant ordinances be conducted to ensure alignment.

The Council determined it was not prepared to vote on finalized job descriptions at this meeting, given the need for additional review. A subcommittee was formed, consisting of Councilmember McLaughlin and Mayor Pro Tem Smith, to work on the job description language and return a draft for Council consideration. Mr. Bringewatt indicated he would assist in the legal review once the subcommittee produced a draft. The Council discussed convening a special meeting if needed to expedite the process, given the urgency of advertising for the Town Planner position.

Motion: Councilmember McLaughlin made a motion to form a subcommittee to review and finalize the Town Planner and Town Administrator/Clerk job descriptions
Vote: The motion passed with a unanimous vote.

12. Code Enforcement Report

Ms. Dewey reported that code enforcement activities are currently in progress between the issuance of notices and the scheduling of inspections for outstanding violations. She noted that a preliminary set of recommended updates to the nuisance ordinances had been received from the Code Enforcement Officer. The proposed updates focus on expanding definitions to strengthen the town's ability to address nuisances where current ordinance language limits enforcement options. The draft updates will be forwarded to Town Attorney Karen Wolter for legal review before being brought to the Council.

13. Update from Finance Officer and Tax Collector

A. FY2026-2027 Budget

Ms. Gaylord presented a summary of the financial reports included in the meeting packet, including monthly financial statements, quarterly updates on ARP, SCIF, and park funds, and the proposed FY2026–2027 budget.

The proposed budget reflects total revenues and expenditures of approximately \$3,160,000, representing a modest increase of just over 5 percent compared to the current year's budget of approximately \$2,987,000. Ms. Gaylord attributed the increase primarily to growth in the ad valorem tax base and anticipated increases in sales tax and utility franchise revenues. The property tax rate is proposed to remain unchanged at \$0.035 per \$100 of assessed value.

One notable item in the proposed budget is the carryforward of funding for mast arm poles, which were budgeted in the current year but not completed; those funds are now reflected in the upcoming

fiscal year's budget. Ms. Gaylord noted that the budget as presented will serve as the basis for the public hearing to be held on June 8, 2026, and that any changes the Council wishes to make should be identified now. Ms. Gaylord also noted that a budget amendment may be brought in the following month to adjust any line items requiring adjustment.

Councilmember McLaughlin asked when the last adjustment was made to Council member stipends. Ms. Gaylord indicated it had been approximately 10 to 13 years ago, at which time a survey of neighboring municipalities and League of Municipalities data was used to set the current levels. No changes have been made since.

Regarding the town's audit, Ms. Gaylord reported that the prior-year auditor selected following a competitive bid process had failed to perform under the contract. Audited financial statements, which were due to the Local Government Commission (LGC) by December 31, were not submitted on time. An amended contract extending the deadline to March 31 was also not met. The town subsequently received a Notice of Noncompliance from the State Treasurer's Office. Ms. Gaylord reported that she has been unable to reach the auditor since April 12 despite multiple attempts by phone, email, and text. As approved in the Consent Agenda, the town has engaged its prior auditor, Ann Craven, CPA, who is familiar with the town's records and has agreed to take on the engagement for one additional year. Ms. Gaylord expressed confidence that Ms. Craven can complete the audit and submit the financial statements by the June 30 deadline. If that deadline cannot be met, the town will file an appeal with the LGC documenting that the noncompliance was beyond the town's control. Ms. Gaylord noted that given the town's prior clean compliance record, withholding sales tax distributions would be unlikely under these circumstances. The Council affirmed the approach and directed staff to proceed accordingly. Ms. Gaylord confirmed she will issue a new request for proposals for audit services for the upcoming fiscal year.

14. Updates from Town Planner and Town Administrator

Ms. Dewey provided the following updates:

- Assistant Zoning Administrator: Following the Council's approval in the Consent Agenda, Jazlyn Moock has been appointed as Assistant Zoning Administrator, granting her authority to sign zoning permits.
- Park and Events Advisory Board: The Park and Events Advisory Board will hold its first meeting on June 1 at Weddington Town Hall at 6:00 PM.
- Food Truck Fridays: The final Food Truck Friday event of the season is scheduled for May 15. Food truck information is posted on the town's Facebook page, and an email with menu links will be distributed the following morning.
- Park Planning Contract: LaBella Associates submitted a proposal to add a survey and public engagement session to the park planning contract. Ms. Dewey noted she had not yet fully reviewed it but indicated the proposed cost is substantial, and that the Council should discuss how it wishes to proceed with public engagement on the park project.
- Park Grant Extension: The Office of State Budget and Management granted a one-year extension for the \$250,000 park grant.

15. Transportation Report

Mayor Bell reported that he had spoken with NCDOT regarding the traffic signal at the intersection of Antioch Church Road and Forest Lawn Road. After multiple prior delays, installation is now projected for August or September.

16. Council Comments

Councilmember Ladner expressed appreciation for the efforts of Town Administrator Karen Dewey, Deputy Clerk Deborah, Tax Collector Kim, Finance Officer Leslie Gaylord, and all town staff, noting that their work is essential to the day-to-day function of the town.

Councilmember Ellen McLaughlin echoed those sentiments, acknowledging that staff has handled a stressful period with grace and professionalism.

Mayor Pro Tem Tom Smith thanked all in attendance, expressed appreciation to Town Attorney Kevin Bringewatt for his guidance on the forms-of-government discussion, and encouraged residents to consider the clarifications provided regarding the town's governmental structure. He also called on individuals to refrain from making allegations that cannot be substantiated by clear and factual evidence.

Mayor Bell acknowledged the contributions of community volunteers who assist with Food Truck Friday setup and breakdown, and encouraged residents to attend the final event on May 15. He reiterated the Council's commitment to the town and its residents and called on the community to work toward greater unity and factual public discourse.

** 17. *Enter in to closed session pursuant to NCGS 143-318.11(a)(3) to consult with Town Attorney.*

Motion: Mayor Pro Tem Smith made a motion to enter into closed session pursuant to NDGS 143-318.11(a)(3) to consult with Town Attorney at 9:01 p.m.
Vote: The motion passed with a unanimous vote.

18. Adjournment

Mayor Bell called the meeting back to order at 9:10 p.m.

Motion: Mayor Pro Tem Smith made a motion to adjourn the May 11, 2026 Regular Town Council meeting at 9:10 p.m.
Vote: The motion passed with a unanimous vote.

Approved: _____

Jim Bell, Mayor

Karen Dewey, Town Administrator/Clerk