

Board of Aldermen
Strategic Plan Special Called Meeting
Flossie White Board Room, Maggie Valley Town Hall
Tuesday January 6th 12:00pm and Wednesday January 7th 9:00am

Tuesday January 6th

Members Present:

Mayor Mike Eveland, Mayor Pro-Tem Jim Owens, Alderman John Hinton, Alderman Phillip Wight, Alderman Tim Wise.

Members Absent:

None

Staff Present:

Interim Town Manager Sam Cullen, Town Clerk Kathy Johnson, Public Works Director Seth Boyd, Police Chief Matthew Boger, Acting Planning Director Noah Taylor.

Others Present:

One other person was present.

Media Present:

No media were present.

Meeting Called to Order

Mayor Mike Eveland called the meeting to order at 11:58 am on Tuesday January 6, 2026, in the Maggie Valley Town Hall Flossie White Boardroom 3987 Soco Road, Maggie Valley, NC 28751.

Mayor Eveland opened the meeting with reflections on previous strategic planning sessions. He emphasized how previous strategic planning had enabled important projects like crosswalks to be funded through deliberate saving over multiple years. He expressed optimism that the current strategic planning session would provide a roadmap for the next 3-5 years.

NCLM Strategic Planning Workshop Refresher

Town Manager Sam Cullen provided a brief overview of the agenda and set expectations for the workshop. He explained that the agenda was broken into four sections focused on points identified at the League of Municipalities workshop in Winston-Salem. He clarified that the agenda items were not meant to be comprehensive of everything the town plans to accomplish over the next five years, but rather a starting point for conversation to craft action items.

Mr. Cullen noted that some items in the presentation, such as travel policy and vehicle replacement policy, were being presented to show the board what was being worked on in the background at Town Hall, with many policies still in draft form. He explained that at the end of the workshop, the board would have the opportunity to formalize the strategic plan by resolution.

He reviewed the four priority focus areas identified at the Winston-Salem workshop:

1. Organizational excellence
2. Economic development and tourism resources
3. Safe, reliable, and sustainable utility services

4. Revitalized town infrastructure

Mr. Cullen explained that the first day would focus on the first two points, while the second day would address the remaining areas.

Mission Statement (Review draft Statement)

Mr. Cullen presented the current mission statement of the Town of Maggie Valley: "It is the mission of the Town of Maggie Valley to provide quality services and protect the health, safety, and welfare of its citizens while exercising stewardship of its human and natural resources. As both a community and resort town, the Town of Maggie Valley supports economic prosperity, cultivates community spirit, and honors its heritage and culture."

Board members expressed consensus that the current mission statement was appropriate and did not require changes. Mayor Eveland noted that the language was "timeless" and still fits with what they are doing. Mr. Cullen confirmed he would incorporate the existing mission statement into the final strategic plan document for review.

Fund Balance

Mr. Cullen presented a draft fund balance policy for the board's consideration. He explained that the town currently does not have a fund balance policy, but that sound financial planning would be key to implementing the strategic plan over the next five years.

He explained that the draft policy was crafted using other municipal policies as models and sets a minimum fund balance percentage of 100% of annual expenditures. Mr. Cullen noted there is no hard number required by state statute for fund balance reserves, but the Local Government Commission (LGC) suggests that municipalities maintain a fund balance equivalent to the median of peer municipalities in good financial health. Towns with similar budgets (between \$1-10 million) maintain an average fund balance of 103%.

Mr. Cullen emphasized that this policy consideration needs to account for disaster recovery, as the town is still awaiting full reimbursement from FEMA for previous emergency expenditures. He clarified that the policy should be revised periodically as the financial state of the town evolves.

During discussion, board members expressed support for the 100% minimum fund balance target. Mayor Eveland noted that while they might consider adjusting it to 90% in a couple of years as FEMA reimbursements are fully realized, the 100% level makes sense as a starting point. Alderman Jim Owens agreed that the policy was well thought out and conservative, noting that the fund balance includes designated funds that are still in the bank.

Mr. Cullen confirmed he would formalize the draft policy without changing substantive details and bring it to a subsequent Board of Aldermen meeting for formal adoption.

Pay and Classification Study

Mr. Cullen briefly mentioned that a pay and classification study had been completed by the MAPS group. He noted that Becky Veasy from MAPS would give the board a comprehensive presentation on January 22nd. While the study is part of the organizational excellence objective, detailed

discussion would occur at the January 22nd meeting, with no action required from the board until a subsequent meeting.

Mayor Eveland asked if the town was in better shape regarding pay classification than during a previous study. Mr. Cullen confirmed they were in "pretty good shape," and that any needed adjustments could likely be funded without using fund balance, utilizing leftover money from employee turnover and retirements.

Employee Cross Training and Education Opportunities

Mr. Cullen provided an update on employee training and cross-training opportunities. He shared a spreadsheet of certifications that had previously been utilized as part of a career track. Department heads were reviewing departmental needs and identifying educational opportunities for staff. Examples included Zach Smith in Public Works working to obtain his electrician license and Town Clerk Kathy Johnson pursuing her Master Clerk Certification.

Mr. Cullen explained that the old policy allowed for the town manager to establish a schedule for certification increases for employees, but this had been discontinued under previous management and had not yet been reestablished.

The board discussed the importance of encouraging employees to pursue additional certifications. Alderman Tim Wise raised the question of whether certifications were optional or required for various positions. Mr. Cullen explained that some certifications are required for specific positions, while others are encouraged as part of employee development. He noted that as part of a new evaluation program implemented last year, each employee has a goal sheet with short-term and long-term goals, often including certification targets.

Board members expressed support for investing in employee education, with key notes being:

- That cross-training opportunities were especially valuable during crisis situations.
- The importance of employees showing initiative rather than being forced into educational programs.

Mr. Cullen also mentioned that Christy Passmore would be taking classes in the upcoming budget year, and he would be asking the board to appoint her as deputy clerk to assist when the Town Clerk is unavailable.

Mr. Cullen also discussed a draft travel policy to provide guidance to employees and management when traveling for classes out of town. He explained that currently there is no guidance on expenditures during travel. The policy establishes meal and lodging rates based on the General Services Administration standards and implements a system where employees receive a check in advance for allowable expenses rather than using town credit cards, which had been creating a burden on the finance department.

IT Systems

Mr. Cullen reviewed the town's current IT services contract with Advanced Data Services out of Asheville, which provides tech support, maintenance, and internet security protection. He

expressed satisfaction with the current contract and services provided, noting that the town pays approximately \$6,700 per month for all services, including Microsoft Office and security subscriptions.

He explained that department heads had recently reviewed all devices to eliminate unneeded and obsolete equipment and had upgraded necessary devices to Windows 11 following Microsoft's announcement of the end of support for Windows 10. Mr. Cullen shared a spreadsheet listing all town-owned devices with their date of purchase and operating system.

The town is working to establish a rotation schedule to replace devices when they are around five years old, which would mean replacing 4-5 devices each year rather than making large bulk purchases.

Mr. Cullen also discussed the town's website and social media operations, which are handled by Christy Passmore, who has a background and degree in graphic design. He noted they had identified issues with retaining Facebook comments for public records compliance and were looking at implementing a system used by Haywood County and the Town of Waynesville that automatically captures changes to social media pages at a cost of approximately \$4,000 per year.

Board members expressed support for the social media initiatives and suggested exploring more engaging content to increase public interest and interaction, such as introducing the town manager through Facebook Live interviews.

Mr. Cullen also mentioned that when Tax Collector Leslie Arrington joined the staff, the town's tax billing provider went out of business, which led them to find a new provider that offers the same services at a lower rate. The new system incorporates QR codes into tax bills, allowing taxpayers to elect to receive electronic bills instead of paper, saving the town money on printing and postage while also collecting email addresses for future communication.

Vehicle Replacement Policy

Mr. Cullen presented a draft vehicle replacement policy, noting that replacing vehicles costs the town well over \$100,000 per year. The policy is still being finalized but will provide a scoring system to better plan for vehicle replacements. Department heads have been testing the scoring system on various vehicles to ensure it appropriately identifies when replacements are needed.

The goal of the policy is to provide guidance to department heads before budget meetings and to establish a regular replacement rotation over the next 3-5 years. Mr. Cullen explained that implementing this policy would allow the town to better predict vehicle replacement needs in advance.

Board members expressed support for the scoring approach, noting it would provide a more objective basis for planning vehicle replacements.

Other Organizational Excellence Items.

Board members expressed appreciation for the improvement in town communications and suggested continued enhancement of social media engagement to better connect with residents.

There was a brief break starting at 1:05pm and reconvened at 1:15pm.

System Development Fee Study and CIP

The meeting commenced with a discussion on the System Development Fee Study. Manager Cullen explained that it was time to update the study and had been in conversations with engineering firms, noting Withers Ravenel was initially considered but they lacked capacity to take on the project. He mentioned that engineering firms are currently in high demand.

Manager Cullen pointed out that the town's sewer fees are relatively low, which has been detrimental to grant applications. He referenced the last study performed by Withers Ravenel in May 2021, noting that since then, COVID-19, Hurricane Helene, and significant residential growth have affected the economy, further justifying the need for a comprehensive study.

It was emphasized that this study is required by general statutes to defend system development fees. Manager Cullen explained that Withers Ravenel also performed a capital improvement plan for the sewer system, but proposals for fee increases over the next several years may no longer be applicable due to changed circumstances.

Sewer System Update

Public Works Director Seth Boyd provided a comprehensive update on the sewer system, noting that the current treatment plant capacity is 1 million gallons per day. He presented the average monthly flows for the past three years:

- 2025: 331,000 gallons per day
- 2024: 299,000 gallons per day
- 2023: 298,000 gallons per day

Mr. Boyd explained they are currently operating at approximately one-third of the treatment plant's capacity. He attributed the increase in 2025 to new developments coming online, including Wild Brooks (approximately 70% built out) and the upcoming Valley View development.

Regarding maintenance, Mr. Boyd reported that North Carolina requires cleaning 10% of sewer lines annually (approximately 30,000 feet). He noted that while camera inspection is not required, the town has always performed it to assist with infiltration and inflow (I&I) studies. The town contracts between 22,000 to 26,000 feet of cleaning annually, with the remainder done in-house.

Mr. Boyd discussed needed upgrades for the next five years, noting the treatment plant's expansion would be paid off in 2028. He recommended rehabilitation projects including:

- Replacing diffusers in the aeration basins
- Rehabilitating the chlorine basin walls which are decaying.
- Exploring alternative sludge management options

He presented information on reed beds as a potential low-cost sludge treatment system. This natural filtration system could potentially operate for 12-15 years before needing to be cleaned

out, saving the town significant costs in hauling dewatered sludge to landfills (currently \$43 per ton, with monthly volumes ranging from 16-30 tons).

The board discussed long-term planning considerations, including:

- The requirement to develop expansion plans when reaching 50% capacity.
- The need for 24-hour staffing if the plant exceeds 1 million gallons per day capacity.
- Land acquisition challenges for future expansion.

Board members emphasized the importance of proactive planning and maintenance to avoid situations faced by neighboring municipalities with aging infrastructure. There was consensus to begin exploring land acquisition options near the current treatment plant for future expansion.

Other Safe, Reliable, and Sustainable Utility Services items.

The board discussed the need to conduct the sewer fee study before the next budget cycle, potentially requiring a budget amendment. It was noted that current fees are significantly below what would qualify the town for certain grants, with combined water and sewer fees at approximately \$50.40 (minimum sewer rate of \$20.30 and water rate of \$30.10), well below the \$85 threshold typically needed for competitive grant applications.

The board emphasized the importance of taking a proactive approach to fee increases rather than the "soft approach" taken previously. They also discussed the need for long-term planning beyond the current 5-year outlook, including potential satellite facilities to service growth in the Jonathan Creek area.

There was consensus to open discussions about land acquisition for future needs, recognizing that securing property now would be beneficial both financially and strategically. The board agreed that the sewer fee study would likely recommend a significant initial increase followed by smaller cost-of-living adjustments in subsequent years.

Adjournment

A motion was made by Alderman Tim Wise to adjourn the meeting at 1:59m. The motion carried unanimously.

Wednesday January 7th

Members Present:

Mayor Mike Eveland, Mayor Pro-Tem Jim Owens, Alderman John Hinton, Alderman Tim Wise.

Members Absent:

Alderman Phillip Wight,

Staff Present:

Interim Town Manager Sam Cullen, Town Clerk Kathy Johnson, Public Works Director Seth Boyd, Police Chief Matthew Boger, Acting Planning Director Noah Taylor.

Others Present:

No others were present.

Media Present:

No media was present.

Meeting Called to Order

Mayor Mike Eveland called the meeting to order at 8:55 am on Wednesday January 7th, 2026, in the Maggie Valley Town Hall Flossie White Boardroom 3987 Soco Road, Maggie Valley, NC 28751.

Sweet Briar EV Chargers

Manager Cullen discussed the plans for EV chargers at the Sweet Briar parking lot, noting that the original plans set aside two spaces for future installation. During construction, the town proactively established the base infrastructure and moved the designated spaces closer to a power pole for easier connection. Mr. Boyd has been in discussions with Duke Energy, who agreed to provide the necessary power to the pole, minimizing installation costs.

Manager Cullen explained that he along with Acting Planning Director Noah Taylor , and Mr. Boyd had met with several EV charging companies and determined they could install new chargers at Sweet Briar and potentially replace the older ones at Town Hall for less than \$15,000, possibly closer to \$10,000-\$12,000 if only installing the Sweet Briar chargers. The recommendation was to install Level 2 chargers rather than faster, more expensive chargers. Level 2 chargers would encourage longer stays in the town center while visitors charge their vehicles over 3-4 hours, potentially increasing patronage at local businesses.

Board members discussed the benefits of upgrading the existing chargers at Town Hall, which are currently slow, and agreed that having all chargers on the same network would be more efficient. Mr. Boyd provided technical information about the electrical requirements and explained that one of the existing Town Hall chargers had already been replaced. The board noted that Tesla chargers appeared to be the better option as they are universal (compatible with all electric vehicles), less expensive, and do not require a monthly subscription fee if the town continues to offer free charging.

The board agreed that signage would need to be developed for the EV parking spaces to prevent overnight parking and other potential issues. The consensus was that this was a worthwhile investment that would benefit both tourists and residents, with a budget allocation of \$15,000 recommended to cover all costs with some contingency.

Parks Landscaping and Beautification

Manager Cullen proposed installing educational signage in each of the town's six parks, focusing on town history and waterway education. He noted that Haywood Waterways Association has offered to assist with text and design for waterway educational signs. Mr. Cullen presented this as a low-cost, high-impact initiative that could be implemented by 2027.

The Board discussed making the signs more permanent and weather resistant. There was enthusiasm for creating signs that would tell the town's history across different parks, potentially creating a trail that encourages visitors to explore multiple parks. Board members suggested incorporating QR codes on the signs to link to more detailed information on the town's website.

The board discussed the need for better signage for Elevated Park, as many people do not know it exists. The state would allow a brown and white metal sign in their right-of-way. The board agreed that improving park visibility through proper signage would benefit tourism and local quality of life.

Board members discussed incorporating landscaping improvements in the parks, noting that the Garden Club has already done significant work at the sensory garden at R&R Park and McCracken Park. There was discussion about leveraging community partnerships with organizations like the Garden Club and Haywood Community College to maintain and beautify park spaces without overburdening town staff.

The Board agreed that this aligned with their discussion in Winston Salem about creating a beautification committee that could coordinate efforts from multiple community resources. There was consensus that improving these spaces would enhance the town's appeal to visitors and residents alike.

New J-Creek Development Greenways

Manager Cullen presented a plat showing the Wildbrook Estates development on Jonathan Creek, reminding the board of a condition that provided for a greenway easement along the creek front portion of the property. While the development is not yet complete (approximately 75-78% built), this will be an area for review in the next few years.

Board members discussed potential low-maintenance improvements like a crusher sand path, benches, and pet stations. Given that this development houses a sizable portion of the town's population (approximately 200 residents in 92 homes), the Board agreed that developing this greenway would be beneficial but should be approached with fiscal restraint.

The board noted the importance of moving forward with planning before DR Horton turns over the HOA to homeowners, as it would be easier to work with a single developer than multiple homeowners. The timeline suggested was to begin planning mid-year with potential implementation within 18 months.

There was discussion about the long-term vision for connecting greenways along Jonathan Creek, though it was acknowledged this would be a multi-decade effort with challenges related to property access.

Haywood TDA Park Planning Proposal

Manager Cullen briefly mentioned that the TDA had reached out about a park planning projects for all towns in the county. The initiative would help towns develop grant-ready plans for parks, potentially funded by the TDA. While Maggie Valley might not have as much property as other municipalities with flood buyouts, the board agreed it was important to be included in these discussions.

The Board recognized the opportunity to align their park development plans with TDA priorities to increase chances of funding support. Alderman Owens noted the importance of maintaining

representation and relationships with the TDA, especially given potential changes to the TDA board structure that might eliminate dedicated town representatives.

Historic Advisory Committee

Mr. Cullen introduced a discussion about creating a Historic Advisory Committee as mentioned during the Winston Salem workshop. He outlined potential duties including assisting with historical signs, creating documentation of town history, interviewing long-standing residents and business owners, and providing recommendations on preservation.

Alderman Tim Wise emphasized the urgency of capturing town history before it is lost, noting the difficulty they had gathering historical information for the town's birthday celebration. He volunteered to help coordinate initial efforts and offered to oversee the formation of a steering committee.

The Board agreed to establish an informal steering committee rather than immediately creating a formal advisory committee with bylaws and procedures. This would allow them to begin collecting historical information while avoiding administrative burdens. The steering committee would include key community members with deep knowledge of Maggie Valley's history, including long-term residents like Sue Penley, Brenda O'Keefe, and others who could contribute valuable historical knowledge.

Manager Cullen suggested that this steering committee could later recommend the structure and purpose of a formal Historic Advisory Committee if deemed necessary. The board agreed this approach would allow them to make progress while working through staffing transitions.

Economic Development Incentives

Manager Cullen provided an overview of economic development incentives offered by the town, including the Facade, Sign, and Landscape Grant program. Recent recipients include Bear Waters Brewing for a new facade and Cool Breeze Campground for landscaping. While the board agreed the program offers valuable support to businesses, they acknowledged that measuring economic impact is difficult.

The Board discussed challenges with the program, noting that despite having relatively simple application requirements, many businesses begin the application process but do not complete it. Common barriers include the 50% reimbursement structure (versus upfront funding), the requirement to prove tax compliance, and general lack of awareness.

The board agreed to continue the program and potentially increase promotion through the Chamber of Commerce, social media, and direct outreach. Mr. Cullen suggested allocating a specific amount in the budget and actively advertising the program to increase participation.

Manager Cullen also presented an older Economic Incentive Grant program that predates his tenure and appears unused. Board members explained this was created around 2013-2015, primarily with Ghost Town development in mind, offering tax incentives based on investment amounts.

The board agreed to put this program on hold pending further research. They directed Mr. Cullen to consult with county economic development officials to determine if the program aligns with current best practices and to bring recommendations back for potential revisions or replacement.

The Board briefly discussed the current status of Ghost Town.

The meeting adjourned before discussing the Economic Development and Tourism Resources section of the agenda.

There was a brief break from 10:17am and reconvened at 10:35am.

Other Revitalized Town Infrastructure Items. **Festival Grounds**

Financial Overview

Manager Cullen provided a financial overview of the festival grounds. He explained that without considering capital expenses, it costs approximately \$150,000 annually to operate and maintain the grounds. With the adoption of the new fee schedule, the deficit has been reduced by approximately \$20,000, along with the reallocation of salaries to public works and administration departments. This has significantly lowered the original deficit of about \$90,000.

Deficit Plan

A proposed plan to address the deficit over the next few years was presented. The plan aims to eliminate the deficit by the end of 2029, Manager Cullen believed it could possibly be eliminated before that time. Alderman Owens expressed that he did not think the festival grounds needed to make money, but at minimum should break even, as it supports tourism which is essential to the town.

The board discussed the fee schedule for future years. For 2027, the daily rate would be \$800 with a \$100 setup/teardown fee. The board decided to approve the fee schedule for 2027 now but wait to decide on 2028-2029 rates until they could gather more information.

There was discussion about potentially charging different rates based on electricity usage, as some events use significantly more power than others. However, the consensus was to keep rates simple rather than getting "down in the weeds" with variable charging. Town Manager Cullen noted that electricity costs for the grounds had not exceeded \$12,500 annually except during years with the barbecue festival, which had many vendors.

CIP Discussion

The board discussed developing a capital improvement plan (CIP) for the festival grounds for the next several years. Items identified for improvement included:

- Bathrooms and concessions
- Parking lots
- ATM
- Electrical infrastructure

Town Manager Cullen recommended hiring professional engineers to develop a comprehensive plan, noting that while he generally prefers to avoid unnecessary consulting fees, in this case it was warranted to ensure proper planning. The board agreed this approach would provide guidance for future budget processes.

The board discussed the need to reorganize the electrical infrastructure at the festival grounds. Mr. Boyd explained that the current electrical setup was originally designed for the barbecue festival, and while there is three-phase power to every pedestal, the current configuration does not match how vendors now prefer to set up around the perimeter rather than down the middle.

The lease for the western parking lot was discussed. The current lease ends in March, and the town pays \$300 per month. Manager Cullen had spoken with the owner's representative, who indicated they were amenable to renewing under the same terms. The board discussed possibly extending to a three-year lease instead of the current annual arrangement.

The board also addressed the need to clarify festival grounds policies, particularly regarding setup and teardown days. They agreed that the current system had been too lenient, allowing some promoters to check in several days early without additional charges. They decided to implement clearer definitions of what constitutes setup and teardown days with appropriate fees.

Additionally, the board discussed the need for a clear policy on who gets priority for dates when multiple promoters want the same date. They agreed to implement a "first come, first served" policy with complete application packages, and to define clear deadlines for returning promoters to secure their traditional dates.

Adoption of the Town of Maggie Valley Strategic Plan (Resolution #26-01)

Town Manager Cullen presented the final strategic plan document, which included the introduction, mission statement, and focus areas covered during the two-day workshop. He explained that this plan would provide guidance to staff in implementing the priorities identified by the board.

Manager Cullen indicated that he would like to start a campaign to advertise the plan to the public so citizens would know what the town is working on. He noted that specific items brought forward from the plan would require public hearings and bidding processes as appropriate.

Aldermen John Hinton made a motion to adopt Resolution #26-01, adopting the Town of Maggie Valley Strategic Plan. The motion carried unanimously. Alderman Phillip Wight was absent from the meeting.

Adjournment

A motion was made by Alderman Tim Wise to adjourn the meeting at 11:22am. The motion carried unanimously.

Attest:

S: Mike Eveland

Mayor Mike Eveland

S: Kathy Johnson

Kathy Johnson, Town Clerk

S: Sam Cullen

Sam Cullen, Town Manager