

MINUTES

**Town of Weaverville
North Carolina**

**Town Council Strategic Planning Retreat
Saturday, February 24, 2024**

The Town Council for the Town of Weaverville held its 2024 Strategic Planning Retreat on February 24, 2024, at 9:00 a.m. in the Community Room within Town Hall at 30 South Main Street, Weaverville, NC.

Councilmembers present: Mayor Patrick Fitzsimmons, Vice Mayor Catherine Cordell and Council members Doug Jackson, John Chase, Michele Wood, Peter McGuire and Dee Lawrence.

Staff members present: Town Manager Selena Coffey, Town Attorney Jennifer Jackson, Finance Director Tonya Dozier, Planning Director James Eller, Town Clerk Tamara Mercer, Assistant Police Chief Somer Oberlin, Fire Chief Scottie Harris, Public Works Director Dale Pennell, and Water Plant Supervisor Randall Wilson.

1. Call to Order

Mayor Fitzsimmons called the retreat to order at 9:00 a.m., welcomed everyone and introduced Erica Anderson, Land of Sky Regional Council Deputy Executive Director as the retreat facilitator.

Mayor Fitzsimmons made introductory comments regarding basic demographic information about Weaverville noting the Town's growth, the need for medical facilities and economic development opportunities.

2. 2018-2021 Three-Year Strategic Plan Progress

Town Manager Coffey provided a review of the 2018-2021 Strategic Plan, noting goals, strategies, action steps and subsequent accomplishments including ongoing and completed projects. Manager Coffey highlighted the objectives and goals accomplished and reviewed the statuses of ongoing projects for each department via attachment 1, Final Report:

Goals:

- 1) To provide town services to meet the needs of the community.
- 2) To improve regional collaboration.
- 3) To maximize benefit to the Town in land use planning efforts.
- 4) To promote a successful downtown.
- 5) To increase legislative outreach.

Planning Director Eller reviewed components of the Comprehensive Land Use Plan (CLUP, including the history of the extra-territorial jurisdiction (ETJ), which was lost by legislative law in 2014, growth areas originally designated in 2022, updates to current growth areas, water allocations, major projects, voluntary annexations, and infrastructure analyses.

Town Council engaged in lengthy discussion regarding the development within the identified growth areas and mapping for the Gill Branch Valley, Monticello Road west, Ollie Weaver Road, the I-26 Corridor, and the north and west sides of incorporated Town limits. Members of Council had further discussion regarding development on Reems Creek Road and in the Reems Creek valley and Flat Creek area and the need for water and sewer infrastructure.

3. Town Focus Areas Identified by Town Council, Ms. Anderson facilitated discussion

Ms. Anderson polled retreat attendees regarding current challenges and opportunities. Topics of interest and concern were: community walkability, neighbors and neighborhoods, scenic natural spaces, downtown economic growth and Main Street development, appropriate mindful growth, support and planning for sidewalks and greenways, smart growth planning, recreational and outdoor activities, annexation, well maintained infrastructure, attracting medical offices or hospital facilities, population growth, taking advantage of strong economic growth, visitors desire to live here, professional staff, zoning for continued growth, citizen involvement within the Citizens Academy and the Town's volunteer boards and committees, grants and funding sources, connecting Main Street with Lake Louise, and opportunities to encourage youth involvement in Town activities.

Manager Coffey shared an informal SWOT Analysis input from a recent Citizens Academy class and added that the Citizens Academy has had 133 graduates in her 8+ years tenure as town manager, not including the current 2024 Academy class with 29 participants, the largest cohort to date.

Town Council continued discussion regarding land use planning with regard to the voluntary annexation requests, zoning, housing, density, multi-family development, single family development and affordable housing. Most notable concerns were with conserving greenspaces and natural resources. Mr. Eller pointed out the trend in the housing market since 2017 has been the development of multi-family and increased density housing stock.

Infrastructure – Water and Sewer and Broadband Access

Vice Mayor Cordell addressed the increased water capacity and expansion project to take place over the next 3-4 years in Weaverville, noting that Mars Hill recently did not approve a retirement facility due to insufficient water capacity. Cordell also noted that she was concerned about conserving water allotments for potential future healthcare facilities over apartment complexes. Council member John Chase agreed and noted that MSD expands sewer infrastructure as requested by developers and that the Town should be concerned about sewer infrastructure development.

Manager Coffey reminded Council that Town has free public WIFI but noted that some who live outside of town limits, in unincorporated Buncombe County, do not have sufficient broadband access.

Town Officials discussed the Reems Creek area increased development and its impact on pedestrian safety. The town is working towards a more walkable Reems Creek supported network and ensured safer pedestrian connections. Roadway traffic issues will impact Police and Fire Department response times along with EMS emergency services. Attorney Jackson stated that is why the town is working with other regional services such as Reems Creek Fire Department to address formal agreements to improve response times. Congestion issues along Main Street may cause delays, therefore regional talks, and contract agreements for the new annexation requests are underway.

Traffic calming measures, vehicle traffic volume, school pick-up and drop off vehicle patterns were discussed, Fire and EMS services, and Police citations for improper driving were addressed. Assistant Police Chief Oberlin said each public school is different, but the current administration requires parents to vehicle line-up around the Brown Street neighborhood. The campaign actively discourages walkers. Manager Coffey stated the town staff will collaborate with the school officials in order to work with the policy to see what measures can be taken to counter their anti-walking policies.

Recreation – Greenways, Trails, Parks

Manager Coffey reiterated updates to the Eller Cove Watershed greenway plan for unincorporated town owned property in Buncombe County. The Outdoor Recreation Complex at Lake Louise, including the pickleball and basketball courts.

Council member McGuire's suggested the Town seek a 'delayed harvest' designation for Reems Creek. As a trout stream delayed harvest trout waters, the NC Wildlife Resources Commission would open trout streams between June and September. He explained the Wildlife Resource would stock the trout year-round, while catch and release is October to June. In Buncombe County there are no delayed harvest streams. Staff could follow-up with Curtis Wright Guided fly fishing and Mark Endries working on the Eller Cove Watershed plan noted Manager Coffey.

In response to Council member Chase's inquiry regarding the Main Street Nature Park upgrades, Attorney Jackson reviewed the stormwater management plan, which includes expansion to the north and community education. The Town is collaborating with Land of Sky Regional Council and stormwater management experts on run-off control measures. The final report will provide measures on how to improve functionality and beautification. There are public engagement and education opportunities. Staff is seeking direction from Town Council as to a phased plan approach to the work with Public Works Department staff. In response to Council member Wood's suggestion to apply for grant funding money, Attorney Jackson noted the project is not a large enough project for a PARTF grant but Mary Roderick, with Land of Sky noted the town has other options.

The greenways expansion is on-going and Council member Chase said the Active Weaverville Plan land acquisition easements are being negotiated with developers for additional trails and for the subdivision connector walking paths.

Relationships – Weaverville Business Association, Economic Development Advisory Committee, Schools, Buncombe County, NCLM (North Carolina League of Municipalities), NCDOT

Towns resources water and county, NCLM, business associations ex. WBA, Economic Development coalition, not industrial property available mayor on project committee, NCDOT combo private, town owned, engaged with legislators relationships,

- **Business- downtown, Enhance help, subdivision reestablishment of Goals for business Economic Development Advisory Committee, Events promotion, Music on Main, Art in Fall, Candlelight Stroll organized by the WBA and interlink with the Town's website, find a Weaverville niche, vice Mayor Cordell suggested to identify Town of Weaverville as a destiny destination, Dry Ridge Museum, Veterans Day event and 911 events**

Manager Coffey requested guidance from Town Council regarding the subject of social districts on whether to renew the conversation. Partnering with WBA potential closure of Florida Avenue closure for events or permanently. Mayor Fitzsimmons said this could be a social district workshop. He requested staff to research benchmark cities. Learn how they are doing it. Manager Coffey noted the Police Department is researching how law enforcement is addressing it. The Weaverville Business Association requests to extend the hours of events including serving of alcohol at event. Assistant Chief Oberlin noted past events where law enforcement addressed problems of overserved alcohol. Impaired people at the 4th of July family event and how officers addressed that. If the event is earlier then alcoholic drinking begins earlier and the Police want to be supportive, but what type of vibe do the organizers want for the events. Law enforcement staff will research Sylva and Brevard, who implemented 'social districts', but the question is who we want to draw and attract to the events.

Manager Coffey said brick and mortar businesses want to sell alcohol in their establishment and this showcases our breweries. Street intoxication must address proper amount of porta pots and location placement. Staff spend time cleaning after events, and this drives up costs. The Town Hall fountain needed maintenance as trash was fished out by Public Works Department.

Communication

Town Council identified 'Communication' as a strategic focus as communication underscores the Council's commitment to transparency and accountability.

Manager Coffey stated to enhance communication and engagement within our community, we are exploring various channels to reach a wider audience. While online platforms may not cater to all age groups, we understand the importance of diversifying our communication methods. To address this, we are implementing alternatives such as the Town Hall lobby TV monitor for information on events, Town Council meetings, and Public Service Announcements. Mailers and newsletters in utility bills have been suggested, but the printed formats are not cost effective. Additions to the E-Newsletter include all Town Council meeting agenda packets, which subscribers are already receiving. By incorporating these strategies, we aim to improve communication and foster stronger connections within our community.

Town Council's identified Goals and Strategies for 2024:

- Development:
 - #1) Staffing Long-Range Planning
 - #2) Land Use Planning- Zoning, Annexation Process, Economic Development, Affordable and Accessible Housing, Commercial and Industrial
- Infrastructure:
 - #1) Pedestrian Network- Active Weaverville Bike/Pedestrian Plan including greenways such as Eller Cove and Quarry Road trails, sidewalks and intersections.
 - #2) Broadband access, public WIFI & High-speed, Parking, aging facilities, traffic
 - #3) Sewer expansion (it was noted that Water Expansion Project is on-going as previously approved)
- Recreation:
 - #1) Active Weaverville Plan,
 - #2) Reems Creek, Eller Cove, and Quarry Road Trails
 - #3) Parks, Land acquisition and easements
- Business:
 - #1) Community Events,
 - #2) WBA partnership and support and communication,
 - #3) Downtown- enhance entrepreneurship, WEDAC established goals, social districts which may include road closures for events
- Communication:
 - #1) Strategies with the public such as shared messaging across media and departments
 - #2) Committees, engagement and recruitment
 - #3) WBA connections with website links, other tools such as print, CodeRED and departments, meet-and-greets
- Relationships:

#1) schools, Towns, County, League, Weaverville Business Association, EDC, NCDOT, and Legislature

Mayor Fitzsimmons questioned, 'What does success look like for the Town of Weaverville'
Audience and Town Officials polled:

- affordable housing
- robust economic
- healthy happy community/ healthy population
- smart growth
- vibrant sense of place
- adequate well-maintained facilities
- multimodal transportation systems in place
- preservation of downtown and businesses
- moderation
- diverse population
- economically thriving town that maintains its small town charm

There being no further business, Mayor Fitzsimmons adjourned the Strategic Planning Retreat at 12:15 p.m.

ATTEST:



Tamara Mercer, Town Clerk