



Town Council Workshop Minutes of September 14, 2026

The Town Council regularly scheduled workshop was held on Monday, September 14, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. in the Town Council Chambers at Town Hall, 30 S. Main Street, Weaverville, N.C.

1. Call to Order

Mayor Lawrence called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Town Council Present: Mayor Gary D. Lawrence, Vice Mayor John Chase, and Council Members Phil Barnett, Mark Endries, Peter McGuire, Andrew Nagle and Jennifer Young

Staff Present- Assistant Town Manager Jennifer Jackson, Planning Director James Eller, Public Works Director/Town Clerk Angela Reece, Assistant Public Works Director Eric Cutshall, Public Works Superintendent David Fisher and other Public Works Staff, Planner Graham Crawford, Police Captain Nicholas Shea, Community Resource Officer Andy Mace, Fire Chief Ray Canafax, and A/V Coordinator Lauren Ward

2. Merchants Alley Overview and Preliminary Concepts

Manager Harris stated Merchants Alley is a 20-foot-wide public street, open to the public, and owned and maintained by the Town. He said parking within the travel way has increased and obstructs emergency access, sanitation services, and through traffic. Town Manager Scottie Harris presented three preliminary concepts to Council for consideration and feedback.

Manager Harris outlined each concept as follows:

Concept #1. Loading/Unloading Area and Fire Lane. This concept focuses on the loading and unloading needs of the area businesses in a way that preserves emergency access and sanitation services. In general, through-traffic and public parking within Merchants Alley are eliminated under this option. Manager Harris stated the first is the preferred concept by town staff for emergency access for police and fire as well as sanitation services and loading/unloading.

Concept #2. Two-Way Traffic with Temporary Loading/Unloading. This concept allows bi-directional loading and unloading in the northbound lane. Public parking within Merchants Alley is eliminated under this option. This option requires closure of Florida Avenue for through traffic access.

Concept #3A. One-Way Traffic (Southbound) with Loading Unloading. Bi-directional loading and unloading is allowed in the northbound lane. Public parking within Merchants Alley is eliminated under this option.

Concept #3B. One-Way Traffic (Northbound) with Loading/Unloading. Bi-directional loading and unloading is allowed in the southbound lane. Public parking within Merchants Alley is eliminated under this option. For this

option to be workable the two-way traffic on Florida Avenue will have to be evaluated before implementation. Eastbound traffic on Florida Avenue will be dead-end unless further reconfigurations are considered.

3. Florida Avenue Preliminary Concept

Changes to Florida Avenue between Main Street and Merchants Alley could be considered along with a reconfiguration of Merchants Alley. A one-block closure of Florida Avenue would allow the creation of an outdoor dining area with possible social district. This is a preliminary concept only and will need to be fully planned if implementation is desired by Town Council.

Manager Harris recalled the closure of Florida Avenue being discussed several times in the past by former Councils. He advised the proposed concept could resolve some ADA accessibility issues on Main Street resulting from sidewalks narrowed by tables, chairs etc.

4. Staff Recommendation

Town Manager Harris stated Merchants Alley must be addressed and said staff have recommended Concept #1, Loading/Unloading Area and Fire Lane. Manager Harris requested Council direction on which concept(s) they prefer to be developed more fully and whether or not staff should study closure of Florida Avenue.

5. Public Input

Assistant Town Manager Jennifer Jackson advised Council that the public and merchants received notification of the preliminary concepts for Merchants Alley being available for review and selection at Town Hall beginning on September 8 with the following results: Concept #1 received approximately 35 votes, Concept #2 received approximately 15 votes, Concept #3a and #3b both received approximately 3 votes each and the Preliminary Outdoor Dining/Social District received 45 votes. Manager Jackson stated there were some citizens who opposed all of the concepts which was not captured in this preliminary public input.

The public was provided with the opportunity to comment (3 minutes each) as follows:

- Darla Letourneau addressed Council and encouraged them to look at the downtown corridor in a holistic manner citing growing safety and access concerns due to expanded businesses, activities, foot traffic, and vehicular traffic. Ms. Letourneau expressed support of the Florida Avenue Outdoor Dining and possible Social District Concept and said she believes this is most consistent with the Town's strategic plan.
- Inger Stallmann Jorgensen addressed Council and encouraged them to take steps to prepare for challenges ahead with increased traffic and area growth. Ms. Stallmann Jorgensen commented on the importance of separating foot traffic from vehicle traffic to prevent injuries and fatalities from happening. She also spoke in support of having a social district but acknowledged that there will be issues to work through on that.
- Amy Spooner, owner of Artisans on Main, addressed Council expressing concerns about employee safety at the church lot where employee parking spaces are available, and asked for considerations such as salting in inclement weather, security cameras, and security lighting. She stated she supports a walkable community and asked if restrooms were being considered if Florida is closed. Ms. Spooner requested a better rendering of what Florida Avenue could look like that was more accurate than the AI generated image.

- Brandi Bailey addressed Council in support of keeping marked parking on one side of the alley and expressed concerns of eliminating parking altogether.
- Beth Mangum, owner of Mangum Pottery, addressed Council stating she does not support two-way traffic on Merchants Alley due to square footage and sanitation issues. She expressed that Merchants Alley should be closed to through traffic and only open to local traffic and suggested a panel of businesses and staffs to look closer at the options.
- Josh Garris, owner of Curtis Wright Outfitters, addressed Council expressing concerns about losing parking spaces for employees and the need for parking signage for public. He additionally expressed concerns about employee safety and some employees not being physically able to reach the parking lot at the church.
- Mary Parker addressed Council expressing concerns of closing Florida Avenue and inquired if the property would be split between the adjacent property owners.
- Alan Sheppard addressed Council in support of a two-way street on Merchants Alley but acknowledged larger vehicles would need more room and that garbage receptacles would need to be relocated. Additionally, he expressed concerns about added traffic and large vehicles on Alabama as well as traffic enforcement.
- Tonya Sheppard addressed Council speaking on behalf of Meadowbrook Bridal and advised they are not in support of any closures of Florida Avenue. She expressed concerns that a quiet upscale business could be disrupted by a noisy social district. Ms. Sheppard stated she supports keeping Merchant's Alley two-way and opposes a social district so near Main Street.
- Wilder Wadford addressed Council regarding access to his property at 38 N. Main, expressing concerns of property value and access to Main Street by way of Florida Ave. He advised he is opposed to any closure of Florida that would impact his ability to access his property.
- Thomas Veasy addressed Council in opposition of a social district citing proximity of three breweries and proposed building parking garages behind the library and Town Hall.
- Melissa Zimmer, owner of Lev & Lulu's, addressed Council expressing concerns of the business on the south side being omitted from the concepts. Additionally, she expressed concerns of female employees walking to access parking.
- Jerry Zimmer addressed Council requesting consideration of more public parking in town.
- Lou Accornero addressed Council in support of adding parking in the Nature Park.

6. Town Council Discussion and Direction

Council Member Endries proposed forming a task force comprised of staff, citizens and business owners.

Council Member Barnett recalled a hotel developers survey conducted by the Economic Development Committee stating restaurants and businesses must be walkable to attract hotels. He also acknowledged a 2017 parking agreement with local churches and proposed re-establishment and clarity of what has been offered by the churches

in terms of capacity and how this is communicated. He also acknowledged new developments will be bringing more people to the town in the next few years and said there will be challenges due to change.

Council Member Young expressed thanks and appreciation to everyone for their participation and comments in this process and encouraged staff to include all businesses and residents on Alabama in future input or outreach.

Council Member McGuire expressed support of a task force and recalled a discussion of extending sidewalks in Florida Avenue in the past. Manager Harris advised that past Councils did not proceed with expanding those sidewalks due to safety and proximity of vehicles to pedestrians, tables and chairs. Council Member Young stated she recalled Police Chief Oberlin expressing these concerns as well.

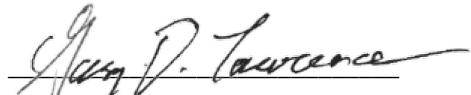
Council Member Young requested Manager Harris investigate the parking agreements and safety concerns as well as lighting and snow/ice removal. Manager Harris stated he has begun speaking with businesses and acknowledged more work needs to be done on lighting and signage. Manager Harris advised he supports exploring long-term options such as acquiring property for additional parking and the possibility of a boardwalk.

Vice Mayor John Chase expressed thanks and appreciation to citizens for their input.

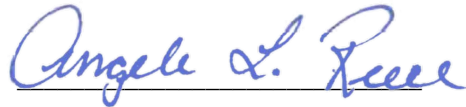
After all discussion and input was concluded, the consensus of Council was to continue investigating options. No action was taken.

7. Adjournment

There being no further business and without objection Mayor Lawrence adjourned the meeting at 6:52p.m.



Gary D. Lawrence, Mayor



Angele Reece, Town Clerk