Town Council Workshop Minutes of October 13, 2026

The Town Council regularly scheduled workshop was held on Monday, October 13, 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 Gary D. 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-Town Manager Scottie Harris, Assistant Town Manager Jennifer Jackson, Finance Director Tonya Dozier, Planning Director James Eller, Public Works Director/Town Clerk Angela Reece, Assistant Public Works Director Eric Cutshall, Police Chief Somer Oberlin, Police Captain Nicholas Shea, Police Captain Derrick Burrell, Community Center Director Mike Desario, Fire Marshal Kile Davis, and A/V Coordinator Lauren Ward

Attorney John Henning was in attendance.

Council Member Jennifer Young requested an adjustment to the agenda and Mayor Gary D. Lawrence denied this request.

2. Weaverville Fire Department – Update

Town Manager Scottie Harris announced that John Coffey has been selected as the next Fire Chief, citing Chief Coffey's extensive experience and qualifications. Manager Harris advised that Chief Coffey was considered in the initial pool of applicants as a top choice. Manager Harris advised that four (4) out of the five (5) new hires started work last week and said two of those are experienced Firefighter/EMT's with more than twenty (20) years' combined experience in emergency services. Manager Harris further stated that the fifth new hire would begin in the coming week and said out of the thirty (30) allocated positions there are five (5) remaining vacancies; one (1) captain, two (2) engineers, and two (2) firefighter-EMT's which are posted and said that the Department is planning to conduct the interviews in early November. Manager Harris announced that the Department maintained a 2 out of 10 ISO rating in Town and a 3 out of 10 for the North Buncombe Fire District as of October 1, 2026. He explained that a rating of 1 is the highest rating and 10 is the lowest and said this rating accounts for the Department's ability to respond to calls, how many structure fires, staffing on scenes among other things and said the Fire Department is successfully running calls and operating at above level with minimum staffing. Manager Harris stated he is unaware of any delayed responses or that the Department has been unable to respond to a call but acknowledged the possibility of an overlapping call if this has occurred but again stated he has not been notified of this. Manager Harris stated the new fire apparatus was placed in service in August and said the next apparatus in production expected to be delivered in December 2026 and that the heavy rescue truck is on order and expected to be delivered in 2027.

3. Merchants Alley Task Force – Update

Manager Scottie Harris recalled Council's request to form a taskforce at their September 14th meeting and said there were ten (10) people who asked to join at the meeting and another two post meeting. He stated there may also be a representative from Alabama Avenue requesting to join and that Council Member Mark Endries has requested to be a liaison. Manager Harris provided a list of interested people to Council and requested guidance on Town Council goals and objectives. Manager Harris acknowledged that an easy, agreeable solution may be difficult to find, and said staff reached out to Traffic Planning & Design (which is now an engineering firm known as McAdams) to see if they would be able to provide technical advice on any proposed options and said McAdams recommended having a neutral facilitator work with the group.

Council Member Nagle stated he does not support paying a facilitator. Council Member Phil Barnett also stated he does not support paying a facilitator and expressed concerns that the issue is becoming too complicated and prolonged. Manager Harris asked the following questions:

- Does the task force contain all the stakeholders that you would like to see represented?
- What is the "mission statement", goal, objectives for the task force and staff?
- Is this group also exploring a permanent closure of a 1-block portion of Florida Ave. or is that a separate but related conversation?
- Is the study area of Florida/Alabama and the intersection of Central/Merrimon accurate?
- How much public input would Council like?

There was general Town Council consensus not to pay for a facilitator. Council Members expressed concerns regarding the size of the task force but did not provide guidance on reducing the number. Council Member Mark Endries suggested the focus should be on Merchants Alley and said he believes Florida Avenue and Alabama Avenue are components to consider as they could be affected. There was consensus on the study area described above being accurate. The consensus of Council was that the task force should only consider options that comply with established laws and town ordinances, provides the Fire Department with ingress and egress, and allows an appropriate amount of room for loading/unloading zones. They also agreed that a goal could be formed at their first meeting.

4. Florida Avenue – Town Council Direction on Next Steps

Town Manager Scottie Harris requested direction regarding the closure, and the consensus of Town Council was to focus on Merchants Alley and to continue with event-centered temporary closures only at Florida Avenue to avoid any ingress and egress problems.

5. Town Council Updates on Outreach to Business

Council Member Phil Barnett recalled previous announcements regarding Thermo Fisher leaving the town and Council discussions of developing relationships with the business owners so they can stay informed. Council Member Barnett stated he was successful in connecting with Conrad Industries and said he is in conversations with school officials and Dodge to discuss internship opportunities to motivate youth to enter the local workforce and stay in town. Council Member Jennifer Young stated she has been successful in contacting Ingles and said she would also contact Lowes. She stated she has also met with Ashley Demarco to discuss filling a space at Ball Crank

and said she has connected with the school to seek input on recreational preferences local youth may have. Council Member Young also announced she is heavily involved with Advent Health Hospital and stated they are planning a community meeting to present updates on construction. Council Member Mark Endries stated he was successful in outreach to Buncombe County Schools and has also connected with Walmart but said that any request the Town would have would need to go through a national corporate process. Council Member Phil Barnett acknowledged connecting also with Publix.

6. Closed Session

At 6:35 p.m. Vice Mayor John N.C. G.S. 143318.11(a)(3) – To consult with an attorney and preserve the attorney-client privilege; N.C.G.S. 143-318.11(a)(5) – To establish or instruct Town staff on the price and other material terms of a proposed contract for the acquisition of real property and to consider the amount of compensation or other material terms of an employment contract; and N.C.G.S 143-318.11(a)(6) – To review or discuss confidential personnel matters. A unanimous vote of the Council present followed. Motion carried, 7-0.

Council Member Andrew Nagle exited Closed Session at 7:20 p.m.

Council Member Phil Barnett exited Closed Session at 7:35 p.m.

The remaining Council and Town Attorney exited Closed Session at 7:51 p.m.

7. Town Council Discussion/Direction to Staff (if any)

No further discussion or action was taken.

8. Adjournment

There being no further business and without objection Mayor Gary D. Lawrence adjourned the meeting at 7:52p.m.

Gary D. Lawrence, Mayor

Angela L. Reece, Town Clerk