

**TOWN OF VALDESE
TOWN COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING
SEPTEMBER 6, 2022**

The Town of Valdese Town Council met on Tuesday, September 6, 2022, at 6:00 p.m., in the Town Council Chambers at Town Hall, 102 Massel Avenue, SW, Valdese, North Carolina. The following were present: Mayor Charles Watts, Councilwoman Frances Hildebran, Councilwoman Rexanna Lowman and Councilman Paul Mears. Also present were: Town Attorney Tim Swanson, Town Manager Seth Eckard, Town Clerk Jessica Lail, and various Department Heads.

Absent: Councilman J. Andy Thompson, Ward 5 Seat Vacant

A quorum was present.

Mayor Watts called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. He offered the invocation and led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

OPEN FORUM/PUBLIC COMMENT: Mayor Pro Tem Frances Hildebran read the Rules & Procedures for Public Comment: Rule 5. Public Comment - Any individual or group who wishes to address the council shall inform the town clerk, any time prior to the start of the meeting, and provide their name, address and subject matter about which they wish to speak. Comments should be limited to five minutes per speaker. If the speaker's comments needs to be addressed, upon the direction of the Council, someone from the management team will be in touch with you later.

POOL RENOVATION – AMANDA LENNEX, 4102 CHERRYWOOD DRIVE, HUDSON: Ms. Lennex shared that she has children who have used the pool for over 13 years and is concerned with the upcoming renovations. Ms. Lennex is concerned with the pool renovation being scheduled in the fall, with high school swimming starting in October. Ms. Lennex asked the Council to postpone the renovations until February 2023.

CONSENT AGENDA: (enacted by one motion)

APPROVED REGULAR MEETING MINUTES OF AUGUST 1, 2022

APPROVED APPOINTMENT TO VEDIC BOARD: Ms. Donna Zamora was appointed to a three-year term. The term will expire on July 1, 2025.

APPROVED LEASE AGREEMENT AT OLD ROCK SCHOOL WITH P&W RAILROAD CLUB: Annual Lease Agreement at the Old Rock School with P & W Railroad Club in the amount of \$230 per month.

APPROVED LEASE AGREEMENT AT OLD ROCK SCHOOL WITH DAVID HARMON STUDIOS, LLC: Annual Lease Agreement at the Old Rock School with David Harmon Studios, LLC, in the amount of \$350 per month.

APPROVED UPDATE TO THE CONTINUITY OF OPERATION PLAN: A copy of the plan can be obtained in the Clerk's office.

APPROVED FALL LITTER SWEEP, SEPTEMBER 10-24, 2022

Councilwoman Lowman made a motion to approve the aforementioned items on the Consent Agenda, seconded by Councilman Mears. The vote was unanimous.

End Consent Agenda

ITEMS REMOVED FROM CONSENT AGENDA: None

NEW EMPLOYEE INTRODUCTION: Public Works Director Allen Hudson introduced Jody Price, Utility Field Technician.

APPOINTMENT TO FILL WARD 5 VACANY: Mayor Watts shared that Council requested applications from interested citizens that reside in Ward 5. Mayor Watts asked Council if they had a motion for an appointment.

Councilwoman Hildebran made a motion to appoint Timothy James Skidmore as Ward 5 Councilman, seconded by Councilwoman Lowman. The vote was unanimous.

Mayor Watts shared that Mr. Skidmore would take the Oath of Office at the October 3, 2022, Council meeting.

ANNUAL PROPERTY TAX COLLECTION REPORT: Finance Director Bo Weichel presented the following report:

Tax Year 2021	
Property Tax Statement Annual Settlement	
Property Valuations	
Real Estate	308,357,968
Personal	87,687,073
Senior Citizen Exemptions	<u>(4,908,620)</u>
Total Property Valuation Subject to Tax Rate	391,136,421
Levy	2,057,727
Discoveries	73,967
Late List Penalties	<u>7,727</u>
Total Levy	2,139,421
Less Collected as of 6/30/2022	2,088,946
Releases	2,500
Uncollected 2021	52,295
Ratio of Taxes Collected to Total Levy	97.76%
Motor Vehicle	
Levy	223,441
2021 Collection by Burke County	223,441
Collection Costs	8,629

Councilman Mears asked how our collection rate compares to other municipalities in the state. Mr. Weichel shared that he thinks Burke County is around 98% but is unfamiliar with other municipal percentages. Councilwoman Hildebran feels that this collection rate is great, considering we have been in the middle of a pandemic, and she would like to thank Kim Cline, the Tax Collector, for her excellent work.

APPROVED BUDGET AMENDMENT: Finance Director Bo Weichel presented the following Budget Amendment:

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Budget Amendment # 3

Subject: Pool Boiler Unit

Description: A boiler unit to heat the pool was approved for \$25,000 at the April 2022 meeting. Due to supply chain issues, the original boiler unit ordered will not arrive until late November. This amendment will allow for the installation of three smaller units to replace one large unit, which is available now.

Proposed Action:

BE IT ORDAINED by the Council of the Town of Valdese that, pursuant to Section 15 of Chapter 159 of the General Statutes of North Carolina, the following amendment is made to the annual budget ordinance for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2023:

Section I:

The following revenues available to the Town will be increased:

Account	Description	Decrease/ Debit	Increase/ Credit
10.3990.000	General Fund Balance Appropriated		7,140
Total		\$0	\$7,140

Amounts appropriated for expenditure are hereby amended as follows:

Account	Description	Increase/ Debit	Decrease/ Credit
10.6200.740	Capital Outlay	7,140	
Total		\$7,140	\$0

Section II:

Copies of this budget amendment shall be furnished to the Clerk to the Governing Board, to the Budget Officer and the Finance Officer for their direction.

Councilwoman Lowman asked how soon we would have to wait until the pool was heated. Parks & Recreation Director David Andersen said that it is slated to be installed on September 12, 2022.

Councilwoman Lowman made a motion to approve the aforementioned budget amendment, seconded by Councilman Mears. The vote was unanimous.

APPROVED CAPITAL PROJECT ORDINANCE AMENDMENT: Finance Director Bo Weichel presented the following Capital Project Ordinance Amendment:

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Capital Project Ordinance Amendment # 10-35

Subject: Public Safety building

Description: To amend capital project ordinance Fund 35
USDA application submittal process

Proposed Action:

BE IT ORDAINED by the Council of the Town of Valdese that, pursuant to Section 13.2 of Chapter 159 of the General Statutes of North Carolina, the capital project ordinance for various capital projects funded from a variety of sources is hereby amended as follows.

Section I:

Revenues available to the Town to complete the projects are hereby amended as follows:

Account	Description	Decrease/ Debit	Increase/ Credit
35.3480.001	Distributions		5,000
	Total	\$0	\$5,000

Amounts appropriated for capital projects are hereby amended as follows:

Account	Description	Increase/ Debit	Decrease/ Credit
35.5300.041	Professional Services	5,000	
	Total	\$5,000	\$0

Section II:

Copies of this budget amendment shall be furnished to the Clerk to the Governing Board, to the Budget Officer and the Finance Officer for their direction.

Mr. Weichel explained that USDA is requiring a financial forecast. In past years, the USDA would have someone in-house to complete this, but since they are short-staffed, the Town has to do it. Mr. Weichel shared that they have a certain set of rules and firms to use. Mr. Weichel explained that because we are in such good order, the firm will only charge us \$5,000 for the completion of the study, which is a low price.

Councilwoman Lowman asked about the financial forecast and how it will be used with this application. Mr. Weichel explained that they would complete a six-year forecast of our revenues and expenditures based on some economic data they have. Mr. Weichel shared that the goal of this study is to make sure that we can afford to make the payment. Councilman Mears asked where the \$5,000 would come from. Mr. Weichel explained that we have a savings account within the project that has already been set aside.

Councilwoman Hildebran made a motion to approve the aforementioned capital project ordinance amendment, seconded by Councilwoman Lowman. The vote was unanimous.

MANAGER'S REPORT: Town Manager Seth Eckard made the following announcements:

Coffee with the Chief, Thursday, September 8, 2022, 9:00 a.m. at the Valdese Town Hall, Community Room has been cancelled.

Old Colony Players Presents: Cyrano, September 8 - 10, 2022, 8:00 p.m. at the Fred B. Cranford Amphitheatre.

NC State Bocce Tournament, Saturday, September 10, 2022, 8:00 a.m. at the LPDA.

Paint the Park Reception, Saturday, September 17, 2022, 4:00–7:00 p.m. at the Old Rock School. Visit painttheparkvaldese.com for more information.

Draughn Homecoming Parade, Tuesday, September 20, 2022, at 6:00 p.m., Main Street, Council will meet at the Fire Department at 5:30 p.m.

Parks & Recreation Project Updates – Parks and Recreation Director David Andersen gave the following report:



Parks and Recreation Project Updates for Town Council-September 6, 2022:

McGalliard Falls Update:

Waterfall Keepers of North Carolina, a non-profit organization, will be coming the morning of September 7 to clean the graffiti from the face of McGalliard Falls at no cost to the town. We will be the first place they will test their new pressure washing system designed to clean graffiti from waterfalls.

There is a plan to construct stairs from the McGalliard Falls shelter to the sewage easement leading to the McGalliard Creek Bridge. We hope the stairs will make it easier for park visitors to access the easement trail, and subsequently, the bridge and Valdese Lakeside Park. Bimbo Bakeries and the Friends of the Valdese Rec will provide the funding for the project, which we hope to have completed by Deeply Rooted Landscaping in December at the latest.

Kayak Launch/ Valdese Lakeside Park PARTF Grant:

Recently we applied for a 1-year extension for our open Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF) Grant for Valdese Lakeside Park because of the canoe/kayak launch project being incomplete. It is the final piece needed before closing out the grant.

NC Wildlife Resource Commission (NCWRC) is managing the project on behalf of the town, and their staff submitted a full draft application package to Duke for Step 3 of their three-step application process on Friday, September 2. This process has been underway since late 2021. We expect at least one round of rejection and resubmittal from Duke. Once Duke approves the draft and final application, then Duke will send the application to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) for FERC approval. At a meeting on Thursday, August 25, Duke representatives clarified that the FERC process may take 6 months to a year.

Staff has also applied for a grant to provide a fixed workstation and tools for bicycles and wheelchairs to be installed at VLP near the restrooms. The grant would also include bike racks that staff anticipate installing at McGalliard Falls Park. Staff should know by September 16 if we have been awarded this grant.

Community Center Locker Rooms Renovation Update:

We know of three contractors actively working on preparing bids for this project. Staff will open bids at 11am on Friday, September 16, in the Community Room at Town Hall. We anticipate bringing a bid for approval to council at the October 3 town council meeting. Staff has been very responsive to inquiries from the contractors throughout the time they have been working on preparing the bids.

Patrons have raised questions regarding keeping the pool open during the renovations. Alex Bustle, Aquatics/Fitness Supervisor, and myself have been looking at how we can continue to operate while this work is being completed. Without having a final contractor selection, we do not have a good idea of the final construction timeline. We want the contractors to be able to work unimpeded to finish quickly and with minimal disruption. We have already decided not to host any birthday parties during the remainder of 2022, as we are unable to guarantee the status of the facility from week to week.

Concerns regarding the high school swim season, which takes place between the beginning of November and the middle of February, have come up. We have been in touch with all coaches who use the facility, and they are aware of the likelihood of some complete closures due to construction. However, it is our expressed intent to limit any full closures as much as possible while also not impeding the work of the contractors. By utilizing porta johns outside of the Bubble, as well as portable changing areas and a temporary shower inside the Bubble, we should satisfy requirements to operate the facility.

Pool Update:

Town staff will be working this week to prepare the pool deck area for the Bubble, which town staff and BRIDGE crew will be installing the week of September 12. Chris Moseley and Hickory Sheet Metal will be installing the new heaters during the pool down time the week of September 12. We anticipate a pool re-opening with functional heating capacity on Monday, September 19.

Wayne Owens Gym Update:

Staff members have selected colors for the new bleachers, pads, and piping on goals, and we have been in close communication with The Sports Flooring Group regarding a timeline for the manufacture, delivery, and installation of those items.

Jeff McGee has completed internal ceiling repairs, and he will be installing a chimney cap on the old boiler chimney. Taylor and Viola has completed their engineering solution to strengthen the gymnasium trusses. Richard’s Welding has submitted a quote to complete the required work for \$18,049.72. Powell’s Welding has provided a quote for the same work at \$29,150. The truss work may take 2-3 weeks to complete.

Staff is expecting updated, detailed HVAC quotes by the end of this week. At this time, contractors have informed us to anticipate lead times that are incredibly long. In addition, many of their suppliers are not providing quotes for longer than a day at a time.

Custom Coatings should be ready to start prep and paint by late September/early October, but will likely need to delay slightly due to the welding work.

Tiger Gym Update:

W.C. Reynolds/ Houck Construction is awaiting delivery of the larger ventilation components to begin the work in the gymnasium. We are currently in the ninth week since the contractor placed the orders, and there was an expected lead-time of roughly eight weeks.

Tennis Court Update:

Court One of Granite Quarry has undergone a management change, which further delayed the resurfacing project. Employees of the company arrived at the courts September 6 to start working on the surface, and they should have things completed in roughly 2 weeks depending on the weather.

MAYOR AND COUNCIL COMMENTS: Councilwoman Hildebran thanked Code Enforcement/Animal Control Officer Hicks for all his work with Code Enforcement and Animal Control this month. Officer Hicks shared that it has been a busy month for Animal Control. Mayor Watts also thanked Officer Hicks for his prompt response to calls. Councilwoman Hildebran also shared how proud she is of our ten-year Capital Improvement Plan that puts money back to restore aging lines that are 80 – 90 years old. Councilwoman Hildebran is proud to say that we do not have to worry about a water issue in the Town of Valdese.

Mayor Watts thanked everyone who worked on the successful Waldensian Festival.

Mayor Watts read a letter addressed to the Mayor, Mayor Pro Tem, Town Manager, members of Council, and the Citizens of Valdese, from Councilman Andy Thompson. Mr. Thompson resigned as Councilman of Ward 1 effective Tuesday, September 6, 2022, to focus on his business, himself, and family. In his letter, Mr. Thompson shared that it has been a pleasure working for the citizens of the Town of Valdese. Mayor Watts said that he received this letter at 4:00 p.m. this afternoon.

WARD 1 RESIGNATION: Mayor Watts stated that there is now a vacancy in Ward 1 and in order to fill the vacancy, persons interested must reside within the boundaries of Ward 1 and submit an application and resume. The applications are available online or at the Town Hall and will be open until the seat is filled. Members of Council expressed their gratitude and well wishes for Mr. Thompson.

ADJOURNMENT: At 6:40 p.m., there being no further business to come before Council, Councilwoman Hildebran made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Councilman Mears. The vote was unanimous.

The next regular Council meeting is scheduled for Monday, October 3, 2022, at 6:00 p.m.

Town Clerk
jl

Mayor