

**TOWN OF VALDESE  
QUORUM PRESENT – Citizens Academy Seventh Session (Graduation)  
THURSDAY, MAY 5, 2016**

On Thursday, May 5, 2016, 6:00 p.m., the Seventh Session (Graduation) of the Town's First Citizens Academy was held at Valdese Town Hall Council Chambers, 102 Massel Avenue, SW, Valdese, North Carolina.

Present: Mayor Pro Tem Susan Stevenson, Councilman Ogle, Councilwoman Frances Hildebran, and Councilman Roy F. Sweezy. Also present were Town Manager Seth Eckard, Deputy Town Clerk Thelda B. Rhoney, Community Affairs Director Morrissa Angi, and various Department Heads.

Absent: Mayor John F. "Chip" Black, Jr., and Councilman Gary L. Delp

A quorum was present and no action was taken.

Hors d'oeuvres were provided by Myra's Catering.

At 6:15 p.m., Town Manager Seth Eckard welcomed everyone and asked that the participants of the academy present their project.

Mayor Pro Tem Stevenson welcomed everyone and congratulated all of the participants of the First Graduating Class of the Citizens Academy in Valdese. She said on behalf of the Mayor and Members of the Valdese Town Council they appreciated the dedication to the program and to the Town. She commended the Department Heads for their hard work.

Ms. Tonya Stephens, elected President of the Academy by the members, offered a PowerPoint presentation and said the academy members came up with a lot of projects which was hard to narrow down. They chose the Valdese Pride Street Sweep on August 6, 2016, to clean/sweep the streets of Valdese on Main Street prior to the Waldensian Festival. They would reach out to Churches, Scouts, Schools, etc., for assistance. They are going to continue meeting as part of the Main Street Committee.

Mayor Pro Tem Stevenson said this project would enhance the Litter Sweep Program.

One of the members thanked Public Works Director Bryan Duckworth for assisting with the Fat/Oils/Grease Program and for painting the parking spaces around town.

Mr. Eckard said staff had also learned from the academy as well. He encouraged the academy members to spread the word about future sessions.

Councilwoman Hildebran said she was impressed that the academy members chose a project that would do something for the Town and it made her proud.

Mr. Eckard said Community Affairs Director Morrissa Angi would distribute a survey tomorrow and he asked the academy members to fill out the survey and return it as soon as possible.

Mr Eckard presented Certificates to the following Citizens Academy Graduates:

1. Carla S. Berry
2. Kathy Boutwell
3. LaDonya Edwards (absent)
4. Colton Tyler Gera
5. Judy Norris Jones
6. Rick McClurd
7. Rose Mueller
8. Will Mueller
9. Leyton Christopher Shoupe
10. Katelynn Smith
11. Tonya Stephens
12. Maxwell Hudson Teffeteller (absent)
13. Sandra C. Walker
14. Heather Ward (absent)

Ms. Angi took a group photo.

Mr. Eckard asked for questions/answers.

Ms. Carla Berry said the group was excited about the projects the group proposed. There was pride and desire to help from the academy participants.

Mr. Eckard recommended an Alumni Session in five years for all Academy participants to attend.

Mr. Rick McClurd said the group was great and President Stephens did an excellent job keeping everyone informed and she sent a lot of e-mails.

Mr. Eckard asked what surprised the group. Several members said the Water and Wastewater Plants.

Ms. Sandi Walker said in the book, "What Mean These Stones," which spoke of volunteerism in Valdese and she said this group had the pride.

One of the members said she learned something about each department. She learned that the Town offered mulch and she was spreading the word.

Some of the members said the academy needed to last eight or nine weeks instead of seven. One member said perhaps meet once a month instead of every week. Another member liked meeting every week. One of the members said he learned about recycling. One member said all of the Department Heads were proud of what they did and were caring and they took very good care of Town equipment.

Councilman Ogle asked the group if they understood they were getting a 6 cents tax increase and how many understood their water bill was going up. He said the Town needed to get the information out to the public. He said Burke County just went up 16 cents on taxes.

Two members raised their hands they did not like the increase and one said she did not like it but she would pay her taxes and understood why increases were needed.

Mr. McClurd recommended that everyone read the book, "One Second After." He encouraged all Town Officials to read the book and the author was from Black Mountain. Mr. Eckard said Town Staff works with Burke County Staff during emergencies.

Mr. Eckard asked the group if they remembered how many services a town must provide to its citizens. He said only one service which would be building inspections. He briefly reviewed services offered by Valdese.

Mr. Duckworth said the group project chosen by the academy members was huge and would be most beneficial to the Public Works Department.

Ms. Walker said the "Have a Hat Day," (to honor the tradition of the Waldenses and their hats) would be held on Saturday, May 7, 2016, 10:00 a.m., Jacumin Plaza. There would be demonstrations and entertainment. She said Macie Miller (former Little Miss North Carolina) would be raising funds by selling hot dogs for "Macie's Magical Monies," and all monies would be donated to Levine Children's Hospital. There would be a small parade and prizes would be given away and coupons for prizes could be obtained from the Downtown Merchants.

Ms. Berry said next Wednesday, May 11, 2016, 8:30 a.m., Trail of Faith, there would be senior games with participants from four counties.

At 6:52 p.m., there were no additional comments or questions and the meeting adjourned.

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Town Clerk

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Mayor

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