

Town of Taylorsville



## **Taylorsville Town Council Retreat**

**February 17<sup>th</sup> | 8:30 am – 2:30 pm**

**February 18<sup>th</sup> | 8:00 am – 12:30 pm**

**Taylorsville Savings Bank, Conference Room**

**107 Main Ave. Dr. NE Taylorsville, NC 28681**

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**Monday, February 17<sup>th</sup>, 2025**

**Present:** Mayor George Holleman  
Mayor Pro Tem Eric Bumgarner  
Councilwoman Tamara Odom  
Councilman Jack Simms  
Councilwoman Kim Brown

### **Open Forum:**

There was not public comment forum held at the retreat.

There were no actions taken at this retreat.

### **Welcome Remarks, Retreat Objectives, and Icebreaker Exercise**

The retreat began at 9:00 am with an opening welcome statement from Town Manager, Nathan Hester. Opening remarks were also made by Anthony Starr, Executive Director of Western Piedmont Council of Government, who explained the objectives of the retreat.

#### Meeting Objectives:

1. Build on the momentum from last year's budget and current projects
2. Establish the Town's vision, mission, and goals
3. Discuss the Town's long term and strategic planning needs in light of recent growth and change

The meeting included a variety of presentations, discussion, and participant engagement activities. Western Piedmont Council of Government staff facilitated to draw out all viewpoints while keeping participants on track.

### **WPCOG: Anthony Starr and Alison Adams from the WPCOG**

- Establishment of a Vision- Where do you see Taylorsville in the future?

Anthony asked the council members what their vision for the future of Town of Taylorsville was, resulting in a collected list of ideas. Councilman Eric Bumgarner stated he would like to see more business growth within Town of Taylorsville. Councilwoman Tamara Odom would like to see community involvement. Councilwomen Kim Brown would like to see the Town of Taylorsville as a clean, walkable, inviting area. Councilwomen Kim Brown also mentioned incorporating the history, culture and arts of the town into the marketing of Taylorsville. Mayor George Holleman would like to see the town working with developers to make Town of Taylorsville a destination. Mayor Holleman stated he would also like to see affordable housing within the town. Councilman Jack Simms explained he would like to see Taylorville as a safe affordable community that is open to resident input and improved air quality.

- **Foundations of a Mission Statement- Establish key words used within a Mission Statement**

Anthony Starr asked the council members to discuss ideas which they would like incorporated into a mission statement for the Town of Taylorsville, collecting a list of ideas.

- Councilman Eric Bumgarner suggested the following:
  - Family oriented
  - Transparency
- Councilwoman Tamara Odem suggested the following:
  - Open to change
  - Embracing our history
- Councilwoman Kim Brown suggested the following:
  - Great place to live, work, play, and learn
  - Future opportunity for growth
  - Clean, safe environment for all citizens
  - Equality & inclusion
  - Good quality of life
- Councilman Jack Simms suggested the following:
  - Listening to resident's concerns and input
  - Partnership with the county

**Special Presentations: Duncan Cavanaugh, WPCOG- Center for Research & Data Analytics Manager**

Duncan Cavanaugh with Western Piedmont Council of Government gave a presentation regarding the demographic and economic data of Taylorsville which will aid in the future vision of the town and preparing for the upcoming budget for fiscal year 2025-2026. The presentation included statistical data concerning:

- Population trends
- Household income & poverty levels
- Employment and wages
- Commuting patterns
- Educational attainment

Councilman Jack Simms commented, the numbers provided could be used to help determine growth of the town. Mayor George Holleman stated, the number of individuals who rent stood out to him. Tamara commented how the presentation shows where the town's focus needs to be, traffic comes into Taylorsville

but it needs to stay here. Eric stated, the population of 15- to 34-year-olds who are projected to leave the town stood out to him and the town needs to create jobs to keep these individuals in the town.

#### **WPCOG – Anthony Starr and Alison Adams, WPCOG**

- **Recent Successes**

Anthony asked the council members to recall recent successes and accomplishments of Town of Taylorsville from the past few years, collecting a list of ideas.

- Councilman Eric Bumgarner recalled the following accomplishments:
  - Hiring a new town manager
  - Hiring a financial director
  - Improved the transparency with the community, ex. Posting town council meetings on YouTube
- Councilwoman Tamara Odem recalled the following accomplishments:
  - Hometown Halloween & Hometown Christmas
  - A new variety of businesses
  - Mattheson Park renovations
  - Taylorsville ABC Board and opening of the store
- Councilwoman Kim Brown recalled the following accomplishments:
  - The purchase of a town Christmas Tree and hosting a Christmas Tree Lighting
  - About a 99% occupancy of downtown businesses, 1 building is currently vacant
  - Road Diet Investigation to improve parking
  - Improved Main Street relationships
  - Separation of the employee's duties within Town Hall administration
  - Addition of committees for economic development, strategic planning, revitalization
  - Town providing services through more responsibilities
- Mayor George Holleman recalled the following accomplishments:
  - Creation of the Historic District downtown which allows for more grant opportunities
  - Courthouse Park and Music Venue
  - The town manager and the county manager are working together
  - Improved financial process (POs)
- Councilman Jack Simms recalled the following accomplishments:
  - Sidewalks on westside of town are in progress
  - Hiring a new police chief
  - Audits are nearly up to date

- **Concerns on Challenges Over the Next 2-3 Years**

Anthony asked the council members what they would consider to be possible challenges over the next 2 to 3 years, collecting a list of ideas.

- Councilman Eric Bumgarner expressed the following concerns:
  - Needed business growth
  - The slow pace of government
  - Sale of the urgent care building

Code enforcement, the partnership with Alexander County will end June 2025

- Councilwoman Tamara Odem expressed the following concerns:
    - Support for changes
    - Creative solutions for meeting the town's needs
    - Need for medical facilities
    - Getting rid of the utility poles
  - Councilwoman Kim Brown expressed the following concerns:
    - Retaining quality employees
    - Lack of housing options
    - Marketing and wayfinding
    - Main Street utility wires and excess poles
    - Getting stakeholders to invest in their buildings
    - Updating the town ordinances and codes
  - Mayor Geroge Holleman expressed the following concerns:
    - Speeding & littering
    - Aging population
    - Retirement / adult population housing
    - Tax base is not growing
  - Councilman Jack Simms expressed the following concerns:
    - Age of the water and sewer infrastructure
    - Keeping tax rates low
    - Homelessness
    - Public information and updated website
- **Prioritizing Goals- What should the city do to achieve each goal?**

Anthony asked about the goals each council member would like to address over the next 2 to 3 years, collecting a list of ideas.

    - Councilman Eric Bumgarner mentioned the following:
      - Marketing the town for growth
      - Seek all grant opportunities available
      - Recruiting businesses and franchises
      - Grow the industrial businesses
    - Councilwoman Tamara Odem mentioned the following:
      - Parking & Streetscaping
      - Medical facilities and medical services
      - Updating the police department's equipment
      - More festivals and events
    - Councilwoman Kim Brown mentioned the following:
      - Appearance strategies
      - Main Street Designation
      - Establish downtown appearance ordinances
      - Increase annexations to expand corporate limits
    - Mayor Geroge Holleman mentioned the following:
      - Affordable retiree housing

- Emphasize historic credit
- New strategies to improve the communication with citizens
- Explore borrowing money for key projects
- Councilman Jack Simms mentioned the following:
  - Sewer and water lines within the town
  - Speed enforcement

### **Expectations of the Town Manager, from the Council**

Anthony requested the council to provide feedback with expectations the council members have of the Town Manager.

- Councilman Eric Bumgarner had the following comment:
  - He appreciated the weekly email communications concerning updates
- Councilwoman Tamara Odem had the following comment:
  - Likes the one-on-one meetings and communication
- Councilwoman Kim Brown had the following comments:
  - Asset to gain Main Street designation
  - Efficiencies of operations
  - A new perspective
  - A partnership and requesting input from council
- Mayor George Holleman had the following comments:
  - Relationships with developers to develop the town
  - Know how to prioritize
  - Delegate to others
- Councilman Jack Simms had the following comments:
  - Proper communication
  - Communication between the Town Manager and County Manager

### **Expectations of the Council, from the Town Manager**

Anthony requested the Town Manager to provide feedback with the expectations the Town Manager has for the council members. Nathan requested proper communication either positive or negative, so he could address the issue correctly.

### **Adjournment**

**Tuesday, February 18<sup>th</sup>, 2025**

**Present:** Mayor George Holleman  
Mayor Pro Tem Eric Bumgarner  
Councilwoman Tamara Odom  
Councilman Jack Simms  
Councilwoman Kim Brown

**Open Forum:**

There was not public comment forum held at the retreat.

**Welcome Remarks, Retreat Objectives, and Icebreaker Exercise**

The retreat began at 8:30 am with an opening welcome statement from Town Manager, Nathan Hester.

**Finance Director: Zach Greene**

Finance Director Zach Greene, presented information concerning the financials of Town of Taylorsville. The FY 2024 audit is under contract and scheduled to be completed by July 31, 2025. The FY 2025 audit is scheduled to be completed by December 2025. He also explained the importance of monitoring expenditures versus revenue, budgeting for large purchases in the future, and evaluating the impact of spending from fund balance. Fund balance is currently invested with a return of 5% and retaining those funds in fund balance will build a return on investment. Zach explained the sales tax revenue is unpredictable and the loss of revenue from the Taylorsville ABC Board are both valid reasons to retain a healthy fund balance. He also explained the need to compare the expense from Republic Service versus the fees passed on to customers because currently there is a \$5.00 per customer per month deficit in environmental fees. Councilman Jack Simms, asked how the incorporation of Bethlehem (if approved) would affect Town of Taylorsville. Zack explained, if the Bethlehem community becomes incorporated the Town of Taylorsville would experience a \$200,000.00 to \$300,000.00 loss. Town of Taylorsville will be transitioning to Black Mountain beginning July and will go live in October 2025. As of July 2025, the town will no longer be partnering with Alexander County for planning and zoning. Zack mentioned the future expense of new employees including the Accounts Payable/ Billing Clerk and 2 SRO positions for Taylorsville Elementary School and Student Success Center/ Early College.

Mayor George Holleman feels money in fund balance is from the taxes paid by the citizens and should be used in some way. He followed by asking how much should be in the fund balance each month for expenses. Zach explained, the monthly expense amount varies based on the time of year and it is hard to have a specific number. Aaron explained how some grant projects have upfront expenses and the reimbursements for those expenses can take 6 to 8 weeks to receive. Aaron also suggested using a capital reserve fund for known future expenses.

**Human Resources Director and Town Clerk: Yolanda Prince**

Human Resources Director and Town Clerk, Yolanda Prince shared personnel updates, employee achievements and accomplishments, and current employee benefits. Over the past year, Town of Taylorsville reviewed and updated of the personnel policy. A classification and pay study was completed resulting in up-to-date job descriptions and pay classification implementation. There will

be a new financial software system transition which will require training. The Town Code of Ordinances will need a complete administrative and legal overview to bring ordinances up-to-date. The town's website needs to be modernized. Yolanda recommended an evaluation of services versus the cost of the service provided, concerning annexation fees, solid waste fees, and service fees.

**Police Department Report: Police Chief Mike Millsaps**

Chief of Police Michael Millsaps, reported several accomplishments for the police department over the past year. The police department is currently fully staffed, offering competitive pay following the salary study with additional educational incentives. The police department has acquired new vehicles, 12 new tasers, and protective vests. Chief Millsaps will continue to send officers to training opportunities. He would like to encourage more community policing and community involvement. In the next 3 to 5 years the police department will assume 2 SRO positions from Alexander County, resulting in the need of vehicles, equipment, and uniforms. There may be potential radio changes dependent on mandates passed down from the state. Chief Millsaps acknowledges the future need of equipment and vehicles as the current equipment ages.

**Public Works – Public Works Director Aaron Wike**

The cemetery expansion project should be completed by June 30, 2025 providing an estimated 304 new grave plots which should give the town 25 to 30 years of plot sales (average about 8 per year). Aaron suggested having the cemetery GIS mapped which will give citizens the ability to find graves more efficiently. It is projected a new mower will be needed in the spring 2027. As a future project, the roads of the cemetery will need to be repaved. Aaron also suggested increasing the part-time seasonal mower position from 16 hours per week to 20 hours per week.

The Matheson Park project has been completed with new playground equipment, mulch, and boarder. Space has been prepped additional playground equipment to be added in the future. The trees at Matheson Park will be addressed by town staff in the upcoming weeks. The park bathrooms need to be updated. Potential grant funding will assist with a Streambank Stabilization Project to redirect the stream to prevent further erosion. Aaron also asked the council to contemplate potential uses for the Park House property as the home is aging and will need work in the future.

The bleachers at the Town Park Ballfield are also in need of repair. The infield needs to be relevelled to reduce the amount of standing water from rain. Aaron asked council to contemplate alternative uses for the property.

The Streets and Sidewalk Project (state directed funds) is underway building a sidewalk from Food Lion to Taco Bell and repaving Fairway Oaks, Green Meadows, Princeton Forest, and 1<sup>st</sup> Ave Drive SE. Aaron reported several projects currently needing to be addressed including street repairs & resurfacing, storm water issues, and tree removal & sidewalk repairs. Long term future needs include culvert replacement at Matheson Park, various street resurfacing, and continual sidewalk repairs & expansions. In an estimated 5 to 10 years larger equipment (leaf truck, street sweeper, and a small dump truck) will need replacing as the cost of maintaining the current equipment will outweigh the cost of new equipment. The future new purchase of a bucket truck and tow behind lift would be beneficial.

Aaron mentioned a possible partnership with Energy United and Wilkesboro to pull water from the Yadkin River Basin as new source of purchasing water. Aaron spoke on the potential opportunity of

obtaining water lines on NC Hwy 16 South from Alexander County which would expand the town's service area. Current wastewater projects underway include the Paul Payne pumpstation upgrades, wastewater collection system upgrades, and AIA grant and WPCOG GIS mapping. Current projects needed within the water department include water meter replacement. Aaron mentioned future projects for the water department would be hydrant & valve repairs/ replacements and water lines on numerous streets. Future projects to consider include the Hwy 90 E / 1<sup>st</sup> Ave Dr SE sewer, Hwy 16 N lift station, and Fairway Oaks elevated lift station. Future equipment needs for the water and sewer department includes a bushhog, mini excavator, equipment trailer, small backhoe, trench box, pipe bursting, and vehicle replacement. Purchasing these large equipment pieces will allow the water and sewer department to bring projects back in house verses contracting with other entities to complete the work. The water and sewer department incurs \$25,000.00 in maintenance fees from processing credit card payments in office and online. It was mentioned the transition to Black Mountain will decrease maintenance fees to about \$1200.00 per year since Black Mountain automatically pass these fees onto the card user.

#### **Town Manager: Nathan Hester**

Town Manager, Nathan Hester, presented information regarding long term goals with infrastructure & development projects, performance monitoring, building a strong team, and community relations. Nathan reported Town of Taylorsville has minimal debt, with a healthy fund balance; however, operation expenses continue to increase. Nathan addressed how the general fund should generate additional revenue and not be dependent on the enterprise fund. The town should limit the use of fund balance transfers to cover operational expenses. Nathan prepared a spreadsheet comparing Town of Taylorville's tax rate to other comparable municipalities within NC. Nathan reported on the current and future operational needs of administration, police department, and public works. The police department needs storage space, in car radios, body cameras, reporting software, and a data server. The public works department is in need of a four-door utility truck, mini-excavator, compact tractor with backhoe attachment, mini-skid steer, and a pipe bursting machine. A Facility Feasibility & Cost Analysis is being done for a future public works facility located on Minnigan Lane with the water treatment facility. Economic development projects include Main Ave waterline replacement, Matheson Park culvert and park equipment. Other future economic development projects include Taylorsville Development Alliance, a 501-C(3) to funnel economic development projects through for liability, the NC Mainstreet Project, and business incentives. Nathan offered recommendations for revenue change for the 2025-2026 budget including a property tax increase, efforts to increase efficiency levels of departmental operations, and to strive to include a COLA increase for staff.

#### **Adjournment**

With no further business to discuss, meeting was adjourned.



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Mayor

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Councilman

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Councilman

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Councilman

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Councilman

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_  
Yolanda T. Prince, Town Clerk