

Zebulon Board of Commissioners
Work Session
Minutes
May 7, 2025

Present: Glenn L. York-Mayor, Jessica Harrison-Mayor Pro Tem, Beverly Clark-Commissioner, Shannon Baxter-Commissioner, Quentin Miles-Commissioner, Taiwo Jaiyeoba- Interim Town Manager, Lisa Markland- Interim Town Clerk, Chris Perry-Fire, Matt Lower-Planning, Bob Grossman-Police, Edwin Killelte, Shiela Long-Parks & Recreation, Samuel A. Slater-Attorney

Absent: Commissioner Amber Davis

Mayor York called the meeting to order at 6:00pm.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Jessica Harrison-Mayor Pro Tem Harrison made a motion, second by Commissioner Clark to approve the agenda. There was no discussion, and the motion passed unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS

A. Budget Presentations

Interim Town Manager Jaiyeoba outlined the meeting's budget presentations from the Planning, Parks and Recreation, Police, and Fire Departments. He noted the shift to a "priority budget" due to time constraints and growth needs. He explained some departments requested new or filled positions to expand service. He reviewed the upcoming schedule, including department presentations on May 14th, a public open house, the draft budget presentation on May 20th with three compensation scenarios, a public hearing on June 2nd, and a budget retreat on June 7th. He then invited the Planning Director to begin.

i. Planning

Planning Director Matt Lower presented the fiscal year 2026 budget for the department, emphasizing the need to prepare for Zebulon's continued growth. He noted that even without new development, current entitlements would bring an estimated 6,600 new residents. He mentioned the budget aimed to maintain existing staffing levels, five planners, a technician, and two code enforcement officers, while formally transferring the transportation engineer contract from Public Works to Planning. He mentioned the plan included strategic spending to maximize public benefit, such as procuring an on-call planning firm and conducting a value-per-acre study to guide future updates to the comprehensive plan.

He highlighted three major budget increases: salaries, due to standard raises; professional services, largely from contract transfer; and travel and training to support staff development. He noted these increases were to be funded through approximately \$100,000 in lapsed salaries from unfilled

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positions and an anticipated \$60,000 to \$120,000 rise in permit revenue based on current development trends.

He focused on promoting staff retention and growth by supporting certifications like AICP, floodplain management, and zoning officer credentials, as well as participation in relevant conferences. He explained that these efforts would help make Zebulon a more attractive employer for planning professionals. He proposed using professional services for specialized planning areas and UDO updates and preparing for a future comprehensive plan revision by conducting a value-per-acre study to better align planning decisions with fiscal impacts.

ii. Parks & Recreation

Parks and Recreation Director Sheila Long provided a comprehensive update on department operations, growth challenges, and budget priorities. She emphasized that growing demand from the expanding population had outpaced current staffing and funding levels. She noted maintenance standards had been reduced to accommodate increased workloads, including extending mowing intervals and handling a 70% increase in work orders compared to the previous year, without added staff. She commented that athletic participation had more than doubled since FY19, general program participation rose over 35%, and private facility rentals increased revenue by 133%.

She explained that the FY26 budget proposal was guided by the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board, which prioritized right-sizing services, focusing on high-impact efforts, and preparing for continued growth. She commented that through meetings and feedback since September, staff crafted a proposal to increase the operating budget by \$169,000, mostly driven by fixed costs like salaries and utilities, and no program fee increases were recommended. She mentioned that key reductions included delays to new programs such as after-school offerings, fewer adult arts and non-league sports programs, postponement of equipment purchases, and scaling back special events, particularly proposing to limit holiday programming to one major winter and one major spring event due to limited staff capacity.

She commented that staffing adjustments were also recommended, including repurposing a vacated recreation assistant position into an athletic supervisor to meet increasing demands without adding a new position. She noted the department also proposed delaying the addition of new maintenance technicians, instead relying on part-time support to meet growing parks' needs.

She mentioned that on capital priorities, the Advisory Board reaffirmed land acquisition as the top priority, followed by enhancements to existing parks. She highlighted a \$2 million CIP request, primarily funded by recreation impact fees. She noted that key projects included additional funding for Little River Park Phase I, site-specific planning for Community Park, stream restoration, and improvements at Zebulon Elementary's volleyball court. She stressed that external funding, grants, partnerships, or potentially a parks bond would be necessary to meet long-term needs, especially for a recreation center, sports complex, neighborhood parks, and greenways.

She concluded with a specific call to address the critical shortage of soccer fields due to rapid growth in the youth soccer program, which had strained current field availability and conditions,

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with no backup fields and increased use of non-traditional spaces. She noted that upcoming construction at Town Hall campus would further impact field and parking capacity. She urged the Town to prioritize land acquisition for both neighborhood parks and a future sports complex to sustain and grow recreational services.

iii. Police

Interim Police Chief Bob Grossman provided a summary of the Police Department's accomplishments and presented the proposed FY26 budget. He highlighted that in FY25, the department implemented a peer support program, launched the CARE unit, and partnered with Cary Psychology for officer wellness. He noted the department received a \$7,500 ABC grant to help start wellness services, installed additional Automated License Plate Readers (ALPR) cameras, and transitioned to upgraded firearms with improved optics, resulting in higher accuracy scores. He mentioned the key goals for FY26 included crime prevention, improved traffic enforcement, accreditation, and employee wellness.

Chief Grossman requested funding for two new police officers and a full-time social worker to ensure minimum staffing of three officers per shift, alleviate call volume strain, and support proactive policing. Calls for service had increased significantly from 8,000 in 2015 to over 27,000 in 2023 and were projected to exceed 30,000 in 2025. The CARE unit showed promising results among residents who accepted services, 83% had no repeat calls; those who declined had a 100% repeat rate.

The proposed additions were expected to improve response times, reduce staff fatigue, and enhance community engagement. Bob mentioned that grant funding was sought to cover personnel and equipment costs, including a \$125,000 Victim of Crimes Act (VOCA) grant for the social worker and a \$250,000 federal earmark request for two fully outfitted police vehicles. He noted that no other fleet replacements or capital projects were planned for the year. Police Captain Edwin Killette was introduced to present on the department's LPR camera program.

Police Captain Edwin Killette explained that Zebulon's LPRs, primarily Flock cameras, were used to identify vehicles tied to crimes, issuing real-time alerts and providing 30 days of investigative data. He noted that access was limited to sworn officers, with all use being logged and audited, and that neighborhood HOAs could install their own cameras and grant or revoke police access. He mentioned the Department has six cameras and access to two or three more. He highlighted the system helped solve 23 serious local crimes and provided numerous leads, and the Officers received training, and audits ensured proper use. Each camera costs about \$3,000 annually.

iv. Fire

Fire Chief Chris Perry reviewed the FY26 budget request, highlighting increased service demands with over 2,200 incidents and 515 simultaneous calls in 2024. He mentioned staffing was expanded through ARPA funds, enabling two fully staffed four-person crews, and a replacement fire truck was ordered but won't arrive until 2028. He noted that the new fire station project required extensive interdepartmental effort, and a records management system was implemented to support

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data-driven decision-making. He mentioned the budget increases under \$50,000 covered staffing-related costs, maintenance, and dispatch. He mentioned that capital items included funding placeholders for the new station, a traffic light project, defibrillator replacements, and turnout gear. He commented that despite a slight drop in the town's cost share to 34.48%, call volume continues to rise across both municipal and county areas.

CLOSED SESSION

As allowed Per N.C. General Statute § 143-318.11 for the purpose of personnel discussions.

Commissioner Miles made a motion, second by Commissioner Baxter to go into closed session. There was no discussion, and the motion passed unanimously.

NOTE: In closed session, Commissioner Harrison made a motion, second by Commissioner Miles to come out of closed session. There was no discussion, and the motion passed unanimously.

ADJOURN

Commissioner Clark made a motion to adjourn the meeting, second by Commissioner Harrison. There was no discussion, and the motion passed unanimously.

Adopted this the 7th day of July 2025



Glenn L. York—Mayor

SEAL



Ana Gomez Rindahl –Town Clerk