Town of Stantonsburg
Regular Board Meeting Minutes
May 11, 2026

The regular monthly meeting of the Stantonsburg Town Council was held at 6:30 p.m. on Monday, May 11, 2026, in the Town Hall with Mayor Coley Rhodes presiding.

Members present were Mayor Coley Rhodes, Mayor Pro Tem Powell Dew, and Councilpersons Jackie Grice, Carla Davis, Skip Covert, and Eartha Butler. Town representatives present were Town Manager Brian Hawley, Utilities Superintendent Roger Sullivan, Town Clerk Christie Cobb, and Attorney Gabe DuSablon.

Also present was Louis Davis for the utility presentation and one citizen in attendance.

Call to Order and Opening

Mayor Coley Rhodes called the regular meeting to order at 6:30 p.m., led the Pledge of Allegiance, and offered the invocation.

Approval of Agenda and Prior Minutes

Councilperson Jackie Grice made a motion to approve the agenda as presented. Councilperson Skip Covert seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Council next considered the minutes of April 30, 2026, Special Called Council Meeting. Mayor Pro Tem Powell Dew made a motion to approve the minutes as written. Councilperson Eartha Butler seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Public Comment

Mayor Rhodes opened the floor for public comment. No members of the public requested to speak.

Presentations

Substation and Electric Rate Stabilization Fund
Louis Davis and Town Manager Brian Hawley presented information on the Tri-Towns transmission-to-distribution substation and the proposed electric rate stabilization fund. Mr. Davis reported that a quote had been requested for an engineering evaluation of the substation, particularly the high-side equipment, to determine its condition and remaining useful life before major replacement decisions are made. He stated the review cost was expected to be under $10,000 and could likely be shared among the three towns.

Council discussed the need to first obtain reliable information on the substation before determining the scope and timing of any improvements. Discussion included possible phased upgrades, long lead times for electric equipment, and long-term system reliability. No formal action was taken.

Mr. Hawley also reviewed the concept of an electric rate stabilization fund to help absorb unexpected power costs, emergency repairs, storm-related expenses, and other extraordinary electric-system costs. Council discussed the purpose of the fund, whether monies should be restricted, and whether a designated reserve would be preferable to leaving excess funds in the Electric Fund. No formal action was taken.

FY 2026-2027 Budget Message and Budget Presentation
Mr. Hawley then presented his recommended Fiscal Year 2026-2027 budget message and proposed budget in the total amount of $4,838,450, noting it was lower than the prior year. He stated that the budget reflected Council priorities and focused on completing outstanding audits, continuing utility infrastructure improvements, planning for electric-system needs, addressing stormwater concerns, and advancing work on the new government complex.

He reviewed the major fund totals and explained that General Fund revenues were based on current tax-base information and other anticipated local revenues. Staff recommended reducing the ad valorem tax rate from $0.45 to $0.30 per $100 valuation due to county revaluation and tax-base growth, and Mr. Hawley advised that the recommendation remained feasible and conservative.

Mr. Hawley also reviewed the Water and Sewer Fund and discussed major infrastructure needs, including sewer rehabilitation, inflow, and infiltration reduction, the well and water line project, and the potential use of SCADA or other alert technology to improve response to utility failures.

Long-range capital planning reviewed in the budget message included the Town Hall project, the well and water line project, Sewer Rehab Phase II, electric system rehabilitation, and other equipment and facility needs. Mr. Hawley noted that some figures were preliminary and would depend on future Council direction and project ordinances.

Mr. Hawley also reviewed payroll and operating assumptions, including a projected payroll decrease due to the removal of one position. He discussed utility rate recommendations, stating that staff favored modest usage-rate adjustments, particularly for water and sewer, while keeping base rates stable. He also reviewed sanitation, parks, and festival-related budgeting assumptions.

Council asked questions regarding reserves, tax policy, departmental needs, and future projects. Mr. Hawley responded that he believed the recommended rate was workable and would still maintain a positive financial position.

Council also discussed the required public hearing on the proposed budget. Attorney DuSablon advised that the simpler legal approach would be to hold the hearing as part of the regular June meeting rather than change the regular meeting time. Council agreed that the budget hearing would be held first on the agenda at the June regular meeting at 6:30 p.m.

Financial Reports and Approvals

Council reviewed the manager's summary, financial reports, account balances, revenue and expenditure statements, and the April 2026 invoice register. Mr. Hawley reported that the Town received approximately $310,661.18 and disbursed approximately $316,800 during the period reviewed, with some revenues still outstanding. Council discussed cash balances, purchased power wire transfers, selected disbursements, and the importance of continued close monitoring as the fiscal year ends.

Council also questioned the way check information was presented in the packet. Councilperson Jackie Grice noted that prior packets included a clearer check listing with check numbers and identifying information. Clerk Christie Cobb stated that she would provide the additional report, and Mayor Rhodes confirmed that Council wanted both check copies and a clearer summary report included in future packets.

Council gave particular attention to the invoice from Beverly Stroud CPA PLLC for accounting and audit support as the Town continues working to bring its records current. Following discussion, Mayor Pro Tem Powell Dew made a motion to approve the Beverly Stroud invoice, seconded by Councilperson Eartha Butler. The motion carried unanimously.

Councilperson Eartha Butler then made a motion to approve all remaining invoices, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem. The motion carried unanimously.

Departmental Reports

Utilities Superintendent Roger Sullivan reported on activities in the Electric, Water and Sewer, and Street/Sanitation departments. In the Electric Department, he reported that Jeremy Edwards had started as the Town's second first-class lineman, work had begun on a three-phase service for a new Lancaster Farm warehouse, several poles had been replaced with more planned, tree trimming had been completed in multiple areas, and thirty-two work orders were completed in April. He also reported three after-hours electric calls, including a thunderstorm-related outage affecting approximately thirty customers in Saratoga.

In Water and Sewer, Mr. Sullivan reported repair of a fifteen-inch outfall line at the wastewater treatment plant without any sanitary sewer overflow. He also reported completion of required sampling and reports, minor deficiencies from a recent NCDEQ inspection, and repairs to a valve and blower motor at the plant.

In Streets and Sanitation, Mr. Sullivan reported repairs to hydraulic leaks on the garbage truck, grounds maintenance at Town Hall and in downtown areas, and NCDOT repair of a sinkhole on North Main Street. He also stated that GPS and fuel-use monitoring continued to help reduce unnecessary idling and waste.

Town Manager’s Report

Town Manager Hawley reported on ongoing administrative and project matters, including stormwater funding efforts, coordination with the Wilson County Sheriff’s Office, Planning Board and Board of Adjustment activity, website updates, CDBG environmental studies, training opportunities, the Sewer Rehab Phase II extension request to NCDEQ, and recent resurfacing work on Main Street and Saratoga.

He stated that staff continued pursuing drainage solutions and outside funding for stormwater needs, and that communication with the Wilson County Sheriff’s Office remained ongoing regarding additional public safety support within town limits.

Mr. Hawley also reported that website updates, grant follow-up, and CDBG environmental review work remained in progress and were necessary to keep projects moving and preserve future funding opportunities.

Mr. Hawley then updated Council on the new government complex, reporting continued progress on drywall, windows, and gutters. He also reported on the Main Street historical marker and museum project, stating that the historical committee had agreed to assume responsibility for the museum effort through its nonprofit organization, which would allow it to pursue grants and manage the project more directly. He noted that a future memorandum of agreement should define responsibilities such as utilities, insurance, and building obligations.

Mr. Hawley also advised Council that grant applications had been submitted for water and sewer needs, reimbursement was expected from Excell Communications for damage in Wainsfield Subdivision, and funding requests had been sent to Senator Buck Newton and Representative Dante Pittman. He also referenced continued coordination with Lucama, Black Creek, and engineering representatives on electric-system matters. No formal action was taken on the Town Manager's report.

Old Business

Council considered the proposed FY 2026-2027 rate and fee schedule. Mr. Hawley reviewed the recommended tax rate of $0.30 per $100 valuation, proposed water and sewer tap fee changes, and inflation-based adjustments to water and sewer usage rates while keeping base rates stable. He also stated that no sanitation rate increase was recommended at this time. After discussion, Mayor Pro Tem Powell Dew made a motion to approve the FY2026-2027 Fee and Rate Schedule, seconded by Councilperson Covert. The motion carried unanimously, with the schedule to become effective July 1, 2026.

Council next returned to the matter of public safety cameras and law enforcement support. Discussion focused on beginning with a smaller number of cameras and adding more later if needed. Councilperson Eartha Butler made a motion to approve the purchase of public safety cameras in an amount not to exceed $35,000. Councilperson Skip Covert seconded the motion. The motion carried, 4-1 with Councilperson Jackie Grice opposed.

Council then considered a resolution declaring certain Town property surplus and authorizing its disposition. Mr. Hawley explained that the inventory included obsolete or unneeded equipment, vehicles, trailers, mowers, construction equipment, hand tools, and other items no longer required for Town operations. After discussion, Councilperson Carla Davis made a motion to approve the resolution. Councilperson Eartha Butler seconded the motion. The motion carried4-1 with Councilperson Grice opposed.

New Business

Council considered a Powell Bill budget amendment. Mr. Hawley explained that resurfacing and related street expenditures required appropriation of restricted Powell Bill reserve funds in the amount of $27,371.45. Mayor Pro Tem Powell Dew made a motion to approve Resolution Amendment 0726 to amend the budget accordingly. Councilperson Skip Covert seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Council next considered a turf management agreement with Right Lane Turf Management for ant and weed control at the cemetery, Town park, and Town Hall grounds. Mr. Hawley noted that the proposal was substantially lower than another estimate and would help address recurring maintenance needs. Councilperson Jackie Grice made a motion to approve the agreement. Councilperson Eartha Butler seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Council then considered an amendment to the Town Hall Government Complex Project Ordinance. Mr. Hawley explained that, with guidance from the Town's CPA and the Local Government Commission, the amendment was needed to properly transfer and account for project funds from the General Fund, Water and Sewer Fund, and Electric Fund. Mayor Pro Tem

Powell Dew made a motion to approve the budget ordinance for the Town Hall project allocation as presented. Councilperson Carla Davis seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Council Comments

During council comments, members continued asking questions about the proposed FY 2026-2027 budget, electric-system planning, reserve strategy, and the Town's overall financial position.

Council then discussed whether the Town's two electric linemen should be allowed to drive Town vehicles home. Discussion included response capability, fuel usage, restrictions on vehicle use, prior board direction, and the need for clear expectations. Mr. Sullivan stated that GPS and fuel use were being monitored closely.

Following discussion, Councilperson Carla Davis made a motion to allow the Town's two electric linemen to drive Town vehicles home subject to the restrictions discussed by Council and staff. Councilperson Eartha Butler seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

At the conclusion of open session business, Council considered entering closed session pursuant to N.C.G.S. 143-318.11(a)(6) for a personnel budget and pay discussion. Mayor Pro Tem Powell Dew made a motion to go into closed session. Councilperson Carla Davis seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Closed Session

The agenda included a closed session pursuant to N.C.G.S. 143-318.11(a)(6) for a personnel budget and pay discussion.

Following closed session, Councilperson Eartha Butler made a motion to return to open session. Councilperson Carla Davis seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Return to Open Session

Upon returning to open session, Town Council considered proposed adjustments to elected official compensation, including a 4% cost-of-living raise for the upcoming budget year. The Town Manager advised that the increase could be incorporated into the budget through a minor adjustment. Councilperson Eartha Butler made a motion to increase Councilmember compensation to at least $200 per month, with corresponding adjustments for the Mayor Pro Tem and Mayor. The motion was seconded by Councilperson Carla Davis and carried by a 3-2 vote, with Mayor Pro Tem Dew and Councilperson Grice voting in opposition.

Adjournment

With no further business, Councilperson Jackie Grice made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Councilperson Eartha Butler seconded the motion, and the motion carried unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 9:40 p.m.

Approved by:

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Coley Rhodes, Mayor Christie Cobb, Town Clerk