

May 9, 2025 Budget Work Session

Meeting minutes

Call Meeting to Order

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Marla Thompson at 4:00p.m.

Roll Call

Mayor Marla Thompson conducted the roll call:

- Alderman Genita Hill: Present
- Mayor Pro Tempore/Alderman Gary Lingerfelt: Present
- Alderman Allen Bumgarner: Present
- Alderman Tim Hertz: Present
- Alderman Phyllis Pennington: Present
- Mayor Marla Thompson: Present

Invocation

Mayor Thompson requested Town Manager Cozart to give the invocation. Town Manager James Cozart led the invocation, offering a prayer for guidance and direction for the meeting.

Items for Discussion

Discussion of the Proposed 2025-2026 Budget

Mr. Cozart presented his 2025-2026 Budget Message to the Board. He highlighted several key points:

- The general fund remains stable, though inflation continues to affect costs.
- The town will be changing its liability and workers' comp insurance to the North Carolina League of Municipalities, resulting in substantial savings and better coverage.
- Health, dental, and vision coverage will see a 6% increase, down from an initial quote of 10%.
- A 4% cost of living adjustment for employees was included as approved at the budget retreat.
- The proposed budget includes a 1 cent tax decrease, lowering the property tax rate to 48 cents per \$100.
- Property tax revenue is expected to increase by 5% due to growth in housing.
- There is a 5.2% increase in costs from Republic Services, which will be passed on to citizens.
- The total general fund budget for 2025-2026 is projected at \$5,935,871.
- The utility fund budget includes a 5% increase for water and sewer rates due to increases from the City of Hickory.
- The total utility fund budget for 2025-2026 will be \$2,797,802.
- The federal and state shared proceeds (police department's drug fund) is estimated at \$7,000.
- The total budget for the Town of Longview for 2025-2026 will total \$8,899,273.

Melissa Lalonde, the Finance Director, then presented detailed budget estimates:

General Fund Revenue:

- Based on a 48-cent tax rate (lowering the current tax rate by one cent)
- Significant increase in interest on investments

- New line item for Catawba County firefighter reimbursement (\$180,951)

Governing Board:

- New line items for telephones and clothing allowance
- Election fees of \$7,000 included for the upcoming election year.

Administration Department:

- 4% salary increase
- Increased travel and expense budget for continuing education
- General fund contingency of \$55,000

Town Complex:

- Increased utilities budget due to Duke Energy rate increase
- Increased town hall department supplies budget
- Contracted services to cover new carpet and chairs for council chambers and conference room

Planning Department:

- Significant decrease in overall budget
- New line items for WNC Rail Project and Inner Basin Transfer Project

Police Department:

- Increased uniforms budget
- Decreased contracted services
- Increased department supplies for shields, PPE, laptops, and cameras
- Capital budget of \$65,973 for vehicle purchases

Fire Department:

- Salaries include potential \$180,951 for three Catawba County firefighters
- Increased uniform budget for new firefighters
- Increased personal protective equipment budget

Street Department:

- Increased salaries due to staff reallocation
- Increased street lighting budget due to rate increase
- Increased garbage expense

Recreation Department:

- Decreased budget due to staff reallocation and completion of recreation comprehensive plan
- Potential grant funding for flooring project not included in budget

Risk Management:

- Increased department supplies for Connex
- Increased contracted services for new hire evaluations

General Fund Debt:

- Decreased by approximately \$32,800 due to paying off a brush truck loan

Utility Fund:

- 5% increase in water rates from City of Hickory
- Capital account of \$250,000 for equipment and building improvements
- Increased sewer department expenditures due to rate increases

Other Funds:

- State and federal shared proceeds estimated at \$7,000

- Powell Bill revenue and expenditures estimated based on previous year

The board discussed the potential adjustments to the budget if the three Catawba County firefighters are not approved. They also noted the need to review the medical center contract, which expires in July 2026.

Mr. Cozart mentioned that the budget will be available for public inspection with the Town Clerk, as required by North Carolina general statute. He also announced the launch of the Long View Lead Academy, a citizen's academy program to educate residents about local government operations.

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn made by Aldermen Allen Bumgarner, seconded by Aldermen Tim Hertzell. The motion to adjourn was unanimous and the meeting adjourned at 4:25 p.m.

Staff in attendance: Town Manager James Cozart, Finance Director Melissa Lalonde, Deputy Finance Director Denise Collins, Town Clerk Heather Minor