



**MINUTES
WATAUGA CITY COUNCIL
WORKSHOP MEETING
CITY HALL COUNCIL CHAMBER,
7105 WHITLEY ROAD,
AUGUST 26, 2024
5:30 PM**

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Arthur Miner called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

ROLL CALL

The meeting convened with the following members present:

Arthur L. Miner
Malissa Minucci
Pat Shelbourne
Cris Blackburn
Lovie Downey
Andrew Neal
Mark Taylor
Jan Hill

and

Sandra Gibson
Linda Proskey
David Berman
Deby Woodard
Paul Hackleman
Randy Barkley
Robert Parker
Julie Rodriguez
Lorenza Zavala

Mayor
Mayor Pro Tem/Council Member Place 5
Council Member Place 1
Council Member Place 2
Council Member Place 3
Council Member Place 4
Council Member Place 6
Council Member Place 7

Interim City Manager and Finance Director
City Secretary
City Attorney
Assistant Finance Director
Public Works Director
Fire Chief
Police Chief
Director of Human Resources
Economic Development Coordinator

ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no announcements

PUBLIC COMMENT

No requests for public testimony were received.

PUBLIC TESTIMONY FOR ACTION ITEMS

No requests for public testimony were received.

PRESENTATIONS

1. Presentation of Watauga Revitalization Incentive Program (WRAP) funded by the WEDC

Lorenza Zavala, Economic Development Coordinator, presented the item to the council. She explained that the Watauga Revitalization Action Program (WRAP) is a matching incentive beautification grant program designed to assist both existing and new small local businesses. The program will aid in enhancing building facades, landscaping, parking improvements, and other areas that will contribute to making Watauga a more vibrant and welcoming community. She stated that some of the goals of the Watauga Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) are to increase the taxable value of commercial properties in the city, retain businesses, boost appeal, and stay relevant. She also reviewed the incentive programs offered by neighboring cities, who would be eligible for WRAP, and what documentation would be required.

Mayor Pro Tem Minucci asked if the legal department had reviewed the application. Ms. Zavala responded that the application presented was just a mockup and had not been reviewed yet.

Councilmember Neal inquired if there was a cap on the size of the businesses that could apply. Ms. Zavala explained that the program is intended only for small businesses, not for national or large businesses. Councilmember Neal also asked about the possibility of offsetting permit fees. Ms. Zavala noted that this would require further investigation. He then expressed hesitation about allowing parking lot improvements, such as repaving, under the program. He said he was fine with improvements like lighting and landscaping but didn't believe repaving would significantly enhance the overall appearance of the facility.

Councilmember Shelbourne asked what would happen if a business owner decided to sell their business within six months of receiving the grant and whether any recapture of funds would be considered. Ms. Zavala said no, as the improvements might enhance the resale value and attract a new owner. Councilmember Shelbourne raised concerns that some business owners might take advantage of the program by applying for the grant before selling. Ms. Zavala said she would look into adding a clause to address this issue.

Sandra Gibson, Interim City Manager, reminded the Council that this is a matching grant, meaning the business owner would also need to invest their own funds.

Councilmember Downey suggested requiring a 30-, 60-, or 90-day plan outlining how the improvements would benefit the business and recommended establishing a clawback clause before entering into a contract.

Mayor Miner commented that this program began under the previous city manager and that his research on similar programs in other cities did not reveal any clawback provisions. However, he agreed that it might be worth considering.

Councilmember Taylor opposed the idea of a clawback, stating that the program's objective is to improve the property, and if that goal is to be achieved, additional restrictions might discourage participation.

Councilmember Hill believed that any improvements made to the building would increase the tax base and property value, but also thought there should be measures in place to prevent abuse of the program.

Mayor Miner asked Ms. Zavala to investigate whether any other cities include a clawback provision in their programs.

2. Presentation of Personnel Policy Changes

Juliet Rodriguez, Human Resources and Civil Service Director, presented the item. She reviewed the policy changes proposed to take effect on October 1, which are the result of this year's completed compensation study and deliberations with the Watauga Police Officers Association.

The discussion covered several key policies. Policy 3.01, the Recruitment Policy, included provisions for bridging service for employees who had previously worked for the city. Additionally, the Nepotism Policy was addressed, allowing relatives to work for the city but preventing them from being in the same department or under the same chain of command or supervision. Policy 4.05, related to certification, included an increase in pay amounts. Policy 4.06 introduced a new language pay policy, which requires employees to pass a verbal bilingual test and provides a \$50 monthly pay incentive. Policy 6.04, covering classification and compensation, specifies that employees must work at least 9 months of the year under evaluation to qualify for a merit increase. Furthermore, it was noted that cost-of-living adjustments (C.O.L.A.) would not be paid to employees on probation; however, if an employee was hired before October 1 and completes their probationary period, they would still be eligible for C.O.L.A.

Other proposed changes included the introduction of a sign-on bonus for general employees in positions that are hard to fill, as well as the implementation of a shift differential for police department personnel. Lastly, the removal of Policy 18.03, which outlined the Declared Emergency Plan for COVID-19, was recommended.

Council asked that instead of removing policy 18.03 that a more generalize policy be put in its place.

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Miner adjourned the meeting at 6:17 pm.

Approved: this 14 day of Oct, 2024

Signed: this 16 day of Oct, 2024

APPROVED:

Arthur L. Miner /s/

Arthur L. Miner, Mayor

ATTEST:

Linda Proskey /s/

Linda Proskey, City Secretary

