



CONOVER

North Carolina

Conover City Council

Special Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, January 22, 2025 at 12:00 PM

Manufacturing Solutions Center II

350 5th Ave SE, Conover, NC 28613

A Special Meeting of the Conover City Council was held on Wednesday, January 22, 2025 at 12:00 PM in the Upstairs Conference Room of Manufacturing Solutions Center II.

I. CALL TO ORDER

Kyle J. Hayman, Mayor

Council Members Present:

Mayor Kyle Hayman
Mayor Pro Tem / Council Member Bruce Eckard
Council Member Mark Canrobert
Council Member Joie Fulbright
Council Member Jim Green
Council Member Brenda Powell

Council Members Absent:

None

Staff Present:

City Manager Tom Hart, City Clerk Stephanie Watson,
City Attorney Susan Matthews, Human Resources
Madeleine Epley, Finance Director Kurt L. Beal,
Planning Director Erik Schlichting, Public Works
Director Terry R. Jones, Public Utilities Director Brian
Bradshaw, Fire Chief Mark Stafford, Police Chief
Robert Houston, Information Technology Director
Chris Niver, Police Major Jeff Barkley, Assistant Public
Utilities Director Eric Williams, Deputy Fire Chief
Jackie Lail

II. BUSINESS AGENDA

Item 1: Opening Comments

City Manager Tom Hart spoke briefly about the upcoming fiscal year budget.

Item 2: Discussion of 2025-2026 Proposed Budget

Item a. City Staff Department Presentations

Members of staff each gave a current year fiscal year in review report. They then spoke about potential challenges for the upcoming year, capital items requested for their department, and

any upcoming projects.

Finance Department

During the Fiscal Year Review of the Finance Department, Finance Director Kurt Beal stated that the general fund has increased by 2%. Major transactions and purchases for the city in the past year included a fire truck, renovations to the wastewater treatment plant, the public works addition, and the plaza at the Manufacturing Solutions Center II. The audit was submitted on time and the newly established due date for the audit is now December 31st. There are four open capital projects which include the Downtown Trail Project, the Manufacturing Solutions Center, the City Hall Renovation Project, and the Wastewater Treatment Plant Project. The Finance Department recently hired a new employee which is undergoing cross-training. The department has also expanded its use of technology, implemented new Time Clock Plus System, opened new accounts with Peoples Bank and NC Class and implemented the requirements of GASB 101.

Administration Department

Human Resources Director Epley spoke about the current average age of the workforce of the City and potential challenges the city will face due to a larger than usual number of employees being eligible for retirement within the next few years. She then spoke about the changing workforce environment and the importance of staying within the pack in reference to other municipalities. The Safety Program has completed in house trainings for the City as well as established community CPR certifications, community fire extinguisher training, and a Roth ID Tag Program.

There was some discussion about what positions were open in each of the departments and the challenges to fill them.

Challenges for the City include childcare issues and recruitment for specialty roles, particularly in the Wastewater Treatment Plant and public works.

City Manager Tom Hart spoke briefly about the upcoming City Hall Renovation project for levels two and three of Conover City Hall. He then spoke about a future need for an administrative assistant for the Administration Department.

Planning Department

During the Planning Department's Year in Review report, Planning Director Erik Schlichting spoke about the residential, commercial, industrial, and institutional permits issued during the year. He then covered the amount of homes approved, housing units that are pending and commercial parcels approved due to rezonings. The department has recently hired a new employee after the retirement of the Environmental Coordinator. Projects of note are the Bike/Pedestrian Plan, UDO Project, and Southern Small Area Plan.

Upcoming projects include the Unified Development Ordinance, Park System Masterplan, refining workflow, and a review of the fee structure.

Information Technology Department

During the Year in Review for the Information Technology Department, Information Technology Director Chris Niver spoke about the NC National Guard VADR (SCADA Cyber Assessment), the NC National Guard Penetration Test, the \$60,000 SLGCP Grant, the \$8,000 NCLM Grant for Cyber Security Training, the Facility Security Upgrades (Prox Locks), server upgrades, software security upgrades, and updates of other necessary hardware.

In the coming year, the department will work through licensing issues for software, core network switch replacements, address any noted cybersecurity issues identified by the NCNG Audit, work through IT issues during the upcoming City Hall renovation project, upgrade other security systems as needed, and work through a reclassification of a staff member.

Rising costs and the general lean toward more dependance on the use of technology will continue to be a challenge for the department.

Police Department

Police Chief Robert Houston spoke briefly about the recent retirement of key players in the Police Department this past year and the effect on the department.

In the Police Department's Year in Review Report, there was some discussion about the benefits of the installation and use of FLOCK cameras. The department had a successful CALEA reaccreditation in November of 2024 and will receive an insurance discount. The department applied for and received a grant in the amount of \$21,000 for 14 AEDs for the department's patrol vehicles, re-initiated the bicycle patrol program, and assisted 65 children in 30 families with the Santa Cops Program. The department completed 2,187 training hours during the 2024 year. The department is planning its 100th Anniversary in January 2026 and a new badge to honor the milestone is under development and plans are to have a ceremony in January.

Challenges for the department include a need for more investigators and the restructuring of the investigations division, the uptick in traffic accidents within the city, and a general uptick in the calls for service within the city. There is also a constant need to review recruitment and retention so as to stay competitive with other departments.

Chief Houston requested that the City consider purchasing a covered structure for the department's vehicles and other equipment.

Public Works Department

Public Works Director Terry Jones spoke of the department's accomplishments, which included the installation of the one-arm sanitation truck that is performing well, the internal remodel of the Public Works Facility, and the addition to the seating area of the Amphitheater.

The City is in talks with the Manufacturing Solutions Center about the possibility of co-funding a Facilities Maintenance Position that will handle general maintenance needs for the city, manage rentals, and any maintenance contracts. The goal is to centralize facility maintenance.

Capital needs to be requested were a spreader for the existing plow truck and funding for a replacement of a cross drain pipe on 3rd Ave NE, replacement of a street flusher truck, upgrades to the 30-year-old Public Works Facility, a replacement of the rear skid Solid Waste Truck, fuel tank upgrades and staff growth.

Public Utilities Department

Public Utilities Director Brian Bradshaw stated that in 2022 the CDL program was launched and currently 44% of the Public Utilities Department and 67% of the Public Works Department has their CDLs.

In the Department's Year in Review Report, Mr. Bradshaw spoke about the partnership with Hickory for the sludge facility, the lead service line inventory, the effect of revenue loss from Hickory, the purchase of a 2024 Polar Sludge Trailer, and initiation of the Asset Inventory Assessment process. The Headworks project is under contract and the project is estimated for completion in March 2025. The Aeration Basin is also under contract and is estimated for completion in August 2025.

Challenges for the department include the I-40 corridor sewer line, funding for the NE Wastewater Treatment Plant Projects, updating water meters, monitoring sewer pump station capacity at Rock Barn #2, and hiring qualified staff.

Capital projects include the rehabilitation of the NE Wastewater Treatment Plant, the Swinging Bridge Waterline project, upgrading to a more efficient fleet, and the replacement of a trailer-mounted Sewer Jetter.

Fire Department

In the Fire Department's Year in Review Report, Fire Chief Mark Stafford stated that his staff had completed 9,364 training hours. The department has completed the radio replacement project, closed a four-year performance period for an AFG R&R Grant, began closeout of an AFG Apparatus acquisition grant for a new rescue truck, received a grant from Norfolk Southern for an industrial washing machine for turnout gear. Engine 1 and Rescue 1 are in service.

There was some discussion about the potential for co-funding with the county for additional staffing for a hazmat team and to handle service calls to the county and Chief Stafford requested extra funding for these positions. Other future items include a command position (CPSE) and plans for a stock ladder truck purchase in 2027.

Item 3: Closing Comments

There was brief discussion about the tax rate, water and sewer rates, solid waste fees, COLA, and other rates. No action was taken.

III. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:29 p.m.

Kyle J. Hayman, Mayor

Stephanie C. Watson, City Clerk