



CONOVER

North Carolina

Conover City Council
Special Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, March 3, 2026 at 11:00 AM
Manufacturing Solutions Center II
350 5th Ave SE,
Conover, NC 28613

A Special Meeting of the Conover City Council was held on Tuesday, March 3, 2026 at 11:00 AM in the Manufacturing Solutions Center II.

I. CALL TO ORDER

Presiding Official: Mayor Kyle Hayman

Council Members Present: Mayor Kyle Hayman
Mayor Pro Tem / Council Member Mark Canrobert
Council Member Joie Fulbright
Council Member Jim Green
Council Member Brenda Powell
Council Member Todd Griffin

Council Members Absent: None

Staff Present: City Manager Tom Hart, City Attorney Susan Matthews

Item 1: Closed Session: Per North Carolina General Statute 143-318.11(a)(6) for the Purpose of a Personnel Matter

At 11:00 a.m., motion was duly made by Council Member Green, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem / Council Member Canrobert and Council Member Powell, to enter into Closed Session per North Carolina General Statute 143-318.11(a)(6) for the Purpose of a Personnel Matter.

AYES:	Mayor Hayman, Mayor Pro Tem / Council Member Canrobert, Council Member Fulbright, Council Member Green, Council Member Powell, Council Member Griffin
NOES:	None
ABSTAIN:	None

Motion was duly made by Council Member Green, seconded by Council Member Powell, to adjourn the closed session at 12:28 p.m.

AYES:	Mayor Hayman, Mayor Pro Tem / Council Member Canrobert, Council Member Fulbright, Council Member Green, Council Member Powell, Council Member Griffin
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NOES:	None
ABSTAIN:	None

Motion was duly made by Council Member Fulbright, seconded by Council Member Green, to increase City Manager Hart's salary by 5% (\$174,143) effective immediately and to agree to allow him to work a second job as a soccer referee.

AYES:	Mayor Hayman, Mayor Pro Tem / Council Member Canrobert, Council Member Fulbright, Council Member Green, Council Member Powell, Council Member Griffin
NOES:	None
ABSTAIN:	None

II. RECESS MEETING

Mayor Hayman called for a recess.

III. CALL TO ORDER

At 12:49 p.m., Mayor Hayman called the meeting back to order.

Presiding Official: Mayor Kyle Hayman

Council Members Present: Mayor Kyle Hayman
Mayor Pro Tem / Council Member Mark Canrobert
Council Member Joie Fulbright
Council Member Jim Green
Council Member Brenda Powell
Council Member Todd Griffin

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, Controller/Tax Collector Leslie Hicks, Assistant Public Works Director Ken Colf, Assistant Public Utilities Director Eric Williams, Police Major Jeff Barkley, Deputy Fire Chief Jackie Lail, Assistant Planner Heather Stephens

IV. INVOCATION

V. BUSINESS AGENDA

Item 2: Resolution 04-26: A Resolution to Appoint the City of Conover’s Tax Collector

Kurt L. Beal, Finance Director presented Resolution 04-26: A Resolution to Appoint the City of Conover’s Tax Collector.

Motion was duly made by Mayor Hayman, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem / Council Member Canrobert and Council Members Green and Powell, to adopt Resolution 04-26: A Resolution to Appoint the City of Conover’s Tax Collector.

AYES:	Mayor Hayman, Mayor Pro Tem / Council Member Canrobert, Council Member Fulbright, Council Member Green, Council Member Powell, Council Member Griffin
NOES:	None
ABSTAIN:	None

(Resolution 04-26: A Resolution to Appoint the City of Conover’s Tax Collector contained in the exhibit file called 2026 Resolutions and a copy is hereby incorporated by reference and made a part of these minutes.)

Item 3: Fiscal Year 2026-2027 Budget Discussion

City Manager Tom Hart presented an overview of how a City budget cycle works.

Finance Director Kurt Beal presented the Financial Summary Report. The report included a list of major projects funded for the year, information about the audit, information about GASB, the current status of the City's fund balance, and current Capital Funds and Projects. He then spoke of personnel costs for the city, stating that personnel costs account for 55% percent of the budget. The average percentage allocated for personnel for cities in North Carolina is around 60%-70%. The city may look at banking changes and have been in touch with other banks.

Mr. Hart then gave an economic summary. Items discussed were the changes in employment from 2023 to 2025, the current housing affordability crisis and workforce vs. talent issues that all cities are facing. He then spoke about the effect of Microsoft on the City of Conover's budget.

Mr. Hart with the assistance of Human Resources Director Madeleine Epley gave a brief summary of the city's current workforce. The average age of Conover employees is 39 years old. Average years of service is 10 years. Turnover is low and except for a few hard-to-fill positions, the city is fully staffed. Updates are planned for the personnel policy. Future plans include partnering with the YMCA so that the public safety departments can continue their accreditation. The cost of healthcare continues to rise. The Administration Department is

looking to hire a new person and, as there is a vacancy in Finance, the City could reclassify that position to handle community-facing affairs and to generally provide support to the Administration Department. The city is also working through the aspects of creating a social district and has spoken with a company that specializes in downtown development.

Plans are underway for the city's 150-year anniversary. The city will have three concerts this year and plans are underway to order merchandise as well as create a "yearbook" for the city.

Planning Department

Planning Director Erik Schlichting gave a brief summary of what has happened in the Planning Department in the last year. The City has received 12 rezoning requests, with one withdrawn, two denied, and three carried into the 2026 calendar year. There have been 268 potential new housing units approved, but a few of these rezonings decreased the number of units from a prior approval. Numbers were given for permits that were issued annually and numbers for expansions/alterations for residential and non-residential properties. Council was informed of the department's accomplishments for the year. Two of the big projects underway are the creation of the Unified Development Ordinance (scheduled to be completed by the end of the year) and the Park Master Plan.

Mayor Hayman called for a break at 2:20 p.m. The meeting was reconvened at 2:39 p.m.

Information Technology

Information Technology Director Chris Niver gave a list of the department's accomplishments during the past year. These include the full implementation of a new cybersecurity package, the replacement of 15 core network switches, IT support for the new City Hall Renovation project, the creation of a limited access kiosk for the Public Works Department, upgrades to PCs, the transition to Office 365 for all computers, assisting in the roll-out of new body cam hardware for the Police Department, work with the SCADA system, and other projects.

Coming up this fiscal year is the replacement of all WIFI access points, the elimination of all copper phone lines, and the addition of prox locks on exterior doors at City Hall.

Next year, there is a potential for new website ADA compliance requirements to go into effect. Grant funding for Blue Voyant also expires as of July 2026. There is also a concern with the County pushing cities to get their own internet services.

Mr. Niver reiterated that the cost of information technology continues to rise every year with a potential for a 5% upfit. Big ticket items in the next few years include laptop replacements, desktop replacements, and a server farm replacement.

Fire Department

Fire Chief Mark Stafford informed Council that in the Fire Department, plans are underway to get the Safety Coordinator back to his primary duties. The department is requesting an extra Firefighter/Driver position to help offset the overtime balance, which is continuously an issue due to vacation and extended medical leave of employees in the department. Plans are also to

upfit the exterior building of Fire Station #1 with new signs to be installed on the exteriors of Stations #1, #2, and #3. Part-time firefighter pay was also discussed.

Capital needs for the Fire Department include the consolidation of the department's reporting software, the request for a new 2028 ladder truck, and the exterior building upfit.

Police Department

Police Chief Robert Houston spoke of the department's accomplishments for the year, which included the continuing success of the FLOCK cameras, the National Night Out event, and the Santa Cop program. The department will be piggybacking onto the County's RMS System going forward and will get rid of SOMA.

The department has hired an investigator and this has helped with the workload and allowed the department the opportunity to close more cases. Other notables include a successful NCLM Risk Review, a grant for AED and Shields, a grant from Walmart to get a Theta Z1 360 Crime Scene Camera, and an officer becoming a Law Enforcement Bicycle Association (LEBA) Instructor. Training is up in the department by 25%.

One of the biggest continuing challenges for the department is recruitment and retention, especially as a few of the city's officers will be reaching retirement age in the next few years. Other notable challenges/needs were mentioned. Plans are to create a career path for the Records Division and implement a Records Specialist 1 position. The department will also work toward getting a Traffic Officer Grant in January. Chief Houston spoke of the successful use of Axon Body cameras in real-life traffic stops. The department would like to look into expanding the Police Department building to hold more offices and would like to get a preliminary design and cost estimates.

Mayor Hayman called for a break at 4:13 p.m. The meeting was reconvened at 4:28 p.m.

Public Works Department

Public Works Director Terry Jones spoke about the accomplishments of the department, which include the installation of ADA playground equipment and bathrooms in the Downtown Park, the installation of a Reading Garden at the City Park, the upfit of the Public Works / Public Utilities Department Facilities, and the addition of a new Facilities and Grounds Supervisor.

Challenges for the future will include an uptick in facilities and grounds workload due to increased park visitation and an increase in the solid waste workload as more homes are built. This could be offset by the purchase of more single-operator automated pickup equipment and the rebalancing of routes.

Capital Needs for the department include a new excavator and trailer for the Street Department, a new F150 for Facilities and Grounds, an additional snow plow, a new ASL Recycle Truck (a reserve has been started), a tire balancer, the replacement of the roof at the Public Works/Utilities facilities (reserve started), the installation of trim lights at some of the city's parks, the installation of pour and play at some of the city's parks, and the installation of another pickleball court at City Park.

Public Utilities Department

Public Utilities Director Brian Bradshaw gave a year in review of the department, with the highlight being the aeration project being 99% completed. Other notable items were that three employees earned their water and sewer certifications, the L'echo Park Outfall Line initial funding, the NE wastewater treatment plant pump station funding, UCMR-5 testing for PFAs and lithium per EPA, and the Hickory Sludge Dryer contract. The Utility Office Building project is underway.

Challenges include needed regional wastewater infrastructure improvements toward Claremont, the continual search for funds for the NE wastewater treatment plant project, saving for L'echo outfall line, aging infrastructure, finding funding for expected projects related to AIA issues and starting to save for a hydro-excavation truck. A breakdown of the water/sewer AIA study was presented with estimated costs shown for each part of the project. Finally, a cost breakdown of water and sewer bills for the local area was presented.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

City Manager Hart informed Council that the next budget meeting was scheduled for Thursday, April 30, 2026 at noon.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:40 p.m.

Kyle J. Hayman, Mayor

Stephanie C. Watson, City Clerk

**CITY OF CONOVER
RESOLUTION 04-26**

A RESOLUTION TO APPOINT THE CITY OF CONOVER'S TAX COLLECTOR

WHEREAS, the City of Conover does not currently have a Tax Collector; and

WHEREAS, North Carolina General Statute 105-349 requires that a Tax Collector be appointed by the Governing Board; and

WHEREAS, the Conover City Council makes the following appointment:

Leslie Hicks, Controller, as Tax Collector for the City of Conover for a five (5) year term that will expire on January 26, 2031.

Adopted this the 27th day of January, 2026.

Kyle J. Hayman, Mayor

Stephanie C. Watson, City Clerk