



CONOVER

North Carolina

Conover City Council

Special Meeting Minutes

Thursday, April 30, 2026 at 12:00 PM

Manufacturing Solutions Center 2

Conference Room

350 5th Ave SE

Conover, NC 28613

A Special Meeting of the Conover City Council was held on Thursday, April 30, 2026 at 12:00 PM in the Conference Room of Manufacturing Solutions Center 2.

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

II. INVOCATION

III. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

IV. BUSINESS AGENDA

Item 1: Discussion of the Proposed 2026-2027 Budget

City Manager Hart stated that there would be no tax increase planned for this fiscal year. There would be a rate increase for utilities and garbage.

There was a brief discussion about the upcoming countywide revaluation in the 2027/2028 fiscal year. Expectations are for fairly flat values. There is a new state law that the city will need to watch closely.

Budget wide influences include property and liability insurance, workers' compensation, Local Government Retirement contribution increases, the ongoing talent war. The city plans to hire two new positions, but the hiring process may be delayed until mid fiscal year.

Healthcare for employees continues to be a concern as rising costs are projected in 2027.

Costs of supplies for city services (i.e. water meters, piping, vehicle, concrete, and weed killer) continue to increase.

There was a brief discussion on the proposed payroll for the 2026-2027 fiscal year. The proposal called for up to 5% Merit for all employees. Other alternate pay and benefit methods were suggested, which included the addition of a 60/40 YMCA Benefit that would also satisfy accreditation requirements for Police and Fire Departments and the consideration of a one-time bonus to employees (minus Department Heads). These considerations and others would be thoroughly researched prior to the June 1, 2026 Council Meeting.

The City of Conover remains behind on the talent market. The most notable areas are in the lower pay brackets. Increases in pay for those areas have been aggressive but still remain behind.

The City proposes to keep the current tax rate as is. There is a proposed \$0.50 increase in the landfill fill fee and an approximate 3.5% increase in the Utility Bill. The newly formed Utility Committee will look into further options for this fund.

Governing Board

There will be no election expense this cycle. Included in the Budget is funding for multiple concerts and events. New concerts will require private sponsorships. A notable milestone for this year is the 150th anniversary of the City of Conover which will be highlighted throughout the year at concerts and events.

Mr. Hart gave a brief overview of the General Fund prior to discussing each department.

Administration

The proposed YMCA employee benefit will be budgeted in this department. The marketing budget has been increased for paid recruitment due to hiring challenges. Plans are to repurpose funds from a Finance role to hire an Office Manager type position for City Hall. Duties for this position will be flexible based on the candidate's skills. There is also a consideration of a part-time customer service representative for downstairs operations.

Planning Department

The Planning Department continues to work toward the completion of the Unified

Development Ordinance and hopes to have it completed by late 2026 or early 2027. Progress for this project have been affected by State legislative changes. The Parks Master Plan should reach completion by summer of 2026 and a late summer public input meeting is planned. Adoption of the Park Master Plan enables potential grant applications. A consulting firm will be brought in to help evaluate how the City could improve the downtown area.

Information Technology

In the Information Technology Department, big budget items will be Cybersecurity Monitoring and Switch & Server Updates. Another item to consider in the future is ADA compliance for our City website. There was also a brief discussion about cost for city WIFI services and to support cloud storage for body cam videos / translation services.

City Hall / Conover Station

Notable items in the City Hall / Conover Station Department, include the debt payment to be completed for Conover Station, a new NC Works lease, and potential future repair and maintenance issues on the aging Conover Station building. The janitor line has been removed and moved to the Grounds Department due to hiring cleaners that work for the City.

Police Department

In the Police Department, the budget will include three patrol vehicles, one new traffic position (paid for through a grant), translation body cams, and a (grant ready) design expansion of the police department to handle its growing needs.

Fire Department

In the Fire Department, there are no planned increases in the county fire tax. There is one planned new firefighter position.

Public Works

In Public Works, bigger ticket items include the cost to purchase new garbage rollouts for citizens and CDL training costs. The City is currently working on their five year pavement condition survey.

Non-Departmental

In Non-Departmental, Swim Lesson prices are increasing from \$70 to \$98 per swimmer. The City continues to fund the Arts Culture Catawba (Arts Council), and support the county library and animal shelter.

Cemetery

In the 2024/2025 fiscal year, the City established a dedicated fund for the cemetery. The City will budget another \$25,000 toward that fund in the 2026-2027 fiscal year. The columbarium is now open and niches are available.

Mr. Hart spoke briefly about the Enterprise Fund prior to discussing each department.

Public Utilities

In Public Utilities, plans are to transfer \$1 Million to the Capital Fund and \$425,000 to the Capital Fund (Capital Fee). The City will continue the NE Waste Water Treatment Plant

Capital Projects. The City proposes the following rate increases:

<u>Rate / Fee</u>	<u>Current</u>	<u>Proposed</u>
Water Inside Per 1,000 gal	\$2.89	\$3.10
Sewer Inside Per 1,000 gal	\$4.99	\$5.35
Water Base Fee 3/4" meter	\$16.18	\$16.18
Sewer Base Fee	\$15.76	\$15.76

There was a brief discussion on what Conover's proposed rate would be in comparison to other municipalities and how the projected increase overall would affect residents in the City of Conover.

There being no further discussion, Mr. Hart informed Council that the final budget would be presented during the Monday, June 1, 2026 regularly scheduled Council Meeting where a public hearing would be held followed by the consideration of the adoption of the proposed 2026-2027 budget.

V. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:26 p.m.

Kyle J. Hayman, Mayor

Stephanie C. Watson, City Clerk