

*Town of Taylorsville*



## **TOWN COUNCIL WORK SESSION**

Town Council Chambers

Tuesday, January 20, 2026 at 2:00 p.m.

Prepared By: Nicole Mayes

**Present:** Mayor George Holleman  
Mayor Pro Tem Eric Bumgarner  
Councilwoman Tamara Odom  
Councilwoman Kim Brown  
Councilman Jack Simms

### **Call to Order**

**George B. Holleman, Mayor**

The Town Council Work Session was called to order on Tuesday, January 20, 2026, at 2:00 pm by Mayor George Holleman. No formal invocation was performed, and the council proceeded directly to the preliminary items on the agenda.

### **Discussion Items**

#### **1. Economic Development Strategy Discussion**

**Nathan Hester, Town Manager**

Town Manager Nathan Hester presented the draft of the Economic Development Strategic Plan, a collaborative effort between the Town and a dedicated Steering Committee. Mr. Hester noted that he and Connie Kincaide are currently refining the document to correct minor grammatical errors to ensure the plan is professional and polished prior to formal adoption.

The plan includes an introduction to the planning process and a comprehensive SWOT analysis, which evaluates Taylorsville's internal strengths and weaknesses alongside external opportunities and threats. A formal work plan template, provided by Phil Boggan from the Department of Commerce, will be integrated into the document before it is presented for official adoption during the February Work Session.

#### **Strategic Goals and Objectives**

The Steering Committee identified five core strategic goals to guide the Town's growth:

1. Position Taylorsville as a premier destination to live, work, and visit.
2. Develop a dynamic downtown featuring high-quality public spaces.
3. Invest in community wellness, recreation, and cultural tourism.
4. Strengthen infrastructure to facilitate long-term sustainable growth.

## 5. Achieve the North Carolina Main Street Designation.

Regarding Goal #5, Mr. Hester highlighted Objective 5.3, which aims to establish a non-profit Downtown Development Association by 2029. This initiative involves securing diverse funding, hiring a program coordinator, and partnering with the Town. He noted that the Town is already making tangible progress toward these objectives.

- Council Discussion:

- Councilmember Eric Bumgarner shared insights from the plan's market data, noting a significant \$24 million retail gap in the grocery sector. He suggested that capturing even 10% of that leakage would justify a new store.
- Mr. Hester suggested that a competitor to Food Lion would encourage residents to shop locally rather than traveling to Bethlehem or neighboring counties.
- Councilmember Kim Brown emphasized the need for a "destination" grocer like Aldi or Publix—stores that offer unique or specialty products that residents currently leave town to purchase.
- Councilmember Bumgarner reported his ongoing communication with a representative from Aldi. While previous data did not meet their thresholds, he believes the new strategic plan data provides the necessary leverage to prove the Town's viability.
- The Council discussed the former Family Dollar building as a potential site. However, Councilmember Bumgarner noted that Aldi typically prefers high-visibility locations near major retailers like Walmart.
- Mayor George Holleman suggested utilizing updated traffic and population data from the Western Piedmont Council of Governments to provide Aldi with the most current figures, as Department of Transportation numbers may be outdated.
- Councilmember Bumgarner stated he will send the updated market data to the representative at Aldi to continue recruitment efforts.
- Mayor Holleman initiated a discussion regarding a significant industrial prospect the county recently lost to Pitt County. He noted that the company had requested \$12 million in local incentives, a figure he felt might have been a reasonable investment. Councilmember Jack Simms confirmed the prospect was an automotive industry expected to employ 700 - 1,000 people, and he agreed that the requested incentives were justifiable when considering the long-term economic benefits. Town Manager Nathan Hester clarified that this was the same project discussed in previous months, but emphasized that infrastructure and tax status remained major hurdles. Specifically, while the Town's treatment plant possesses the capacity to handle such a large user, the County-owned pump stations serving the industrial park would require substantial upgrades to meet demand. Mr. Hester pointed out that since the Town maintains these stations and generates revenue from them, the division of ownership and the current state of infrastructure are issues that must be addressed to remain competitive in future recruitment. Additionally, the Council discussed the impact of the Federal Opportunity Zone, noting that the current industrial park is situated just outside the qualifying boundary, which prevented the company from accessing specific tax incentives. However, Mr. Hester confirmed that land across

the road would qualify for such grants and that the company had been willing to be annexed into the Town.

## **2. Sign Ordinance Update Discussion**

**Nathan Hester, Town Manager**

Town Manager Nathan Hester presented a draft for a new sign ordinance intended to replace Article 7 of the current Land Use Code.

Mr. Hester opened the discussion by reviewing Section C: Exempt Signs of the draft ordinance. He specifically sought the Council's guidance on establishing parameters for political signage, noting the challenges regarding unregulated placement at intersections and the necessity of a clear timeline for removal following election cycles.

- Council Discussion:
  - Councilmember Bumgarner suggested that signs are acceptable as long as they do not obstruct the line of sight for drivers and are removed promptly after the election.
  - Councilmember Odom noted that while most local candidates are diligent, some signs remain for up to six months. She emphasized the need for a specific ordinance allowing the Town to remove signs that have outlived their purpose.
  - Councilmember Simms observed that local candidates usually clear their signs within 24 hours, whereas statewide candidates—often lacking local staff—are typically the primary offenders.

The discussion moved to signs affixed to public infrastructure and the enforcement of off-site advertising.

- Council Discussion:
  - Mayor Holleman questioned the legality of signs on utility poles. Councilmember Simms noted that while utility companies own the poles, the Town would have to handle enforcement.
  - Councilmember Brown pointed out that many residents are unaware that only two off-site signs are permitted for yard sales. In discussing enforcement, Councilmember Brown noted that written rules are only effective if the community is informed.
  - Councilmember Simms noted that a significant number of yard sale signs posted within the Town are advertising sales held in the county.
  - Town Manager Hester noted that enforcement would likely be a reactive process, essentially requiring staff to remove and dispose of non-compliant signs throughout the Town.

Mr. Hester transitioned to Section D: Prohibited Signs, reviewing the proposed list of restricted signage. A primary point of discussion involved the prohibition of vehicles used as permanent, static advertisements. Mr. Hester referenced a local business that uses a vintage vehicle as a long-standing landmark, noting that while such displays can add unique character to the Town, the ordinance must be carefully drafted to prevent it from looking unprofessional.

- Council Discussion:

- Councilmember Brown argued that the antique car at West Main Antiques adds character and is "pertinent" to the business type. She mentioned that other areas have cars on poles or buildings that contribute to the local aesthetic.
- Mr. Hester suggested that high-quality, creative vehicle signage could be managed by removing it from the "Prohibited Signs" list and reclassifying it as a "Special Use Permit." This modification would allow the Council to review such requests on a case-by-case basis, ensuring that any permanent vehicle used as a sign meets professional standards and enhances the Town's aesthetic.

Mr. Hester shifted focus to Section E: Additional Prohibited Signs in the Downtown Overlay District and Section G: Requirements Table, which outlines specific limitations for various sign types. A primary focus of this section was the regulation of window displays. The initial draft proposed restricts window painting to a maximum of 50% coverage, while decals/window graphics are limited to only 10% of the window surface.

- Council Discussion:
  - Councilmember Brown objected to the 10% limit, noting that her own business uses graphics covering 100% of a pane. She explained that perforated graphics allow light in and a view out while looking professional from the street.
  - Councilmember Odom agreed, stating that high-quality graphics enhance the appearance of downtown businesses.
  - Councilmember Brown identified two unsightly buildings currently used for storage and suggested they be improved with professional window graphics. Her proposal included installing a "Welcome to Taylorsville" graphic on one building and a community schedule of events on the other to enhance the downtown streetscape.
  - Councilmember Brown suggested that the Town research the municipal policies of Statesville and Mooresville regarding vacant or underutilized storefronts. She noted that Mooresville, in particular, maintains regulations requiring buildings used primarily for storage to maintain the appearance of an active business.

Mr. Hester addressed Section I: Historic Preservation Standards, stating that because downtown is a historic district, all new signs require a Certificate of Appropriateness.

- Council Discussion:
  - Councilmember Simms inquired about the status of existing signage within the Town. Mr. Hester clarified that any signs currently in place would be grandfathered in, meaning they are exempt from the new regulations and may remain as they are. Mr. Hester returned to Section G: Requirements Table to discuss regulations for awning signs—defined as signage painted on, printed on, or attached to an awning surface. He pointed out a specific provision in the current draft that would restrict awning text to street addresses only moving forward, prohibiting the display of the business name. The Council signaled they were open to adjusting this to allow business names.

- Councilmember Odom asked about the YMCA sign. Councilmember Brown emphasized that it is a historic landmark that will need to be restored and would not get approval to be removed.
- Mayor Holleman inquired about the possibility of requesting a state-issued sign on Interstate 40 to direct travelers to "Historic Downtown Taylorsville," similar to the existing signage for the Hiddenite Center. He questioned whether such a request would involve a fee. Mr. Hester noted that based on his previous experience, the Town would likely be responsible for the cost of the sign, and he committed to researching the state's specific requirements.
- Councilmember Odom added that these state signs often require a location to be a specific recognized landmark. As an alternative, Mr. Hester proposed that the Town develop its own branded Wayfinding Program. Under this plan, the Town would design and install custom signage within the state's right-of-way—subject to permission—to create a cohesive look for the historic district. The Council reached a unanimous consensus that pursuing a wayfinding system would be a valuable investment for the Town.

Councilmember Brown initiated a discussion regarding the use of feather flags, which under the new draft sign ordinance is a prohibited sign in the downtown district but permitted in general commercial areas. She noted the difficulty of balancing her perspective as a business owner with her role on the Council.

Mr. Hester cautioned that an increase of feather flags could undermine the aesthetic goals for the downtown area.

- Council Discussion:

- Councilmember Odom emphasized that from a "Main Street" perspective, maintaining visual uniformity is key to a successful downtown.
- Councilmember Bumgarner suggested a balanced approach; he proposed allowing feather flags on a temporary basis—specifically for "Grand Opening" events—to help new businesses succeed without permitting them as permanent fixtures.

### 3. Main Street 2026 Conference

**Nathan Hester, Town Manager**

Mr. Hester announced that the Main Street 2026 Conference will be held in New Bern this year and inquired which Council members were interested in attending.

- Councilmember Brown suggested that both Council members and leaders from the local non-profit should attend, as the non-profit needs to be informed on the projects they will lead.
- Councilmember Odom noted that she could attend via the National Historic Preservation organization, thereby freeing a spot for another Town representative.
- Mr. Hester stated he will gauge interest from the non-profit members. If there is sufficient interest, he will coordinate a joint meeting between the non-profit representatives and the Council to finalize attendance.

### Staff Reports

*Public Works Report*

Public Utility Manager Aaron Wike was absent due to illness; no report was provided.

#### *Police Department Report*

Chief Michael Millsaps was not present; no report was provided.

#### **City Manager's Report**

##### Hospital Project Update

Mr. Hester is working with grant writers to apply for federal CDBG demolition funds to determine the future use of the hospital site. The performance agreement is being finalized by legal counsel; once complete, it will be shared with the Council and the non-profit to initiate the next phase.

##### Urgent Care Property Sale

The Town has received interest in the Urgent Care property, currently listed at \$465,000. A physician is considering the site for a primary or urgent care facility and has toured the building four times.

- Initial Offer: \$225,000.
- Property Status: The parking lot requires approximately \$15,000 in patchwork or \$80,000 for a full repaving.
- Council Discussion:
  - Councilmember Simms initially suggested a \$425,000 reserve, while Councilmember Brown suggested accepting as low as \$375,000.
  - Councilmember Odom noted that securing an urgent care provider would be a major "win-win" for the community.
  - The Council reached a consensus agreement to counter-offer at \$395,000.

##### Winter Weather:

Public Works is currently prepping for significant winter weather predicted for the upcoming weekend.

##### Northwood Project:

The Northwood Project is finished other than patching the pavement. JT Russell is getting things prepped and milled down for paving.

#### **Council General Discussion**

- Councilmember Tamara Odom shared that it was good to see everyone at the America 250 Birthday Celebration.
- Mayor Holleman commented that the America 250 Celebration at Rocky Face in May does not have a rain date and will feature music by Studio 3 and a drama by the Hiddenite Center.
- Councilmember Tamara Odom included there will be an America 250 themed art exhibit at the Lucas Mansion on May 7th, featuring 25 portraits from each of the two middle schools.

- Mr. Hester clarified that the Town will order a total of 50 banners for the America 250 Celebration; this total will include the specific Veteran banners requested, with the remaining balance consisting of America 250 placeholder banners. He noted the goal is to have them installed by Memorial Day.
- Councilmember Jack Simms inquired whether an update would be provided regarding the letters received by the Council, asking if the matter should be dropped or if new information was available. Councilmember Brown asked if the Council could offer suggestions on the issue. Mr. Hester noted that he had discussed the matter with the Police Chief and shared the previous report with them. He explained that while the Town provides necessary equipment, upgrades are dependent on available funding; however, he emphasized that any broken or malfunctioning equipment should be reported immediately to the Chief or Town Manager for replacement. Councilmember Simms concluded by stating his position that Town officers should remain within Town limits unless specifically requested by the Sheriff's Department to assist in the county.
- Councilmember Kim Brown inquired about the status of the upcoming ball. Mr. Hester clarified she was referring to the gala and confirmed that the event is planned, noting that he intends to discuss the details further with the Police Chief.

### Adjournment

With no further business to discuss, the Mayor Pro Tem Eric Bumgarner requested a motion to adjourn at 3:25 pm.

*Motion to adjourn was made by Councilmember Tamara Odom, seconded by Councilmember Kim Brown, and approved unanimously.*

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Mayor

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Councilmember

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Attest: \_\_\_\_\_  
Nicole Mayes, Town Clerk