Town of Taylorsville

TOWN COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING

Town Council Chambers

Thursday, October 1st, 2026, 2:05 p.m.

Prepared By: Christina Childers

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

Meeting went straight into interview with Mr. McRary with McRary Law Firm.

1. **Interview- Mr. Ian McRary with McRary Law Firm** **Mayor, George Holleman**

Mayor George Holleman began the interview by providing background on the Town Council's needs and the Town's previous attorney, Monroe Pannell. Mayor Holleman asked Mr. McRary whether he had experience working with municipalities.

Mr. McRary advised that he had limited municipal experience, as most of his background was in the private sector. However, he explained that his work with a major university involved frequent interactions with local governments regarding various regulations, including business permits. He acknowledged that serving as the Town Attorney would involve a learning curve but expressed his willingness to continue his education and training by taking classes through the UNC School of Government.

Mr. McRary stated that he had handled a variety of cases and crisis situations, which he enjoys navigating.

Councilmember Eric Bumgarner asked about Mr. McRary's family and local roots. Mr. McRary advised that he was originally from the Hickory area and currently resides in Taylorsville with his wife and daughter. Councilmember Bumgarner also asked about his favorite areas of law to practice. Mr. McRary responded that he enjoys conflict and dispute resolution, helping people find solutions to difficult problems, employment law, and business development.

Mr. McRary explained that one of the aspects that attracted him to the position was the Town Council's commitment to Taylorsville, particularly its focus on economic development and the Town's future direction. He stated that he would be there to support the Council in achieving its goals.

Mayor Holleman asked whether Mr. McRary had been associated with a law firm while living in Hickory. Mr. McRary advised that he operated his own firm at that time and worked closely with Steve Bracket.

Councilmember Tamara Odom asked whether Mr. McRary had experience handling disputes involving business transactions and partnerships. Mr. McRary advised that he had handled both personal and business disputes. He emphasized the importance of listening before speaking, considering all sides of an issue, and maintaining a calm and professional demeanor when responding to difficult situations.

Councilmember Jack Simms asked whether Mr. McRary's practice was limited to Alexander County or whether he also served clients in Catawba County. Mr. McRary advised that his only office was located in Alexander County but that he was open to taking cases outside the county. He also noted that he had clients in Raleigh for whom he provided church-related legal services.

Mayor Holleman asked whether Mr. McRary had discussed his fees with Town Manager Nathan Hester. Mr. McRary confirmed that they had discussed the Town's current fee structure. He stated that his typical hourly rate was approximately $250.00 and that he believed his fees were competitive with those of other attorneys. He also emphasized that he is highly responsive and, as a solo practitioner, is selective about the cases he accepts. He explained that this allows him to remain accessible and respond to clients promptly.

Mr. McRary asked the Town Council what qualities they considered most important in an attorney. He also asked what they had appreciated about working with previous attorneys, what had not worked well, and what they would like to see moving forward.

Councilmember Eric Bumgarner stated that he wanted an attorney who would help keep the Council on track regarding legal matters and terminology. He added that the attorney should speak up if a potential legal conflict arose during meetings.

Mr. McRary responded that he would do his best to provide sound legal guidance, outline the available options with the pros and cons of each, and help the Council make informed decisions.

Councilmember Odom stated that the Town would need legal guidance on the various economic development transactions underway. She emphasized the importance of ensuring that the advice provided was not rushed but was instead thoroughly considered and researched before being presented to the Council.

Councilmember Brown asked whether Mr. McRary had mentors or other attorneys he would feel comfortable contacting for advice when needed.

Mr. McRary advised that although he did not necessarily have a formal mentor, he had numerous professional connections. He explained that being a solo practitioner requires resourcefulness, networking, and building professional relationships. He added that he regularly attends local bar association meetings to maintain those connections.

Mayor Holleman noted that the Town has several resources available for legal guidance, including the UNC School of Government, the North Carolina League of Municipalities (NCLM), and the Western Piedmont Council of Governments (WPCOG).

Mr. McRary explained that he also has access to the National Association of College and University Attorneys (NACUA), which provides a listserv where attorneys can share questions and discuss hypothetical situations. He stated that this resource offers opportunities to consult with others who have experience handling similar matters.

Mr. McRary asked the Council how an attorney could best support the Town with its upcoming projects. Mayor Holleman explained that several local grants through the Tourism Development Authority (TDA) would soon become available and that having an attorney review the related documents and agreements would be beneficial.

Town Manager, Mr. Nathan Hester advised that we do have a lot of projects coming up and we will continue to go through all types of contracts and development agreements. Code enforcements have been a hot topic this year and make sure the community is in compliant.

Mr. McRary asked council what are some stress points that you are seeing.

Councilmember Bumgarner advised that people want change but then don't necessarily like it when it happens. Councilmember Brown advised that one thing would be coming up with a deal between a property owner and several businesses on Main Street where the businesses don't have access to alleyway behind their property to place dumpsters. Councilmember Simms advised that a lot of the property owners are just looking to purchase the property and not maintain or put any money into upgrade it.

(See attachment A, which is hereby incorporated and made a part of these minutes.)

2. **Street Closure Request: National Night Out** **N. Hester, Town Manager**

   Town Manager Nathan Hester presented Town Council a street closure request for 2nd St. SW from Main Street to south side of Main Ave. Dr., 1st St. SW from Main Ave. to south side of Main Ave. Dr., and Main Ave. Dr. from 2nd St. SW to South Center Street for National Night Out on Tuesday October 6, 2026 from 5:00 pm – 8:00 pm.

   *A motion to approve the street closure request for the National Night Out was made by Councilmember Jack Simms, seconded by Councilmember Tamara Odom, and approved unanim*ously.

3. **Interview – Mr. Michael Thomas with Patrick, Harper & Dixon** **Mayor, George Holleman**

Mayor Holleman advised Mr. Thomas that our budget is a lot smaller than area counties. We have formed a nonprofit to sit beside the Town of Taylorsville to do a lot of economic development in which we are

looking for advice about grants, and we are in need of an attorney to be present at our Town Hall meetings to make sure we are doing the right things.

Councilmember Bumgarner asked about Mr. Thomas family and roots. Mr. Thomas advised that he is a Hickory native and has lived in Asheville and Atlanta before moving back to Hickory to join Patrick, Harper & Dixon. He is married with four boys and has been in Hickory for 22 years now.

Mr. Thomas advised council that one advantage that they have with them being a larger firm they have a bunch of different lawyers with experience in a bunch of different areas, such as real estate, litigation, land issues and zoning, and working with non-profits. If there is something that we may not know then we do the research and learn some more.

Councilmember Brown asked Mr. Thomas If he has any municipality experience and he advised that he does not personally but his firm does do work for the City of Hickory for their Economic Development projects. Mr. Thomas advised that he handles a variety of problems for CVMC Hospital. He is knowledgeable with open meetings and public records issues.

Councilmember Simms asked if he has a travel fee? Mr. Thomas advised yes there is normally a travel fee from his office to the Town hall meeting and he would be the person that attends the meetings. He would be the first person to call when there's and issue unless it's something outside his scope in which he would hand it off to one of his other partners. He also has a paralegal Travis Good that would be assisting him as needed.

Mayor Holleman advised that one of our towns goals is to become a destination location where people can come and shop. Mr. Thomas advised that he is on the board of Hickory downtown development association which gives him a lot of insight on local developments.

Mayor Holleman addressed the many festivals that we have going on through the years and we need someone to make sure we are not liable for any issues that may arise.

Mr. Thomas asked what are the main things you are worried about, goals and what's important for the attorney stepping into the role to know?

Councilmember Bumgarner said that we have some ordinances that need to be worked on, and holding people in compliance with the ordinances, downtown development and expansion.

Mr. Thomas asked how your relationship is with the county and Councilmember Brown advised that it has improved tremendously over the last few years.

Mr. Thomas has bond experience with the hospital. Town Manager, Mr. Hester advised that we don't deal with bonds however it may be an option in the future especially when we get into some of the larger scale utility projects.

Councilwoman Tamara Odom stated that the Town's primary need is to attract more businesses to the downtown area. Mayor George B. Holleman referenced the former hotel building and expressed the Town's desire to see the property repurposed. However, the current owner has been unwilling to make

changes. Mayor Holleman asked what options the Town could pursue to encourage the owner to work with the Town toward making the necessary improvements.

Mr. Thomas acknowledged that the situation could be challenging. He explained that he would typically recommend three potential solutions: one that makes the most business sense but may be controversial, along with two additional options that may be more politically feasible.

Councilwoman Kim Brown stated that Town Council members are not overly concerned with political considerations and would be willing to give up their seats if doing so would help move the Town forward.

Town Manager Nathan Hester noted that the Town has several upcoming water and wastewater utility projects that will require task order agreements with engineering firms and general contractors, as well as contracts and other related legal matters. Mr. Thomas stated that he has extensive experience with these types of projects, having worked on them from both sides.

Councilwoman Odom asked whether Mr. Thomas had experience with Main Street programs. Mr. Thomas stated that he was familiar with Main Street initiatives but knew others with more direct experience in that area.

Mr. Thomas also clarified that the rates outlined in his proposal were discounted.

Town Manager Hester asked whether Mr. Thomas had experience in employment law. Mr. Thomas confirmed that he had substantial experience in this area, including experience clerking for a federal judge and exposure to numerous employment law cases.

Mayor Holleman asked whether Mr. Thomas had experience working with police departments and addressing issues that arise within law enforcement agencies. Mr. Thomas stated that he did not have experience in that specific area.

(See attachment B, which is hereby incorporated and made a part of these minutes.)

Council Discussion:

Councilmember Simms advised that his vote is Ian because he is Hometown and has private practice. Patrick Harper and Dixion could end up being more costly if multiple people are working on project.

Councilmember Brown agreed that her vote would be for Ian since neither P.H.D or McRary Law has municipality experience which makes them equal in that aspect. Ian did better interviewing.

Mr. Hester advised that P.H.D firm itself has a lot municipality experience, even though Mr. Thomas may not have any.

Councilmember Bumgarner advised that his vote would be for Ian. He likes P.H.D as far as their depth of knowledge but he likes the personal feeling he gets from Ian.

Councilmember Brown stated Ian is only one block away. She notated that even when we had Monroe Pannell we had multiple other law firms that were used for specific things that we were working on. We would have those even if Monroe was still here. Ian could be the "Monroe" and we could still use other law firms for those things. She feels like he will grow and learn with the Town.

Councilmember Odom stated that they are both very knowledgeable and qualified candidate. Both have dealt with business legalities. The biggest this is consistency and she would rather it be someone that knows what is going on a regular basis. I would recommend Ian.

Councilmembers discussed P.H.D pricing structure and fee schedule.

Councilmember Bumgarner stated that it was his gut feeling to choose Ian since he is local and will be more apt to be interested in the ongoings with town.

Councilmember Odom agreed that she felt like Ian was more personally interested in what they are doing.

Mr. Hester asked if the general consensus is to move on with McRary law and Councilmembers Simms, Brown, Odom and Bumgarner agreed.

Mayor Holleman notated that one thing that he wanted to add is the future of Taylorsville is going to become more and more complicated and we might need a more sophisticated law firm.

Councilmembers Brown and Odom both advised that that believe Ian is very open to learning and to being trained. Mr. McRary even addressed continuing his education by taking classes at UNCSOG.

Town Manager, Nathen Hester is going to look at working up a contract with McRary Law and submitting that it to him and to council to review with questions. We will look to vote on this at the November Regular meeting.

Adjournment

Motion was made to adjourn by Councilmember Jack Simms seconded by Councilmember Tamara Odom, and approved unanimously.

With no further business to discuss the meeting was adjourned at approximately 3:35 p.m.

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Mayor

_____ _____

Councilmember Councilmember

_____ _____

Councilmember Councilmember

Attest: _____

Christina Childers, Town Clerk