



**Mayor and Board of Commissioners
2026 Annual Retreat Meeting Minutes
Wake Forest Renaissance Centre
405 S. Brooks Street, Wake Forest, NC 27587
Friday, January 16, 2026, at 9:00 a.m.**

The Wake Forest Board of Commissioners met on **Friday, January 16, 2026**, at 9:00 a.m. The meeting was held at the Wake Forest Renaissance Centre, 405 Brooks St., Wake Forest, NC 27587.

Elected Officials present: Mayor Ben Clapsaddle, Commissioner Faith Cross, Commissioner Keith Shackelford, Commissioner Haseeb Fatmi, and Commissioner Adam Wright.

Town Staff present: Town Manager Kip Padgett, Assistant Town Manager Candace Davis, Assistant Town Manager Allison Snyder, Assistant Town Manager/CFO Aileen Staples, Town Attorney Nathan McKinney, Town Clerk Evelyn Wright, Deputy Town Clerk Ella Dowtin, Parks, Recreation & Cultural Resources Director Ruben Wall, Renaissance Centre Director Amy Pridgen, Strategic Performance Director Lisa Hayes, Communications & Public Affairs Director Bill Crabtree, Police Chief Julius Jefferson, Planning Director Jennifer Currin, Public Works Director Tim Bailey, Electric Utility Director Chris Terrell, Finance Director Samantha Sanchez, Long Range Planning Manager Brad West, Fire Chief Ron Early, Public Facilities Director Mickey Rochelle, Engineering Director Tim Watson, Economic Development Director Jason Cannon, Downtown Development Director Jennifer Herbert, Budget and Performance Director Michelle Daniels, Recreation Program Manager Monica Lileton, Paralegal Danyelle Ritter, Human Resources Director Angela McCray, Chief Information Officer Adam Oates, Inspections and Facilities Director JJ Carr.

****THE FOLLOWING IS A SUMMARY OF THE 2026 BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS ANNUAL RETREAT. PLEASE SEE [JANUARY 16, 2026 BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS WORK SESSION VIDEO](#) FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION.****

I) WELCOME AND OVERVIEW

Mayor Clapsaddle welcomed attendees and expressed appreciation for staff, emphasizing that the Town's success is driven by teamwork, collaboration, and the collective strengths of employees. Mayor Clapsaddle highlighted the importance of recognizing both individual contributions and the ability to work together effectively as an organization and shared feedback

from a recent community meeting, noting that residents frequently expressed appreciation for Town staff's responsiveness and support. Mayor Clapsaddle commended staff leadership and dedication to serving the community. After a brief overview of logistics, Mayor Clapsaddle introduced Town Manager Kip Padgett.

Town Manager Kip Padgett provided an overview of the day's agenda and encouraged open discussion, engagement and questions throughout the session.

II) Clifton Strengths – facilitated by, Mike Brown, Silver Eagle, LLC

Closed session for personnel discussion.

III) Public Power Overview (ElectriCities)

Roy Jones, CEO of ElectriCities, provided an overview of public power at the national, state, and regional levels, noting that Wake Forest is one of 75 public power communities in North Carolina and part of the Eastern Agency. The presentation emphasizes long-term planning challenges and the need to adapt to evolving energy demands, regulatory requirements, and infrastructure needs. Mr. Jones identifies the following trends and issues:

- Increasing energy demand, particularly from data centers and AI, is placing significant strain on the power grid.
- Aging infrastructure and rising costs for equipment (e.g., turbines) are creating challenges for maintaining reliable and affordable power.
- Supply chain delays are impacting the ability to build new generation capacity.

Mr. Jones discussed North Carolina's carbon reduction goals, including adjustments to allow more time for compliance and reduce near-term cost pressures. Legislative changes are expected to lower projected cost increases compared to earlier estimates. The wholesale power costs are projected to increase approximately 2.5%–3.5% annually. Mr. Jones advised residential customers may see gradual increases in monthly electric bills over time. Also, significant long-term investment is required for energy generation and infrastructure. Looking ahead, Mr. Jones advised future energy mix will include solar, battery storage, natural gas, and potential nuclear technologies (including small modular reactors). Planning is underway to meet long-term demand while maintaining reliability and affordability.

Mr. Jones advised of Eastern Agency updates. He advised of anticipated wholesale rate increases (approximately 4%–5% range) to maintain financial stability and working capital; the ongoing coordination among 32 member communities to manage costs and plan for future

needs; however, the past debt obligations have been paid off, resulting in historically lower costs in recent years.

Mr. Jones concluded with advising that North Carolina ranks among the lowest states nationally for residential electric rates and that continued efforts are focused on balancing cost, reliability, and future energy demands.

IV) Lunch

V) Public Power Overview (Wake Forest Power (operation, budget, ten-year plan))

Electric Utility Director Chris Terrell provided an overview of public power, noting that utilities like Wake Forest Power are locally owned, not-for-profit, and accountable to residents rather than shareholders. Mr. Terrell explained that revenues are reinvested into infrastructure and service improvements.

- Public power systems were highlighted as more reliable than investor-owned utilities, with fewer outages and shorter downtime, due to local control and responsiveness.
- Wake Forest Power has operated since 1909 and currently serves over 9,200 customers. The system includes two substations, extensive distribution infrastructure, and maintains approximately 99.9% reliability.
- The utility operates as an enterprise fund, supported by customer rates rather than taxes. The Board has historically favored gradual rate adjustments to maintain stability and fund system improvements.
- Staff presented a 10-year long-range plan addressing projected growth, with peak demand expected to increase from approximately 48 MW to 56 MW by 2035 due to residential and commercial development.
- Key findings indicate the system is performing well but will face capacity and reliability challenges without upgrades, particularly under contingency scenarios.
- Recommended improvements include:
 - Construction of a new express feeder between substations
 - Circuit upgrades and load balancing improvements
 - Installation of automated reclosers to improve outage response
- The total estimated cost for planned upgrades is approximately \$500,000 over 10 years.
- Staff emphasized that these investments will support continued reliability, accommodate growth, and improve system resilience.

VI) Special Events Discussion/Strategic Plan update

Organizational Performance Director Lisa Hayes provided an overview of the Town's special events program, explaining the three main event types: Town-sponsored events, community-organized events, and facility rentals requiring Town support. She highlighted the significant planning, coordination, and staffing required across multiple departments, noting that staff often volunteer beyond regular work hours to support events. Over the past year, the Town supported 149 events, many occurring on evenings, weekends, and holidays, creating strain on staffing—particularly in public safety. Due to increasing demand and limited capacity, the Town has implemented a pause on adding new Town events, requiring any new event to replace or consolidate an existing one. Ms. Hayes also presented proposed updates to the special events policy, recommending a tiered insurance structure that maintains \$2 million coverage for smaller events and increases requirements to \$5 million for larger, higher-risk events to better protect Town resources. Ms. Hayes requested Board consideration to move the policy update forward for approval at a February work session.

Board members discussed the growing demand for events and agreed the Town is approaching a capacity "tipping point," particularly regarding staffing and public safety resources. Board members expressed support for the pause on new Town events and emphasized the importance of maintaining employee work-life balance and preventing staff burnout. There was consensus that flexibility should remain in evaluating events rather than setting a strict cap, while still ensuring responsible resource management. Board members also voiced support for the proposed tiered insurance policy, acknowledging increased liability risks and rising costs. No objections were raised to advancing the policy for consideration at a February work session, and Board members generally agreed with staff's approach to balancing community engagement with operational sustainability. Additionally, Ms. Hayes reviewed the current 2022–2027 Strategic Plan and recommended a streamlined "refresh" process for 2027, retaining the mission and core values while reassessing goals and priorities through consultant support and community engagement.

VII) Demographics and Trends

Long Range Manager Brad West provided an updated overview of demographic, housing, and development trends, noting limited availability of recent census data due to delays. Wake Forest has experienced significant population growth since the 1990s and remains a predominantly single-family, owner-occupied, and highly educated community. While development activity has slowed slightly, residential and commercial growth continues, with a strong presence of single-family housing. The current median home sales price is approximately \$540,000, highlighting ongoing housing affordability challenges compared to local income levels. Multifamily development has increased, contributing to higher vacancy rates and stabilizing

rental prices, though future projects may temporarily raise vacancy levels before being absorbed. Mr. West also reviewed school enrollment trends, noting that growth is occurring primarily in other parts of the county, with new school construction planned accordingly. Overall, Wake Forest continues to grow steadily, with evolving housing and market conditions requiring ongoing monitoring.

Board members asked questions regarding recent apartment vacancy rates and trends over time. Staff explained that vacancy rates were significantly lower in prior years (around 4%) but have recently increased to approximately 15–18% due to new multifamily units entering the market. It was noted that upcoming developments will likely cause temporary increases in vacancy rates before stabilizing as units are leased. Board members also discussed the challenges of tracking rental ownership data due to varying property ownership structures. No formal action was taken.

Planning Director Jennifer Currin shared a visual overview of land use and development trends, noting that a majority of land within the Town and ETJ is already developed, limiting future greenfield opportunities and increasing the likelihood of infill and redevelopment. Residential uses dominate (approximately 79%), with only about 6–7% currently commercial, though the community plan targets closer to 20% non-residential to support long-term sustainability. Housing stock remains primarily single-family, with only modest increases in townhomes and multifamily units expected. Ms. Currin emphasized the fiscal impact of land use, noting that residential development typically costs more in services than it generates in tax revenue, while commercial development helps offset those costs. With projected population growth nearing 120,000 by 2040 and limited remaining land, Ms. Currin highlighted the importance of balancing residential and commercial growth using existing planning tools and policies.

Board members expressed concern that continued residential growth without sufficient commercial development could negatively impact the Town's long-term financial sustainability. Board members discussed the need to better understand the appropriate balance between residential and commercial development and suggested conducting additional analysis to project future budget impacts and guide rezoning decisions. Commissioner Wright asked, and Mayor Clapsaddle echoed, that a formal analysis be conducted. Commissioner Cross raised questions about whether current revenue-to-cost ratios are typical and how they have trended over time. Ms. Currin advised that staff has indicated that these trends are generally consistent nationwide and offered to coordinate further analysis with finance and economic development staff, potentially involving a consultant. Board members supported further evaluation to ensure future growth aligns with maintaining service levels and fiscal stability.

VIII) Commissioner Comments

Commissioner Wright expressed appreciation for the meeting and staff presentations, noting the value of the information shared. Commissioner Wright highlighted recent traffic data indicating that a significant portion of traffic entering Town originates from outside the area, suggesting congestion will continue to increase regardless of residential growth.

Commissioner Wright requested that this information be incorporated into a future public presentation to better inform the Board and community.

Commissioner Cross thanked staff for the informative meeting and collaborative environment and asked for an update on traffic signal coordination efforts. Town Manager Kip Padgett indicated coordination discussions are ongoing. Commissioner Cross also acknowledged recent challenges faced by staff and offered encouragement, commending their professionalism and dedication while expressing Board support amid public criticism.

Commissioner Fatmi expressed appreciation to staff for their support and professionalism, noting a positive onboarding experience during his first month on the Board. Commissioner Fatmi encouraged continued open communication between staff and Board members and thanked staff for their ongoing efforts.

Commissioner Shackelford extended appreciation to staff for the hard work put into the retreat.

Mayor Clapsaddle echoed appreciation for staff and the quality of the presentations, emphasizing the professionalism of the organization. Mayor Clapsaddle shared positive feedback received from community members regarding staff performance and highlighted upcoming events, including a major July 3rd celebration tied to the nation's 250th anniversary. Mayor Clapsaddle encouraged staff to take time to rest during the holiday and invited participation in upcoming community events, reinforcing the importance of service to the community.

IX) Vacant Board Seat

Town Attorney Nathan McKinney provided guidance on the selection process, including requirements for public notice, scheduling, and interview procedures, noting there are 14 eligible applicants and emphasizing the importance of a timely and thorough selection process. Mr. McKinney explained that applicants would be ranked by Commissioners, scores would be compiled to determine top candidates, and selected applicants would be notified following the

ranking deadline. Mr. McKinney also noted that standardized interview questions would be developed and shared with the Board in advance to ensure consistency.

Commissioner Shackelford highlighted the significance of the appointment given its long-term impact on Town decisions and encouraged an efficient and fair process.

Board members discussed and agreed on the selection process, including ranking applicants and determining interview logistics. The Board approved a process for each Commissioner to rank their top five candidates, with rankings due by a specified deadline, after which staff will tabulate results to identify finalists. Board members emphasized the need to balance timeliness with fairness, including handling candidate availability and ensuring a consistent interview process. The Board agreed to conduct in-person interviews on February 3rd, allowing sufficient time for notification and preparation. The Board also agreed that interviews would be conducted in a structured format with standardized questions and approximately 20-minute timeframes.

MOTION: Commissioner Wright moved to have candidate interviews conducted on February 3rd.

SECONDER: Commissioner Cross

Motion carried 3-1. Commissioner Shackelford opposed the motion.

MOTION: Commissioner Shackelford moved to rank candidates 1-5, with 1 being the first choice and submitted by 5 p.m. on Friday, January 23rd, and opportunity for interviews being held on February 3rd.

SECONDER: Commissioner Cross

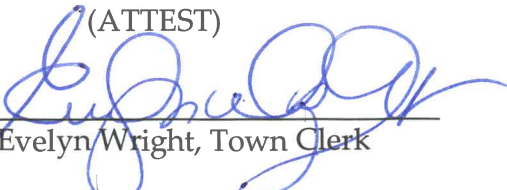
Motion carried 4-0.

X) Closing


Mayor Clapsaddle shared that the board appreciates all the hard work the Town staff has put into the board retreat.

The Annual Retreat adjourned at 3:38 p.m.

Duly approved in open session this 21st day of ~~April~~ ^{March} 2026.

(ATTEST)

Evelyn Wright, Town Clerk




Ben C. Clapsaddle, Mayor

