Wake Forest Board of Commissioners
Work Session Meeting Minutes

The Wake Forest Board of Commissioners met on **Tuesday, September 1, 2026,** at **6:00 p.m.** in the Board Room at Wake Forest Town Hall, 301 S Brooks Street.

Mayor Clapsaddle called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Commissioners Present: Mayor Ben C. Clapsaddle, Commissioner Keith Shackleford, Commissioner Sliwinski, Commissioner Faith Cross, Commissioner Danny Hupp, and Commissioner Adam Wright.

Commissioners Absent: None

Staff Members Present:

Town Manager Kip Padgett
Assistant Town Manager Candace Davis
Assistant Town Manager Aileen Staples
Assistant Town Manager Allison Snyder
Town Attorney Nathan McKinney
Town Clerk Evelyn Wright
Police Chief Julius Jefferson
Fire Chief Ron Early
Communications Director Bill Crabtree
Organizational Performance Director Lisa Hayes
Downtown Development Director Jennifer Herbert
Long Range Planning Manager Brad West
Planner II Emma Linn
Fire Captain Daniel Gregory
Deputy Police Chief Brandon High
Police Captain Chris Minor

Presentations

1.1 Presentation of Go Wake Forest Fare Collection Update and Consideration of a Service Expansion Proposal

Long Range Planning Manager Brad West presented updates on the Go Wake Forest microtransit fare-collection program and its potential expansion. Mr. West explained that GO Wake Forest launched in October 2024 with three vans and one spare but quickly exceeded capacity. After multiple service expansions, the system reached eight operating vans and two spares yet continued to experience demand and capacity

challenges. Fare collection was introduced in February 2026 as a demand-management strategy intended to:

- Reduce excessive/unmet demand.
- Stabilize ridership at a sustainable level.
- Generate revenue that could be reinvested into the service.

The Town invited Via representatives to present performance data, fare revenue, reduced-fare participation, and potential service-expansion options. Via confirmed that routine vehicle cleaning is included in the overall service cost rather than being billed separately to the Town and it was reported that, after cleanliness concerns were raised, Via had recently increased the frequency of routine vehicle cleaning. Via agreed to follow up on current cleanliness performance and rider feedback. Mr. West confirmed that staff had already begun working with Via on transportation options for voters.

Via's representatives Mike Longue and Heather Ameen presented the overall performance of the GO Wake Forest microtransit system following implementation of fares. Mr. Longue characterized the fare program as a successful model that Via could potentially apply with other municipal and agency partners. Mr. Longue reported that the system was approaching 200,000 total rides since its October 2024 launch and emphasized that rides represent transportation for essential activities such as shopping, medical appointments, and employment. Mr. Longue compared GO Wake Forest with the former fixed-route Wake Forest Loop and found the following:

- Approximately 6× more boardings per service hour.
- Approximately 74% more cost-effective per trip.
- Coverage of approximately 4.5× the population served by the former loop.
- Approximately 3× as many jobs within the service area.
- Greater coverage of seniors, residents with disabilities, SNAP recipients, and public-housing residents.

Mr. Longue highlighted the June 2026 rider-survey findings of 50% of riders reported household incomes below $40,000, 32% use the service to travel to work, and 28% are age 65 or older.

Mr. Longue advised that positive rider comments illustrated the service's importance to housing stability, family transportation, and daily life. Also, he explained that fares were introduced because demand had exceeded available capacity. The following are the reported significant improvements after fares were implemented:

- Met demand increased from approximately 73% to 94%.
- Average estimated wait/ETA decreased from approximately 24 minutes to 16 minutes.
- Fare revenue increased from essentially zero to approximately $20,000 per month.
- Recommended monitoring the 90% met-demand level as the key service-quality threshold. A sustained decline below 90% would warrant additional Board review.
- Reported that the Town's reduced-fare program had enrolled approximately 250 eligible riders, allowing qualifying residents to receive 50% discounts.
- Estimated approximately $240,000 annually in fare revenue could potentially be reinvested into GO Wake Forest.
- Proposed using the fare revenue to establish Sunday service without additional Town funding.
- Recommended starting with a budget-neutral Sunday service model and reassessing demand after approximately 3–12 months.
- Presented a longer-term option involving approximately $140,000 in additional investment for increased Sunday driver hours and service capacity if demand warrants it.
- Recommended using the 90% met-demand target as the primary performance measure going forward.
- Explained that Via can implement a temporary geofence around a voting location to allow fare-free rides for voting-related trips.

Commissioner Cross inquired about how vehicles/rides are evaluated, are managers/supervisors are accessible during rides, and specific safety features that drivers must adhere to. Via's representatives Heather Ameen advised that the rating system can be changed/increased, and Mr. West explained the maintenance of the vehicles. Commissioner Sliwinski inquired about the timing of evaluations/surveys. Commissioner Hupp emphasized the usefulness of surveys in order to have accurate data to evaluate.

- The Board expressed consensus to advance the proposed service expansion options to September 15, 2026, voting meeting for consideration.
- Staff and the transit partner will follow up on vehicle cleanliness, maintenance practices, rider and driver feedback, and potential fare-free transportation to voting locations.
- Sunday service funded through existing fare revenue was identified as the initial budget-neutral expansion option for further consideration.

1.2 Presentation of Wake Forest Comprehensive Transportation Plan 2026 Amendments

Long Range Planning Manager Brad West presented the proposed amendments to the Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP), explaining that the updates reflect completed projects, recent studies, revised transportation priorities, and current transit services. Mr. West highlighted greenway connectivity, multi-use paths, transit route changes, roadway classifications, the Ligon Mill Road extension, S-Line improvements, and adjustments to project prioritization. He clarified that the amendments are interim updates ahead of a more comprehensive CTP revision anticipated in the next two to three years.

Commissioner Cross asked whether the proposed greenway improvements would connect the reservoir trails to the regional greenway system. Mr. West explained that the connection aligns with the town's goal of establishing a continuous north-south greenway network.

Commissioner Cross raised concerns about how the proposed four-lane parkway concept along the NC 98 corridor would affect access to the fire station and whether the roadway could accommodate the planned improvements without additional traffic signals. Mr. West clarified that the concept remains preliminary and that access details would be evaluated during future design.

Commissioner Cross asked whether crash data and traffic conditions were considered when prioritizing transportation projects. Mr. West explained that the existing priorities were based on crash data, roadway capacity, traffic counts, and projected growth, but noted that a comprehensive update would incorporate newer data.

Commissioner Sliwinski asked whether intersection improvements associated with one approved development remain accounted for when another development proceeds,

particularly if the original development never materializes. Mr. West explained that developer obligations are generally limited to improvements reasonably related to the development's impact under state law and agreed to provide further clarification if needed.

Commissioner Hupp asked why the comprehensive plan had not been fully updated since 2021. Mr. West indicated he was not involved in the previous update process and did not have a definitive explanation.

Mr. West confirmed that the proposed amendments had been presented to the Planning Board, the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources Advisory Board, and that a public hearing was scheduled for the September 15 board meeting.

1.3 Event Recommendations for 2027 and Beyond

Downtown Development Jennifer Herbert presented three recommendations for future town events:

- Holiday events: Combine the Wake Forest Cares Holiday Kickoff and Lighting of Wake Forest into one annual event on the Saturday before Thanksgiving. The proposed event would retain community performances, interactive activities, holiday entertainment, and the traditional tree lighting while improving scheduling consistency, reducing weather risks, supporting local businesses, and streamlining event operations.
- July 3 Fireworks: Delay the event start time from 5:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m., with entertainment beginning at 7:30 p.m., to reduce heat-related concerns. When July 4th falls on a Sunday, staff recommends holding the children's walking parade on the Saturday morning of the fireworks event.
- Friday Night on White: Reduce the event schedule from six to three events annually, held April through June. Jennifer cited significant staffing demands, employee fatigue and heat exposure, public safety requirements, street closures, and disruptions to downtown businesses as reasons for the recommendation.

Ms. Herbert also explained that the town already supplements its staffing for Friday Night on White with outside personnel, but additional staffing presents training, logistical, and liability challenges.

Commissioner Wright opposed reducing Friday Night on White, emphasizing its success, community value, and importance in maintaining Wake Forest's small-town

atmosphere. He acknowledged staff capacity concerns but advocated evaluating other events and operational alternatives before reducing an award-winning program. Commissioner Wright recommended comparing staffing hours and attendance across events, consolidating some programming where appropriate, exploring additional outside assistance and community volunteers, and reviewing sponsorship revenue or increases to help offset costs.

Commissioner Sliwinski expressed support for the first two recommendations and requested clarification on how staff burden would be measured. Commissioner Sliwinski emphasized comparing staffing hours relative to attendance rather than simply counting employees and supported reviewing additional information before deciding on Friday Night on White.

Commissioner Cross cautioned against evaluating events solely by attendance, noting that Friday Night on White, family dances, and Planning 101 serve different audiences and community needs. Commissioner Wright supported considering each event's purpose when evaluating programming.

Commissioner Cross emphasized that staff safety, heat exposure, and operational capacity should carry significant weight in evaluating events. Commissioner Sliwinski supported listening to staff concerns and considering a temporary reduction in events, followed by reassessment based on experience and results.

Commissioner Shackleford supported considering the impact of repeated street closures on downtown businesses and recognizing the substantial behind-the-scenes work performed by town employees. Commissioner Shackleford encouraged the Board to consider staff recommendations and focus on policy-level decisions rather than micromanaging event operations.

Commissioner Wright suggested exploring outside event personnel, volunteers, and greater assistance from community partners to reduce the burden on town staff. Commissioner Wright also proposed evaluating whether sponsorship revenue could offset additional staffing costs before reducing the event schedule.

Ms. Herbert clarified that the town already uses approximately 50 outside staffing personnel for Friday Night on White, in addition to town employees. She explained that outside personnel have limited responsibilities and still require coordination and training. Ms. Herbert also noted challenges with employee availability, specialized

equipment, safety, and liability. She reiterated that reducing event frequency would help address recurring staff demands.

The Board reached consensus to proceed with planning for the combined holiday event and the revised July 3rd fireworks schedule. The Board did not reach a final decision on reducing Friday Night on White.

The Board discussed gathering additional information, including staffing-hour comparisons, attendance, sponsorship revenue, downtown business feedback, and potential alternatives. The Board agreed to revisit the Friday Night on White recommendation at the upcoming work session and meeting, allowing time for further review and public comment. Ms. Herbert noted that timely direction was important because sponsorship planning and event scheduling for 2027 were approaching.

2. Discussion of Monthly Financial Report

2.1 Discussion of June and July Financial Summaries

Summaries received.

3. Review of Draft Agenda for Upcoming Regular Meeting

3.1 Draft Agenda for BOC Regular Meeting September 15, 2026

Town Manager Kip Padgett advised that Consideration for Go Wake Forest Fare Collection Update and Consideration of a Service Expansion Proposal needs to be added to the agenda. Also, Update Discussion on Holding Subdivision should be added to the agenda.

4. Other Business

5. Commissioner Reports

Commissioner Cross thanked the Board for establishing the Age-Friendly Committee. Commissioner Cross advised she held Coffee with a Commissioner along with Commissioner Hupp, attended the Food Security Summit, attended the Sustainability

Open House, the Public Art Advisory Board meeting, attended Touch-a-Truck event, and attended the kickoff of Senior Month.

Commissioner Sliwinski announced Good Neighbor Day on September 19th at Joyner Park from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. and the Mental Wellness Fair 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. on September 26th at the Renaissance Centre. Commissioner Sliwinski noted that the fair would feature scheduled periods for resource vendors and separate sessions for presentations and panel discussions.

Commissioner Hupp advised he attended Coffee with a Commissioner with Commissioner Cross, the Food Security Summit, and the mobile market. Commissioner Hupp encouraged residents to attend the Parks and Recreation Unplugged event on September 6th and the Concerts in the Park at Joyner Park on September 13th.

Commissioner Wright advised he attended the Technology Advisory Board's discussion of potential municipal AI applications, including chatbots for frequently asked questions and improved tracking and coordination of service requests. Commissioner Wright anticipates further updates as projects develop. To present to the Board.

Commissioner Shackleford had no report.

Mayor Clapsaddle praised Lisa Hayes and her team for the collaborative spirit of the Food Security Summit, thanking participating commissioners, Town staff, elected officials, and community partners. Mayor Clapsaddle announced special programming for the September 11th Friday Night on White event, including a September 11th remembrance, a Fire Department Honor Guard presentation, patriotic musical performances by local artists, and the national anthem performed by local recording artist Maya Warren. Mayor Clapsaddle thanked Town staff and Board members for their service and reminded residents that Town offices would be closed on Labor Day, September 7th, except for essential public safety services.

Town Clerk Evelyn Wright had no updates.

Town Manager Kip Padgett had no update.

6. Adjournment

The Board of Commissioners adjourned the meeting at 7:58 p.m.

Duly approved in open session this ___ day of October 2026.

(ATTEST)

TOWN OF WAKE FOREST INCORPORATED SEAL FEB 20, 1909 NORTH CAROLINA

Ben C. Clapsaddle, Mayor

Evelyn Wright, Town Clerk