



# Town of Mars Hill

## MAYOR AND BOARD OF ALDERMEN

John L. Chandler  
*Mayor*  
Nicholas A. Honeycutt  
*Vice-Mayor*  
Robert W. Zink  
*Treasurer*  
Stuart L. Jolley  
*Clerk*  
Larry H. Davis  
*Secretary*

### MINUTES REGULAR MEETING Mars Hill Town Hall – Conference Room January 5, 2026 at 6:00 p.m.

The Town of Mars Hill Mayor and Board of Aldermen met in regular session on Monday, January 5, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. in the Mars Hill Town Hall.

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Mayor John Chandler; Aldermen Larry Davis, Nicholas Honeycutt, Stuart Jolley, and Robert W. (Bob) Zink.

**STAFF PRESENT:** Nathan R. Bennett, Town Manager; Larry Leake, Town Attorney; Nathan Waldrop, Fire Chief; and Chad Wilson, Police Chief

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Theresa Gang, Doug Hattaway, Monica Buckner, Bill Sewell, Bill Downey, Larry Smith, Ryan Bell, Sarah Scully, Debbie Capps, Clay Capps, and other members of the general public.

#### Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Mayor John Chandler. Mayor Chandler welcomed those in attendance.

#### Approval of the Agenda

Mayor Chandler asked the Board to review the proposed agenda for approval. Upon review of the agenda, Mayor Chandler called for a motion. **Alderman Nicholas Honeycutt made a motion that the agenda be approved as presented.** Alderman Larry Davis seconded the motion. Upon a call for a vote on the motion by the Mayor, the agenda was unanimously approved. (Attachment A)

#### Approval of Minutes

Mayor Chandler then asked the Board to review the minutes of the regular meeting held on December 1, 2025. There being no modifications to the minutes, **Alderman Davis made a motion that the minutes for December 1, 2025, be approved as presented by management.** Alderman Honeycutt seconded the motion. Upon a call for a vote on the motion by the Mayor, the minutes were unanimously approved.

#### Old Business

Mayor Chandler then moved to address old business. There was no old business.

#### New Business

Mayor Chandler then moved to address new business.

## **Bone Camp Creek Property Acquisition Project**

### **NC Parks & Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF) Grant and Helene Recovery Fund for PARTF Grant**

Mayor Chandler recognized Town Manager Nathan Bennett to provide information regarding the NC Parks & Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF) Grant and the Helene Recovery Fund for PARTF Grant, in regard to the Bone Camp Creek Property acquisition project. Mr. Bennett reminded the Board that the Bone Camp Creek property is located off Bone Camp Road and adjoins the Town of Mars Hill Bailey Mountain Park and Preserve property as previously discussed by the Board. Mr. Bennett advised that this acquisition project is in coordination and cooperation with partners Trust for Public Land and Madison County Conservancy. Mr. Bennett advised the Board that several public meetings have been held in the community and that the partner groups have made several presentations to the Mayor and Board of Aldermen previously regarding this project. Mr. Bennett then provided information regarding two grant programs that the Town plans to pursue to assist in the acquisition of the Bone Camp Creek property. Mr. Bennett provided thorough summary of the Helene Recovery Fund for NC Parks & Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF) 2025-2026 Grant and the separate, but similar, NC Parks & Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF) 2025-2026 Grant, regarding the Bone Camp Creek Property acquisition project. Mr. Bennett advised the Board that the NC General Assembly established the Helene Recovery Fund to be administered under the same provisions as the regular PARTF grant program, a program which the Town has successfully participated in with a separate acquisition and development projects. Mr. Bennett explained that the Helene funding is designated for those jurisdictions within the presidentially declared disaster area from Hurricane Helene, which includes the Town of Mars Hill and Madison County. Mr. Bennett stated that there is no maximum grant amount set for this program but advised the Town would apply for \$500,000 for the acquisition of Bone Camp Creek property (which is the cap on the regular PARTF grant program). Mr. Bennett advised the Board that the Helene Fund and the regular PARTF grant program are nearly identical in their requirements. The Helene Fund is designated for those communities impacted by Helene with applications awarded additional points if their project is to directly repair a Helene-impacted facility. Mr. Bennett explained, while this project was not directly impacted by Helene, that the entire community surrounding us was, and that this project will benefit all of Madison County and the surrounding region. Mr. Bennett advised the Board the Helene Fund application is due January 30, 2026, with a decision on awards March 27, 2026. If this Helene Fund application is not successful, the Town intends to submit a grant application for the project to the regular PARTF grant cycle due May 1, 2026, with a decision on awards August 28, 2026. Given the similarities of the programs and the same project scope, Mr. Bennett stated that receiving the Board's support for both program applications at this time will help Town staff and partners expedite preparation of these grant applications. Mr. Bennett explained he is hopeful to receive a grant award from the Helene Fund process, and if so, the Town will not submit an application to the regular PARTF grant program. If the Town does not receive a Helene Fund grant, then the Town will be in position to submit to the regular PARTF grant cycle without any further action needed by the Board. Mayor Chandler then recognized Mr. Doug Hattaway with the Trust for Public Land to provide additional information regarding this subject grant program and the overall status of the project. Mr. Hattaway provided the Board with a summary of fundraising activities by the Trust for Public Land. He stated that they have applied to other funds to bring matching funds to this project including a grant from the Appalachian Regional Commission-ARISE program, of which a portion of that funding will be applied to the acquisition of Bone Camp, and also grants from Sierra Nevada, and the Norfolk-Southern Trail Fund. Other applications are pending with two private foundations and the federal side of the Land and Water Conservation Fund, as well as other options with the Trust for Public Land itself when momentum is gained from the success of these pending grant applications, particularly the Helene Recovery Fund and the regular PARTF grant program.

Mayor Chandler then recognized Theresa Gang with the Madison County Conservancy. Ms. Gang stated that she, and her members, are incredibly grateful to the Town and the Trust for Public Land for working together on this important project. Ms. Gang stated these funds from these grant programs are essential in order to secure and

preserve the Bone Camp property for future generations. She and her members are proud to partner with the Town and TPL in this work.

### **Public Meeting and Hearing**

Mayor Chandler then opened the floor to the public for comments and questions regarding the Bone Camp Property acquisition project generally, and the subject grant programs specifically. Ryan Bell, chair of the Friends of Bailey Mountain, spoke in support of the project and both grant applications. Mr. Bell advised the Board that following Hurricane Helene the Bailey Preserve saw an exponential increase in visitors as it was the only publicly accessible hiking area available. The exposure gained following Helene to the region has led to a constant uptick in regular visitors to the Park. He states that the Bailey Preserve and the efforts to secure additional properties to enlarge it are important to the community, Mars Hill University, and others that enjoy the outdoor recreation opportunities the Preserve offers. The addition of Bone Camp is a powerful statement by the Town in the effort to preserve as much of Bailey Mountain as possible for future generations. There were no other public comments.

### **RESOLUTION – Authorizing Helene Recovery Grant for PARTF Grant Application**

Mayor Chandler addressed the resolution authorizing a grant application to the Helene Recovery Fund for PARTF an application date January 30, 2026. Mayor Chandler recognized Mr. Bennett to present the resolution for Board consideration. Mr. Bennett read the resolution and provided a summary of the elements of same. Upon completion of discussion, Mayor Chandler called for a motion. **Alderman Honeycutt made a motion to approve the “RESOLUTION – AUTHORIZING A GRANT APPLICATION TO THE HELENE RECOVERY FUND FOR PARTF 2025-2026 FOR THE BONE CAMP CREEK PROPERTY ACQUISITION PROJECT,” as presented.** Alderman Jolley seconded the motion. Upon a call for a vote by the Mayor, the motion was unanimously approved. (Attachment B)

### **RESOLUTION – Authorizing PARTF Grant Application (Regular Cycle)**

Mayor Chandler addressed the resolution authorizing a grant application to the PARTF regular grant cycle with an application date May 1, 2026. Mayor Chandler recognized Mr. Bennett to present the resolution for Board consideration. Mr. Bennett read the resolution and provided a summary of the elements of same. Upon completion of discussion, Mayor Chandler called for a motion. **Alderman Jolley made a motion to approve the “RESOLUTION – AUTHORIZING A GRANT APPLICATION TO THE N.C. PARKS AND RECREATION TRUST FUND FOR THE BONE CAMP CREEK PROPERTY ACQUISITION PROJECT,” as presented.** Alderman Davis seconded the motion. Upon a call for a vote by the Mayor, the motion was unanimously approved. (Attachment C)

### **FIRE DEPARTMENT – REPORT**

Mayor Chandler recognized Fire Chief Nathan Waldrop to provide information concerning the 2025 Annual Report for the Mars Hill Fire Department. Chief Waldrop stated that the department responded to 1419 calls for service in 2025, which was a slight decrease from 2024. He stated that 62% of these calls were medical and 38% were fire service. Calls were spread out evenly over the month, with March being the busiest month. Chief Waldrop stated that the calls this year generally occurred during the middle of the day which is a change from prior years and calls for service are spread out pretty evenly over the three shifts (A-shift 469 / B-shift 429 / C-shift 518). Chief Waldrop stated that the department tracks overlapping calls for service. Chief Waldrop provided general updates stating the following: the new Truck-5 (first responder vehicle) has been completed and placed into service, new Brush 5-2 unit has been completed and placed into service and have been very busy with it running several wildfire calls over the past several weeks. He stated that they are very pleased with these new units and grateful for the Board’s assistance with acquiring these needed replacement vehicles. In addition to

these items, Chief Waldrup advised that at Mr. Bennett's direction he submitted an application to the N.C. League of Municipalities for a grant from their safety program for an additional portable light tower apparatus. Chief Waldrup stated this grant was approved and the grant will provide \$5,000 toward the total purchase and should receive it in the next couple of months. Chief Waldrup stated the additional new Brush 5 is still at the upfitter due to personnel setbacks with the vendor, but he has been advised that this vehicle will be completed and ready for deployment very soon. Chief Waldrup provided other general updates regarding department operations. Upon completion of his report, Mayor Chandler thanked Chief Waldrup for his hard work and the good presentation.

### **POLICE DEPARTMENT - REPORT**

Mayor Chandler recognized Police Chief Chad Wilson to provide information concerning the 2025 Annual Report for the Mars Hill Police Department. Chief Wilson stated the department responded to 1329 calls for service in 2025. Chief Wilson stated that the department made seven (7) felony arrests, 25 misdemeanor arrests, issued 188 citations, 121 parking tickets, conducted 50 investigations, and completed 25 full accident reports. Chief Wilson stated that the department also conducted 15 special events including the monthly First Friday events, Independence Day event, Christmas Parade, as well as Mars Hill University and other community organization special events. Chief Wilson reported that the department has upgraded the LPR technology system with four (4) new units installed and in use, now using Flock.

Mayor Chandler asked if the Board had any questions. Alderman Honeycutt asked both Chief Wilson and Chief Waldrup if there were any needs for the departments at this time or items to consider for the next fiscal year budget. Chief Waldrup advised that he and Chief Wilson have had discussions regarding the need both departments have for utility task vehicles (UTV), also known side-by-sides. Chief Waldrup stated that the increased visitation to the Bailey Mountain Preserve presents a growing need to have a vehicle to respond to accidents on the mountain. Chief Wilson also stated that a UTV would enhance the police department's capabilities during special events as they can move easier through crowded conditions. The department could also access places during inclement weather events that a traditional vehicle cannot reach, which would increase the safety of first responders. Alderman Honeycutt asked if the departments currently had UTVs and Chief Waldrup advised that Mars Hill does not have any UTVs. Chief Wilson added that during several response calls Mars Hill received mutual assistance from Ebbs Chapel Fire Department using their UTV. Alderman Zink added that Ebbs Chapel received a state grant to purchase the UTV and inquired if Mars Hill could do that. Chief Waldrup advised that Mars Hill used that same state grant to upfit the new brush trucks he described previously as those funds were directed for wildland fire preparedness. Alderman Honeycutt asked staff what the rough cost of a UTV would be to meet the departments need. Chief Wilson advised that a 2-seat unit would be approximately \$25,000 and a 4-seat unit would be approximately \$35,000, in base cost. There were no other questions from the Board. Mayor Chandler also thanked Chief Wilson for his hard work and the good information provided.

### **February Meeting Location Change – Mars Hill Anderson Rosenwald School**

Mayor Chandler then addressed the request for the Board to hold the regular meeting on February 2, 2026, at the Mars Hill Anderson Rosenwald School. Upon completion of discussion, Mayor Chandler called for a motion. **Alderman Honeycutt made a change the location of the February 2, 2026, regular Board meeting to the Mars Hill Anderson Rosenwald School, as presented.** Alderman Davis seconded the motion. Upon a call for a vote by the Mayor, the motion was unanimously approved. Mayor Chandler noted the meeting will be held on the same date and time on February 2, 2026, at 6:00 p.m.

### **Town Manager Report – Nathan Bennett, Town Manager**

Mayor Chandler then recognized Mr. Bennett to provide the Town Manager Report.

### General Update

Mayor Chandler then recognized Mr. Bennett to provide the Town Manager Report. Mr. Bennett advised the Board that the trash truck purchase authorized at the December 2025 meeting has been finalized and added to the Town sanitation fleet. Mr. Bennett also advised that the Madison County Board of Elections has invoiced the Town for their cost to administer the November 2025 municipal election. Mr. Bennett stated the Board of Elections charge to the Town for this service was \$5,039.30, and the Town paid the invoice last week. Mr. Bennett then advised the Board that Congressman Edwards district staff asked to provide their mobile office hours for constituent services through their RV office at the Town Hall parking lot on January 13, 2026, from 9 a.m. until 10:15 a.m. Mr. Bennett advised there were no significant changes in the status of town projects since the December meeting given the holiday season.

Mr. Bennett provided the Board with a summary of other activities, ongoing projects, and other items of interest to the Board. Mr. Bennett reminded the Board that the Town will observe the Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday on Monday, January 19, 2026.

Mayor Chandler thanked Mr. Bennett for his report.

### Public Comment

Mayor Chandler then moved to public comment. Mayor Chandler recognized Debbie Capps who provided comments regarding the Town's process in preparing the N. Main Small Area Plan and her opinion that the Town did not attempt to contact her. Mayor Chandler thanked Ms. Capps for her comments.

Mayor Chandler then recognized Ryan Bell who provided information regarding the First Fridays events. He stated it would be helpful if the Town could provide a letter of support for a grant from the Madison County Tourism Development Authority they are preparing to fund the operational costs. Mayor Chandler thanks Mr. Bell for his comments.

### Closed Session (Pursuant to N.C.G.S. 143-318.11(a)(3) & (4))

Mayor Chandler advised the Board that there is an item concerning a confidential economic development project that requires a closed session. **Alderman Zink made a motion to enter closed session for the purpose of discussion of a confidential economic development project and consultation with legal counsel pursuant to N.C.G.S. 143-318.11(a)(3) & (4).** Alderman Honeycutt seconded the motion. Upon a call for a vote on the motion by the Mayor, the motion was unanimously approved.

### *CLOSED SESSION*

Upon completion of discussion of the matter subject to the closed session, Mayor Chandler called for a motion to return to open session. **Alderman Zink made a motion that the Board end the closed session and return to open session.** Alderman Honeycutt seconded the motion. Upon a call for a vote on the motion by the Mayor, the motion was unanimously approved.

### Open Session

Upon return to open session, Mayor Chandler announced there was no action subject to the closed session.

### First Fridays Letter of Support

Mayor Chandler then advised that there was additional discussion regarding the public comment from Ryan Bell requesting support for the First Fridays events and the organizations grant application to the Madison County

Tourism Development Authority. Upon completion of discussion of the First Fridays request, Mayor Chandler called for a motion. **Alderman Honeycutt made a motion to authorize the Mayor and/or Town Manager to provide a letter of support on behalf of the Town of Mars Hill for the First Fridays application to the Madison County Tourism Development Authority, as discussed.** Alderman Davis seconded the motion. Upon a call for a vote by the Mayor, the motion was unanimously approved.

**Adjourn**

There being no further business before the Board, Mayor Chandler called for a motion to adjourn. **Alderman Zink made a motion to adjourn.** Alderman Jolley seconded the motion. Upon a call for a vote on the motion by the Mayor, the motion to adjourn was unanimously approved.

Approved and authenticated this the 17<sup>th</sup> day of February, 2026.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
John L. Chandler, Mayor

ATTEST:



Nathan R. Bennett,  
Town Manager





ATTACHMENT A

# Town of Mars Hill

MAYOR AND BOARD OF ALDERMEN

John L. Chandler

*Mayor*

Nicholas A. Honeycutt

*Vice-Mayor*

Robert W. Zink

*Treasurer*

Stuart L. Jolley

*Clerk*

Larry H. Davis

*Secretary*

## AGENDA

### REGULAR MEETING

Mars Hill Town Hall Conference Room

January 5, 2026 at 6:00 p.m.

1. Call to Order – Mayor John L. Chandler
2. Approval of Agenda
3. Approval of Minutes: December 1, 2025 – Regular Meeting
4. Old Business
5. New Business
  - a. NC Parks & Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF) Grant & Helene Recovery Fund for PARTF Grant Bone Camp Creek Property Acquisition – Nathan Bennett, Town Manager, and Doug Hattaway, Trust for Public Land
    - i. Public Meeting
    - ii. **RESOLUTION** – Authorizing Helene Recovery Fund for PARTF Grant Application
    - iii. **RESOLUTION** – Authorizing PARTF Grant Application (Regular Cycle)
  - b. Fire Department – Report – Nathan Waldrop, Fire Chief
  - c. Police Department – Report – Chad Wilson, Police Chief
  - d. February Meeting Location Change – Request from Mars Hill Anderson Rosenwald School
6. Town Manager Report – Nathan Bennett, Town Manager
  - a. General Update
7. Public Comment

[Policy: Each speaker shall be limited to a maximum of three (3) minutes. The public comment period is not intended to require the Board of Aldermen or staff to answer any impromptu questions. The Board will not take action on an item presented during the public comment period. The Board may refer inquiries made during the public comment period to the Town Manager to address as appropriate. If necessary, the item may be placed on the agenda of a future meeting.]
8. Closed Session (*Pursuant to N.C.G.S. 143-318.11(a)*)
9. Adjourn

## Mars Hill Town Hall

280 North Main Street • P.O. Box 368

Mars Hill, North Carolina 28754

Phone: (828) 689-2301 • Fax: (828) 689-3333



# Town of Mars Hill

## RESOLUTION

### AUTHORIZING A GRANT APPLICATION TO THE HELENE RECOVERY FUND FOR PARTF 2025-2026 FOR THE BONE CAMP CREEK PROPERTY ACQUISITION PROJECT

**WHEREAS**, the North Carolina General Assembly ratified the Disaster Recovery Act of 2025 (SL-2025-26, House Bill 1012) in June 2025, in response to the devastation caused by Hurricane Helene in September 2024; and

**WHEREAS**, the Act established, in part, the Helene Recovery Fund to provide dollar-for-dollar grants to local governments for parks and recreational projects in counties and municipalities affected by Hurricane Helene; and

**WHEREAS**, the Town of Mars Hill is located wholly within Madison County which is an eligible county included in the designated presidential major disaster declaration area; and

**WHEREAS**, Madison County, and neighboring counties of Buncombe and Yancey and others, experienced catastrophic damage from Hurricane Helene to parks and recreation infrastructure, while the Town of Mars Hill became the hub for outdoor recreation for the region; and

**WHEREAS**, the Town of Mars Hill recognizes the desire of residents and visitors alike to enjoy parks and recreation services and green spaces at all times, but particularly during these tragic situations as a way to reduce anxiety and stress; and

**WHEREAS**, the Town of Mars Hill seeks to acquire real property consisting of 138 acres, known as the “Bone Camp Creek Property,” for the development and creation of recreational resources for citizens and visitors; and

**WHEREAS**, the Bone Camp Creek property will be added to the Town-owned Bailey Mountain Park and Preserve (also known as Mars Hill Smith Farm Park) to facilitate resource expansion and connection to the Dr. W. Otis Duck Greenway which connects Bailey Mountain Park and Preserve to downtown Mars Hill and Mars Hill University.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the Town of Mars Hill Mayor and Board of Aldermen do hereby firmly resolve to support the Bone Camp Property acquisition; and, **FURTHER RESOLVE** to support an application to the Helene Recovery Fund for PARTF, authorizing the Mayor, Town Manager and any other Town Officers to prepare and submit said application, and commit to accept and support the administration of any such grant that may be awarded for the acquisition of real property known at the Bone Camp Creek property for the development of recreational elements and commit to project completion within three (3) years of any such award.

**ADOPTED** this 5<sup>th</sup> day of January 2026, by the Town of Mars Hill Mayor and Board of Aldermen.

Attest:

  
Stuart L. Jolley, Town Clerk



  
John L. Chandler, Mayor

**Mars Hill Town Hall**  
280 North Main Street • P.O. Box 368  
Mars Hill, North Carolina 28714  
Phone: (828) 689-2301 • Fax: (828) 689-3333  
[www.townofmarshill.org](http://www.townofmarshill.org)



# Town of Mars Hill

## RESOLUTION

### AUTHORIZING A GRANT APPLICATION TO THE N.C. PARKS AND RECREATION TRUST FUND FOR THE BONE CAMP CREEK PROPERTY ACQUISITION PROJECT

**WHEREAS**, the North Carolina Parks and Recreation Trust Fund provides dollar-for-dollar grants to local governments for parks and recreational projects to serve the public; and

**WHEREAS**, the Town of Mars Hill recognizes the desire of residents and visitors alike to enjoy parks and recreation services and green spaces; and

**WHEREAS**, the Town of Mars Hill seeks to acquire real property consisting of 138 acres, known as the "Bone Camp Creek Property," for the development and creation of recreational resources for citizens and visitors; and

**WHEREAS**, the Bone Camp Creek property will be added to the Town-owned Bailey Mountain Park and Preserve (also known as Mars Hill Smith Farm Park) to facilitate resource expansion and connection to the Dr. W. Otis Duck Greenway which connects Bailey Mountain Park and Preserve to downtown Mars Hill and Mars Hill University.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the Town of Mars Hill Mayor and Board of Aldermen do hereby firmly resolve their support of the Bone Camp Property acquisition; and, **FURTHER RESOLVE** to authorize an application to the North Carolina Parks and Recreation Trust Fund, and authorize the Mayor, Town Manager and any other required Town Officers to prepare and submit said application, and will accept and support the administration of any such grant that may be awarded for the acquisition of the Bone Camp Creek Property for the development of recreational elements committing to project completion within three (3) years of any such award.

**ADOPTED** this 5<sup>th</sup> day of January 2026, by the Town of Mars Hill Mayor and Board of Aldermen.

Attest:

  
Stuart L. Jolley, Town Clerk



  
John L. Chandler, Mayor