



# 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 SPECIAL MEETING Mars Hill Town Hall Conference Room May 29, 2025 at 5:00 p.m.

The Town of Mars Hill Mayor and Board of Aldermen met in special session on Thursday, May 29, 2025, at 5:00 p.m. in the Mars Hill Town Hall. The meeting was held in accordance with public notice given pursuant to N.C.G.S. 160A-71 and 143-318.12(b)(2). (Attachment A)

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Mayor John Chandler; Aldermen Larry Davis, Stuart Jolley, and Robert W. (Bob) Zink. Alderman Nicholas Honeycutt was absent due to an employment obligation.

**STAFF PRESENT:** Nathan R. Bennett, Town Manager

**OTHERS PRESENT:** None

#### Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Mayor John Chandler.

#### 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 Stuart Jolley 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 approved unanimously. (Attachment B)

#### Budget Work Session – Fiscal Year 2024-2025

Mayor Chandler then moved to the budget work session for FY 2025-2026. Mayor Chandler asked Town Manager Nathan Bennett to provide information regarding the budget process and next steps. Mr. Bennett advised the Board that the draft budget is complete. Mr. Bennett stated that given the information from the county tax office, he is recommending the current tax rate remain at \$0.34 per \$100 of valuation. He stated that the amount of property tax expected for appropriation in the budget is \$950,250, which is a slight increase of \$22,932 over current year budget. Mr. Bennett stated there is still some fluidity in the appraised value of town property due to the county's reappraisal appeal process. Mr. Bennett reviewed other revenue sources, including sales tax, fire tax, and earned interest, and explained that confidence is high in their accuracy for budgeting purposes. He advised the water & sewer fund budget does include a 2.5% rate increase as set by long-standing board policy. Mr. Bennett then reviewed each department budget and identified necessary capital expenditures and expected increases in personnel costs (including COLA, retirement, and health insurance), and general property and liability insurance. Mr. Bennett stated that he recommends an across the board pay increase of

\$2,500 per full-time employee. The Consumer Price Index for April is up 2.3 % from April 2024 and appears to be following an upward trend. Mr. Bennett advised that there will be a 1% increase to the contribution rate for the Local Government Retirement System. He stated there are expected increases to employee health insurance premiums, as set by the N.C. State Health Plan, but are not known at this time but will be effective in January 2026. Mr. Bennett advised the Board that the draft budget will be ready for the required public hearing at the regular June 2, 2025, board meeting and the Board can decide whether to adopt or wait until later in June to make the final decision on adoption. General discussion continued by Board members regarding various points of interest pertaining to revenue sources and proposed investment and improvement to buildings, grounds, vehicles, equipment, and service delivery.

#### **Other Budget-Related Discussion**

Mr. Bennett updated the Board on the current FY 2025 budget status. He advised the Board that as the fiscal year ends, he will be meeting with the Towns contract CPA to determine what budget amendments will be necessary to reconcile the budget for year-end. Mr. Bennett advised the Board he proposes a brief work session in late June to review any potential amendments. After a brief discussion, Board member consensus was to hold such meeting on June 24, 2025, but formal approval will be considered at the regular meeting on June 2, 2025. Mr. Bennett then discussed water rates, including a brief discussion regarding a specific rate for areas along NC 213 corridor beyond the Bailey Gap water tank location. Mr. Bennett is going to consult with the Town Attorney regarding the rate setting process and bring a recommendation to a future meeting. Mr. Bennett then advised the Board that the Trust for Public Land and Madison County Conservancy will be at the June 2 regular meeting of the Board regarding the Town's position on acquisition and potential ownership of the former Bailey Mountain Bike Park property located on Bone Camp Road. Mr. Bennett advised that the Trust and Conservancy representatives will likely be asking the Town to commit to future ownership of the property and also serve as the applicant for a grant they are pursuing to purchase the property. There was general discussion among the Board concerning the property and the Town's liability exposure and future costs to maintain said property. Mr. Bennett advised the Board the questions they have regarding those issues would be appropriate to ask of the representatives at the meeting.

Mr. Bennett reminded the Board that the Town-sponsored Independence Day Celebration will be held on Friday, July 4, 2025, beginning at 5:00 p.m., with fireworks presented by the Mars Hill Fire Department at 9:30 p.m.

#### **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 2<sup>nd</sup> day of June, 2025.

ATTEST:



Nathan R. Bennett,  
Town Manager

  
John L. Chandler, Mayor



Notice of Special Meeting of the  
Town of Mars Hill  
Mayor and Board of Aldermen  
Scheduled for 29 May 2025

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that the Mars Hill Mayor and Board of Aldermen shall, pursuant to NC Gen. Stat. 160A-71 and NC Gen. Stat. 143-318.12(b)(2), hold a special meeting at the following designated place and time:

Date of Meeting: Thursday, 29 May 2025

Time of Meeting: 5:00 p.m.


Place of Meeting: Mars Hill Town Hall  
Small Conference Room  
280 North Main Street  
Mars Hill, North Carolina

Purpose of Meeting: Budget Work Session for Town of Mars Hill Fiscal Year 2025-2026.

This the 27<sup>th</sup> day of May 2025.

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

Posted as required by NC Gen. Stat. 160A-71 and NC Gen. Stat. 143-318.12(b)(2) on this 27<sup>th</sup> day of May, 2025 at 3:00 o'clock p.m.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Nathan R. Bennett, Town Manager



ATTACHMENT B

# 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**  
**SPECIAL MEETING**  
**BUDGET WORK SESSION**  
**Mars Hill Town Hall Conference Room**  
**May 29, 2025 at 5:00 p.m.**

1. Call to Order – Mayor John L. Chandler
2. Approval of Agenda
3. Budget Work Session – Fiscal Year 2025-2026
4. Other Budget-Related Discussion
5. Adjourn

**Mars Hill Town Hall**  
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Mars Hill, North Carolina 28754  
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