



# 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 October 7, 2024 at 6:00 p.m.

The Town of Mars Hill Mayor and Board of Aldermen met in regular session on Monday, October 7, 2024, 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, for Town Attorney; Nathan Waldrup, Fire Chief; and Chad Wilson, Police Chief

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Ryan Bell, Dorothy Rapp, and Ray Rapp

#### 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 Bob Zink made a motion to approve the agenda 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 asked the Board to review the minutes of the special meeting held on September 9, 2024, to conduct the regular business meeting for September which was postponed due to the Labor Day holiday on September 2, 2024. There being no modifications to the minutes, **Alderman Stuart Jolley made a motion to approve the minutes of the September 9, 2024, regular meeting as presented by management.** Alderman Nicholas 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.

#### RFQ – Engineering Services for Calvin Edney Rd./Exit 11 Water Sewer Extension Project

Mayor Chandler recognized Town Manager Nathan Bennett to present information concerning the Request For Qualifications (RFQ) for engineering services for the proposed Calvin Edney Road/Exit 11 Water and Sewer Extension Project. Mr. Bennett advised the Board that the RFQ for engineering services for this ARC/Dogwood grant-funded project was released by the Town on September 5, 2024. The Town received three (3) responses to

the request as follows: McGill Associates, RVE Consulting Engineers, and WithersRavenel. Mr. Bennett advised that the documentation from each firm was evaluated by Land of Sky Regional Council Planning Director Mary Roderick, together with Mr. Bennett utilizing a scoring matrix with McGill receiving the highest score. Staff recommend approval of the RFQ from McGill Associates and request a proposed engineering services agreement from McGill for the Boards consideration. Upon completion of discussion by the Board, Mayor Chandler asked for a motion. **Alderman Davis made a motion to approve the Request for Qualifications for engineering services proposal from McGill Associates and request McGill Associates to provide the Town an engineering services agreement for consideration for the Calvin Edney Road/Exit 11 Water and Sewer Line Extension Project as presented.** Alderman Jolley seconded the motion. Upon a call for a vote by the Mayor, the motion was approved unanimously.

There was no other old business.

### New Business

Mayor Chandler then moved to address new business.

### **TROPICAL STORM HELENE**

#### **PROCLAMATION – Ratification of Local State of Emergency**

Mayor Chandler recognized Town Manager Nathan Bennett to provide information regarding Tropical Storm Helene and the Proclamation Declaring a Local State of Emergency. Mr. Bennett advised the Board that Hurricane Helene was forecast by the National Weather Service to bring extremely dangerous weather conditions to the region. Town of Mars Hill Mayor John Chandler issued a proclamation for a local state of emergency on September 25, 2024, in keeping with Executive Order 315 issued by North Carolina Governor Roy Cooper declaring a State of Emergency earlier the same day in preparation for the approaching storm. Hurricane Helene came ashore as a category 4 storm in Big Bend area of Florida on September 26, 2024. The incredibly strong remnant tropical storm proceeded to leave devastation, flooding, and power outages across the states of Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, and North Carolina. Western North Carolina saw catastrophic flooding, devastation, power, and water outages not seen in over 100 years. Mr. Bennett advised that the Town escaped the severe damage that ravaged our neighboring towns and counties, but Town departments fully responded to the situation to support our community and provide resources to our neighboring towns. Reports from Town department heads will follow. Mr. Bennett explained the Mayor is authorized by state law to issue the local state of emergency, but he recommends the Board vote to ratify that action for the record. Upon completion of discussion by the Board, **Alderman Honeycutt made a motion to ratify the “PROCLAMATION – LOCAL STATE OF EMERGENCY,” regarding Tropical Storm Helene, as issued by Mayor John L. Chandler on September 25, 2024.** Alderman Zink seconded the motion. Upon a call for a vote by the Mayor, the motion was approved unanimously. (Attachment B)

### **REPORTS – TOWN RESPONSE EFFORTS**

Mayor Chandler then recognized Mars Hill Fire Chief Nathan Waldrop to provide a report regarding storm response efforts by the fire department.

### **FIRE DEPARTMENT**

Fire Chief Nathan Waldrop provided the Board a report summarizing the activities and efforts of the fire department response to Tropical Storm Helene. Chief Waldrop stated that fortunately the Town and most of the first district did not have significant damage and are grateful for that. However, Chief Waldrop reported that the Ivy River area of the fire district did receive substantial devastation. He advised that his team, the fire service, responded to many calls for service and that several homes were lost in the areas near the river. The department

conducted search and recovery activities along the river area, which included discovery of multiple vehicles. Chief Waldrop reported that the department did respond to one (1) fatality related to the storm on Friday, September 27. A female victim stepped out of her flooded vehicle and was swept away by the current. Her body was soon recovered by department staff. Following the immediate response activities, the department switched to a support mode and assisted with coordination and delivery of supplies including food, countless units of MREs, bottled water, and other supports. He stated that the department assisted the public by distributing bulk water to community members in containers ranging from gallon jugs, 100-gallon containers, up to road tankers, estimating they had delivered 14,000 to 18,000 gallons of potable water out of the main fire station. Chief Waldrop stated that he and the deputy chief were on the clock 24 hours a day, from the beginning of the event up to this past Thursday. Shift employees remained on their regular shift schedules and that worked great, together with tremendous support from the volunteer members of the department. Chief Waldrop stated that he supported the public works department with helping them with large-scale water distribution and assisted public works with improved radio communication by putting the fire repeater channel in public works radios allowing them to communicate at locations throughout town. Upon completion of the report, Chief Waldrop asked if there were any questions. Mayor Chandler stated that he appreciated all that Chief Waldrop, and the department have done and that they have done an excellent job by going above and beyond in their efforts to support the community during this time. Every Board member echoed that sentiment and thanked Chief Waldrop for the report and the great service from him and the members of the fire department.

### **POLICE DEPARTMENT**

Mayor Chandler then recognized Mars Hill Police Chief Chad Wilson to provide a report regarding storm response efforts by the police department. Chief Wilson stated that at the beginning of the storm he implemented an emergency response plan increasing the number of officers working on each shift to provide additional officer coverage around the clock. The emergency response plan providing this increase in officers on duty remained in effect until Saturday, October 5, 2024. The police department officer directed traffic and maintained public order at all three gas stations, provided security for Ingles Market, conducted numerous welfare checks, assisted Mars Hill University with food distribution and assisted with fire watch while power was out, provided security for Brookstone Church event in MHU football stadium, assisted N.C. State Highway Patrol, Madison and Buncombe County Sheriff's Offices with wrecks, disabled vehicles, and breaking and entering incidents. Chief Wilson also stated that officers provided escorts for bulk water transport to Yancey County, assisted with establishing the county emergency shelter, and assisted with relief supply donations coming to Mars Hill and with food and water distribution. The police department assisted the fire department with the establishment of a command post in Mars Hill. The department investigated two significant motor vehicles crashes: vehicle crashed into storm-related sink hole at the Waffle House resulting in minor injuries; and a motor vehicle striking two pedestrians resulting in serious injuries and hospitalization of the pedestrians. Upon completion of the report, Chief Wilson asked if there were any questions. Mayor Chandler stated that he appreciated all that Chief Wilson and the police department have done throughout this storm event. He thanked Chief Wilson for the excellent job supporting the community. Every Board member echoed that sentiment and thanked Chief Wilson for the report and the great service from him and the members of the police department.

### **PUBLIC WORKS AND ADMINISTRATION DEPARTMENTS**

Mayor Chandler then recognized Town Manager Nathan Bennett to provide a report regarding storm response efforts by the public works department and administration. Mr. Bennett stated that all Town staff have been integral in the Town's response and recovery efforts. As noted previously, the Town's Local State of Emergency continues to be in effect. Importantly, there has been no interruption in essential town services, and there has been a full response by the fire, police, fire, public works, and administrative functions of Town government. The administration has sent numerous CodeRED messages were sent to citizens advising of the State of Emergency

and other essential information regarding town service delivery changes. Town officials met with Mars Hill University administrative and safety personnel to assist with their response, while also attending the daily meetings of the Madison County Emergency Management Response Team. MHU closed classes on Friday, September 27, and will remain closed until classes resume on October 14, 2024. Many but not all students left campus. University provided shelter in place for students remaining on campus.

Mr. Bennett advised the Board that Town Hall administrative offices were closed to the public on Friday, September 27, but offices reopened on regular schedule on Monday, September 30. Town Hall immediately lost phone and internet phone service and that was restored on Thursday, October 3, at approximately 4:00 p.m. Town Hall received a Starlink internet service on Tuesday, October 1, 2024, from NC Emergency Management resources. Town administration was able to continue operations and were able to timely process employee payroll on Wednesday, October 2, for the current payroll period. Importantly, town administration was able to provide office workspace for the Towns of Marshall and Spruce Pine to process employee payroll, water utility billing, and other finance/administrative activities. Town management offered these resources to the Towns of Burnsville, Town of Hot Springs, Yancey County, and Madison County but they have not been utilized at this time.

Mr. Bennett advised the Board that the public works department has been very busy throughout this event. The Town of Mars Hill Water System was never compromised – no line breakages, no damage to the water treatment plant or distribution system. The Town received request from the Town of Weaverville on Sunday, September 29, 2024, to utilize the emergency water system interconnection to provide public water to the Town of Weaverville temporarily until damage to their raw water intake on the Ivy River could be repaired. That interconnection was activated, and transfer of water began on Monday, September 30 and continued until Thursday, October 3, when Weaverville was able to restart their water plant. The Town of Mars Hill provided approximately 468,000 gallons of water to Weaverville. Town of Burnsville has requested access to public water to assist with restoration of their water treatment plant later this week (on or after Wednesday, October 9.) Town filled 16, 300-gallon water tanks to deliver to Burnsville, Bakersville, and other towns and communities. Additional bulk water distribution is expected to continue as needed. In addition to water distribution, Town public works crews were activated and dispatched to the Town of Marshall to assist with water and sewer utility restoration services. Public works crews completed projects in Marshall on Sunday, September 29, and Tuesday, October 1 through Friday, October 4. Crews were also dispatched to the Town of Hot Springs to deliver parts and assist with water and wastewater system repairs. Mr. Bennett advised the Board that he is continually monitoring the situation and communicating with federal, state, county, and regional partners for additional appropriate actions. The Mayor and Board thanked Mr. Bennett for all his efforts and appreciate the hard work of the public works staff in taking care of all the issues in Mars Hill and for providing much-needed assistance to our neighboring communities of Marshall, Hot Springs, and Weaverville, and others.

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

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

#### **General Update**

Mr. Bennett provided the Board a brief update on various town projects. As noted, all efforts have been concentrated on response and recovery efforts from Tropical Storm Helene. Mr. Bennett addressed other items of interest to the Board.

**Public Comment**

Mayor Chandler then moved to public comment. Mayor Chandler recognized Mr. Ray Rapp to provide public comment. Mr. Rapp complimented the town response and in particular the efforts of town employees to address a variety of issues concerning the storm response and recovery. Mr. Rapp specifically thanked the town for providing public works employees and equipment to transport some 200 grills and associated bags of charcoal donated by a relief group from a warehouse in Asheville to the county distribution center in Marshall. Mayor Chandler then recognized Ryan Bell. Mr. Bell thank the fire chief and police chief for all their efforts and that of their staff regarding the storm response.

There were no other public comments.

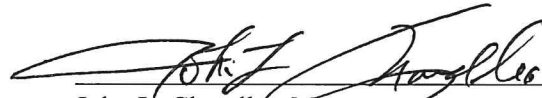
**Closed Session (Pursuant to N.C.G.S. 143-318.11)**

There was no closed session.

**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 4<sup>th</sup> day of November, 2024.

  
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**  
**October 7, 2024 at 6:00 p.m.**

1. Call to Order – Mayor John L. Chandler
2. Approval of Agenda
3. Approval of Minutes: September 9, 2024 Regular Meeting
4. Old Business
  - a. RFQ – Engineering Services for Calvin Edney Rd/Exit 11 Water/Sewer Extension Project
5. New Business
  - a. **TROPICAL STORM HELENE**
    - i. **PROCLAMATION – Ratification of Local State of Emergency**
    - ii. **REPORTS - TOWN RESPONSE EFFORTS**
      1. Fire Department
      2. Police Department
      3. Public Works
      4. Administration
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)(5)*)
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



ATTACHMENT B

# Town of Mars Hill

MAYOR AND BOARD OF ALDERMEN

## PROCLAMATION LOCAL STATE OF EMERGENCY

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

**WHEREAS**, Tropical Storm HELENE may have serious impacts on the Town of Mars Hill; and

**WHEREAS**, certain measures are necessary to ensure the protection and safety of Town of Mars Hill residents and to coordinate the emergency response among town, county, and state officials; and

**WHEREAS**, on September 25, 2024, Governor Roy Cooper issued Executive Order 315 declaring a State of Emergency for the State of North Carolina, and likewise, Madison County declared a Local State of Emergency for said County based on the potential for significant impacts to public and private property from the tropical storm; and

**WHEREAS**, the Town of Mars Hill has authority pursuant to N.C. General Statute 166A-19.22 to declare a town-wide State of Emergency and that authority has been vested in the Mayor.

**NOW, THEREFORE**, by the authority vested in me by the laws of the State of North Carolina as Mayor of the Town of Mars Hill, **IT IS ORDERED**:

**Section 1. State of Emergency**

I hereby proclaim and declare a State of Emergency as defined in N.C. General Statute 166A-19.3(6) and N.C. General Statute 166A-19.3(19) exists for the Town of Mars Hill due to the impact from TROPICAL STORM HELENE.

**Section 2. County Emergency Declaration**

The Town of Mars Hill, pursuant to N.C. General Statute 166A-19.22(b)(2), further consents to extending the Declaration of a Local State of Emergency as may be issued by Madison County to the entirety of the Town of Mars Hill.

**Section 4. Term and Future Modifications**

The State of Emergency declared herein shall continue until it is expressly rescinded. The provisions of this Proclamation may be amended by the issuance of subsequent proclamations as conditions warrant.

**Section 5. Dissemination**

The Town directs that copies of the Proclamation be disseminated to the mass communications media for publication and broadcast, and that a copy of this Proclamation be posted at Town Hall and other Town-owned buildings as appropriate.

**IN WITNESS WHEREOF**, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Seal of the Town of Mars Hill, North Carolina to be affixed this 25<sup>th</sup> day of September 2025, at 3:00 p.m.

  
JOHN L. CHANDLER  
Mayor

Attest:  
  
NATHAN R. BENNETT,  
Town Manager

