



**OAK RIDGE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING  
JANUARY 8, 2026 – 7:00 P.M.  
OAK RIDGE TOWN HALL**

**MINUTES**

**Members Present**

Jim Harton, Mayor  
Ann Schneider  
Mike Stone  
Lindsey Clark

**Staff Present**

Bill Bruce, Town Manager  
Sandra Smith, Asst. Town Mgr./Town Clerk  
Michael Thomas, Town Attorney  
Sam Anders, Finance Officer

**Members Absent**

Michael Greeson, Mayor Pro Tem

**Staff Absent**

Sean Taylor, Planning Director

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Jim Harton called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

**A. Invocation**

The invocation was offered by Myra Blackburn.

**B. Pledge of Allegiance**

**2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

*Councilman Mike Stone made a motion to approve the agenda, and Councilwoman Ann Schneider seconded. The motion passed unanimously (4-0).*

**3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

*Councilwoman Ann Schneider made a motion to approve the minutes of the December 4, 2025 regular meeting, and Councilman Mike Stone seconded. The motion passed unanimously (4-0).*

**4. RESOLUTIONS, PROCLAMATIONS, ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Mayor Jim Harton indicated that a proclamation would be incorporated into the Town Manager's Report as Agenda Item 9.

**5. REPORT FROM GUILFORD COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE**

No report

**6. REPORT FROM OAK RIDGE FIRE DEPARTMENT**

Firefighter Liberty of the Oak Ridge Fire Department reported on call statistics for December 2025 and offered winter safety guidance tips on the use of space heaters and the care of smoke and carbon monoxide alarms.

**7. ANNUAL FINANCIAL AUDIT REPORT**

Chad Cooke, lead auditor of Forvis Mazars, presented the financial statement associated with the annual financial audit for the year ending June 30, 2025, which are hereby incorporated by reference and made a part of the minutes. Cooke said the audit has been submitted to the state and he will provide bound copies to the Town once it has been approved. He reported that the Town had received a clean audit opinion regardless of the new standard requirement to add liability for accrued sick time. He discovered two financial performance indicators of concern (FPIC) in the audit, explaining that an FPIC is determined by the Local Government Commission based on information contained within the financial statements. He noted that the first FPIC pertained to the material audit adjustments made due to grant activity over the past two years in funding various Town projects. He added that the second FPIC pertained to a recorded \$79,000 in excess of budgeted expenditures in the Heritage Farm Park capital project fund, which was a recurring expense from the previous year that was originally budgeted in the general fund. He noted that the discrepancy occurred between where the expenditures occurred versus where they were budgeted, concluding that the concern was more of a classification issue and that the project was fully budgeted. Cooke presented highlights in the financial summary, noting a marginal decrease in cash and investments, and a small increase in general fund revenues where the tax rate remained flat, and property valuations increased due to expanding tax bases brought on by new development. He added that general fund expenditures had decreased modestly owing to the slight decrease in capital outlays, and the annual debt service of \$360,000 related to the loan for the Heritage Farm Park land purchase with Truist. He considered the percentage of available fund balance to budget versus budgeted expenditures was healthy.

**8. PUBLIC COMMENTS / COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION REPORTS**

**A. Community Organization Reports**

- Angie Williams, 6015 Dawn Ridge Trail, Greensboro, introduced the non-profit organization Operation Xcel, which services Guilford County by providing free after-school tutoring programs, social emotional learning, and summer enrichment programs to over 800 students in the County.

**B. Comments from the Public**

- Cinnamon Hunter introduced herself as a candidate for the Guilford County Clerk of Court.
- Randy Floss, 5914 Tarleton Drive, HOA president of Oak Ridge Plantation, commented on the need for increased safety at the crosswalk across NC 150, suggesting the addition of flashing lights similar to those at the crosswalks in Friendly Shopping Center, Greensboro.

**9. TOWN MANAGERS REPORT**

**A. Consideration / Approval of appointment of Jim Kinneman as Tree Board member**

*Councilman Mike Stone made a motion to approve the appointment of Jim Kinneman as a Tree Board member, and Councilwoman Ann Schneider seconded. The motion passed unanimously (4-0).*

**B. Consideration / Approval of Resolution R-2026-01 to request NCDOT study and reduce speed limit on Alcorn Road within Oak Ridge Town Limits**

Town Manager Bill Bruce explained that traffic safety concerns related to new residential development located along Alcorn Road were raised at the public hearing for rezoning case #RZ-2025-04. In response to these concerns, the developer, Craig Fleming, asked NCDOT to analyze the speed limit to determine whether a reduction of speed from 45 mph to 35 mph was warranted. Bruce indicated that NCDOT requested a resolution in support of the analysis from the Town.

*Councilwoman Ann Schneider made a motion to approve Resolution R-2026-01 to request NC DOT study and reduce the speed limit on Alcorn Road within Oak Ridge's town limits. Councilwoman Lindsey Clark seconded the motion, and it was passed unanimously (4-0).*

**C. Consideration / Approval of updated Continuity of Government Plan contacts page**

Bruce explained that the contact information on the Continuity of Government Plan's contacts page needed to be updated to reflect the new composition of Council. He noted that accurate information is essential to ensure staff and Council can be reached during an emergency in order to maintain continuity of government operations.

*Councilman Mike Stone made a motion to approve the updated Continuity of Government Plan contacts page, and Councilwoman Ann Schneider seconded. The motion passed unanimously (4-0).*

**D. Any other business**

None

## 10. NEW BUSINESS

### A. Consideration / Approval of Heritage Farm Park Phase 2 Design Contract

Bruce explained that, following Council's direction at the September 4, 2025, meeting to issue a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for the design of Heritage Farm Park Phase II, the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board reviewed four submissions and recommended Revington Reaves as the most qualified firm. He noted that the Board's recommendation was based on the expertise demonstrated in the firm's proposal, which is incorporated by reference and made a part of the minutes, as well as the firm's prior experience designing and administering construction of the Veterans Honor Green. He added that the proposal included a comprehensive survey design and construction-ready documentation for eight lighted pickleball courts, two tennis courts, a basketball court, fitness stations, additional parking, sidewalks and shade structures for a fee of \$133,974, which was \$60,000 less than the estimate for design work that had been provided by McGill Associates. Bruce's recommendation to Council was to approve Revington Reaves' Heritage Farm Park Phase II design proposal.

*Councilman Mike Stone made a motion to approve the Revington Reaves design proposal for Heritage Farm Park Phase II, and Councilwoman Ann Schneider seconded.*

Councilman Mike Stone commented that the approval of the design proposal was a necessary step in advancing to Phase II, which had received clear public support.

Schneider commented that the cost of the proposal reflected an extensive scope of work involved in producing a shovel-ready project. She explained that a team of engineers and specialists would be engaged to develop schematic designs and detailed construction documents, permits, and cost estimates for everything from utilities and grading to site furnishings and other technical details. She expressed confidence in the value of the proposal, citing the firm's past success with the Veterans Honor Green.

Councilwoman Lindsey Clark remarked that the timeline built into the proposed process would afford Council the opportunity to provide input during the design phase and help ensure the final product reflected the Town's vision.

Mayor Jim Harton noted that horticultural designs had not been included in the proposal and Bruce replied that an element of landscaping would be incorporated into the project, though it was not specifically detailed in the proposal. Schneider pointed out in the section entitled "Deliverables" that a planting plan would be provided and a horticulturalist was a member of the design team.

*A vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously (4-0).*

**B. Consideration/Approval of Resolution R-2026-02 to hold a public hearing to close public trail easement in Ashford subdivision**

Bruce indicated that the resolution to declare the Council's intent to hold a public hearing on closing a public trail easement in the Ashford subdivision was required by statute, and that the hearing was to be scheduled for the February meeting.

Town Attorney Michael Thomas stated that the resolution was adequately drafted to represent the only trail easement in the Ashford subdivision. He pointed out that a more detailed legal description of the easement referencing recorded plats, lots, and dimensions would be required for legal advertisement and for final Council action because the hearing involved vacating an interest in land.

*Councilman Mike Stone made a motion to approve Resolution R-2026-02 to hold a public hearing to close the public trail easement in the Ashford subdivision, and Councilwoman Lindsey Clark seconded.*

Stone explained that the resolution did not affect the easement itself but simply affirmed the Council's intent to hold a public hearing on the easement closure, in accordance with the procedure established by Council 18 months earlier.

Schneider stated that because the easement was a matter of public interest, she did not consider the resolution as merely a procedural step.

Clark reiterated Stone's point that the action was solely to decide whether a public hearing should be held to advance the timeline of the process, and that no other decisions would be made at this time.

Harton recalled that the initial two-year extension to resolve the matter was granted in response to the original request for a 10-year suspension of activity on the easement. He noted that an additional two-year extension could be granted if progress were made, but observed that no progress had occurred and that the timeline for holding a public hearing was imminent.

Schneider disagreed with Harton's recollection, noting that progress had been impeded by the pending lawsuit filed by Councilwoman Clark against the Town, which would inappropriately involve the MST Committee in the legal matter. She expressed support for granting a one- or two-year extension contingent upon the defeat or withdrawal of the lawsuit.

Stone stated the need to stay committed to the timeline originally determined by Council, reiterating that doing so would have no bearing on the status of the easement.

*A vote was taken and the motion failed (2-2).*

Stone asked if the Resolution could be continued to a date when all Council members were present to vote.

*Councilman Mike Stone made a motion to continue Resolution R-2026-02 to the meeting in February.*

Schneider pointed out that, under the Rules of Procedure, an item that has already been voted on cannot be continued. She asked Thomas to confirm this rule. Thomas indicated uncertainty about how much of a delay a failed vote imposed on Council's ability to reconsider the matter. Schneider referenced the Rules of Procedure, citing several actions outlined in the rules that would allow Council to reconsider its decision. Bruce clarified that the motion failed per the vote count but that the question remained as to whether two Council members could request that the issue be added to a subsequent agenda. Schneider suggested deferring the matter to the Town Attorney, who agreed to circulate an opinion on the matter to the full Council as soon as possible. Thomas pronounced the motion effectively defeated by a tie vote.

## **11. MONTHLY FINANCIAL UPDATE**

Finance Officer Sam Anders presented the financial report for the month of December 2025, which is hereby incorporated by reference and made a part of the minutes.

*Councilwoman Ann Schneider made a motion to approve the finance report as presented by the Finance Officer, and Councilwoman Lindsey Clark seconded. The motion passed unanimously (4-0).*

*Councilwoman Ann Schneider made a motion to amend the agenda to allow Public Comments to occur before Committee Reports, thereby giving Senator Phil Berger an opportunity to provide comments. Councilman Mike Stone seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously (4-0).*

## **13. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

- Senator Phil Berger announced that the NC legislature would be returning to session in the spring and offered his office as a resource for the Town on local bills and state matters. He offered to interface with NCDOT on behalf of the Town regarding its request to NCDOT to study the speed limit on Alcorn Road. Berger stressed his ability to direct state resources to support municipal efforts, citing his support for state-level grant funding of the Town's municipal water system. He invited the Town to join his email distribution list and to contact his office with questions or issues for inclusion in his weekly updates. He offered his cell phone number, (336) 932-9899. Harton highlighted the intersection improvements being conducted at NC 68 and NC 150, the municipal water system, and Phase II of Heritage Farm Park as significant ongoing Town projects for Senator Berger's attention.
- John Browning, 8024 Linville Road, questioned the ethical propriety of Clark's participation in the vote to close the Ashford public trail easement.

**12. COMMITTEE REPORTS**

**A. Board of Adjustment**

No report

**B. Mountains-to-Sea-Trail Committee**

No report

**C. Conservation Easement Committee**

No report

**D. Special Events Committee**

Chair Patti Dmuchowski reported on recent activities highlighting the status of paver orders for the Veterans Honor Green, indicating that the Committee was considering placing orders and installing the pavers annually as the volume of brick orders declines. She noted that the Committee was also evaluating budgeting to outsource setup tasks for Light Up the Night due to reduced volunteer availability and capacity. Clark inquired into the Committee's outreach efforts for volunteers. Dmuchowski and Schneider both indicated a broad outreach had been made to most local volunteer organizations.

**E. Tree Board**

John Browning acknowledged the appointment of Jim Kinneman to the Tree Board.

**F. Parks & Recreation Advisory Board**

Co-chair John Browning reported that the Board did not meet in December. Per direction given to the Board by Council one year ago, he presented a 12-month usage report on the Farmhouse Community Center. He noted that no marketing outreach had been conducted on the Farmhouse due to ongoing issues with the parking lot. Despite the lack of publicity, the Farmhouse held a soft opening and hosted seven rentals, totaling 35 hours in usage, between June 1 and November 9, 2025, generating \$940 in revenue. He added that after the Farmhouse was added to the Town's Park Reservation system in November, an additional five rentals, totaling 27 hours in usage, were booked through December 31, 2025, generating \$460 in revenue. Browning indicated that moving forward the Board would continue to report to Council on Farmhouse usage every six months.

**G. Finance Committee**

No report

**H. Water Advisory Committee**

Bruce announced that the next Committee meeting would occur at a rescheduled time of 10:30 a.m. the following Wednesday. He reported that the Committee would continue evaluating the community well threshold as it pertained to the Text Amendment and stated that construction of the water tank was on schedule and within budget, with the water main installation beginning the following week. Harton added that the second water information session was scheduled for the following Saturday and that conversations about connecting to the water system would be held with Oak Ridge Elementary School.

**I. Historic Preservation Commission**

Courtenay Harton reported on sale activity of the *Historic Oak Ridge* book.

**J. Planning & Zoning Board**

No report

Per the question posed earlier, Thomas interjected to offer his opinion on Council's Rules of Procedure regarding reconsideration of a defeated motion. He stated that once Council had rendered a decision on a substantive motion, they could not consider another motion presenting essentially the same issue at the same meeting unless Council first adopted a motion to reconsider in accordance with the rule that governed reconsideration. He added that the issue could be brought back at a future meeting provided that it complied with Council's agenda-setting rules.

**14. COUNCIL COMMENTS**

- Clark expressed appreciation and New Year wishes.
- Stone commented on Councilman Greeson's absence due to sickness.
- Schneider addressed concerns regarding Guilford County's upcoming revaluation of property taxes. She stated that the County should bear the primary responsibility for offsetting the impacts of the property revaluation, noting that the County received the majority of property tax revenue compared to the Town. She shared that County Commissioners were considering lowering the county tax rate to lessen the impact and encouraged residents to contact County Commissioners in support of that approach.
- Harton encouraged safe driving practices to navigate road construction areas. He also emphasized the need for fiscal prudence in considering \$1.8 million for construction of Phase II of Heritage Farm Park while servicing the \$2.4 million remaining debt for Phase I. Finally, he expressed the need to evaluate the Town's strategic plan for updates given the many project advancements which had already taken place. In regard to long-term planning, he suggested that Council consider external factors affecting Oak Ridge, such as rapid development near the airport and in Stokesdale, and emphasized the importance of developing a strategy for the Town to influence issues occurring outside its boundaries in 2026 and 2027.

**15. ADJOURNMENT**

*Councilwoman Ann Schneider made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:24 p.m., and Councilwoman Lindsey Clark seconded. The motion passed unanimously (4-0).*

Respectfully Submitted:

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Sandra B. Smith, MMC, NCCMC  
Assistant Town Manager/Town Clerk

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Jim Harton  
Mayor