



BOARD OF ALDERMEN BUDGET RETREAT #1

Wednesday, March 19, 2025 at 9:00 AM

Landis Board Room

MINUTES

PLEASE SILENCE ALL CELL PHONES

Present: Mayor Meredith Smith, Mayor Pro-Tem Ashley Stewart, Alderman Ryan Nelms

Absent: Alderman Tony Corriher, Alderman Darrell Overcash

Staff Present: Town Manager Michael Ambrose, Human Resources Director/Town Clerk Madison Stegall, Deputy Town Clerk Maddalyn Shuffler, Planning and Zoning Technician Angie Sands, Fire Chief Jason Smith, Police Chief Matthew Geelen

1. INTRODUCTION:

1.1 Call Meeting to Order

Mayor Meredith Smith Called the meeting to order at 9:00AM.

1.2 Welcome

Mayor Smith welcomed those in attendance.

1.3 Adoption of Agenda

ACTION: A MOTION WAS MADE TO ADOPT THE AGENDA AS PRESENTED.

Moved by: Ashley Stewart, seconded by Ryan Nelms

Motion Passed: 2-0

Voting For: Ashley Stewart, Ryan Nelms

2. PRESENTATIONS:

2.1 Admin/Planning & Zoning Departments - Human Resources Director/Town Clerk Madison Stegall

Human Resources Director/Town Clerk Madison Stegall provided a brief overview of the Administration Department. She highlighted several key accomplishments from Fiscal Year 2025, including the completion of the Town Hall remodel, downtown revitalization, and the Board room tunnel. Additionally, she noted the Town's increased grant submissions over the year, as well as efforts to restructure departments and streamline daily processes to enhance efficiency. Director Stegall also outlined the Town's proposal for the FY26 Merit and COLA adjustments. The proposed Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) for FY26 is 4%, consistent with FY25 and FY24. The Merit increase is proposed

to be up to 2%, the same as FY25. Currently, staff receive merit increases in January and COLAs in July, ensuring full-time employees benefit from a pay increase every six months.

Human Resources Director/Town Clerk Madison Stegall provided an overview of the Planning and Zoning Department, highlighting key accomplishments from Fiscal Year 2025. Notably, the Town has fully transitioned the Planning Department in-house, with the addition of a Part-Time Planning Director and Full-Time Planning Technician, making all planning positions Town employees. Currently, the department is overseeing 10 large-scale developments, either in progress or completed. Director Stegall also reported an increase in permits issued, with 18 permits granted between January and March of 2024, compared to 21 permits issued during the same period in 2025. Town Manager Michael Ambrose stated that while inspections were previously conducted only at key milestones last year, they are now carried out by staff on a weekly basis.

Human Resources Director/Town Clerk Madison Stegall gave an overview of the Town's Code Enforcement, explaining that it is now managed by the Landis Police Department in collaboration with Alliance Code Enforcement LLC. She noted that Code Enforcement has successfully closed 59 cases this fiscal year.

Police Chief Matthew Geelen stated that since the Town began collaborating with Alliance Code Enforcement, they have been able to close numerous longstanding cases while also opening several new cases that have been brought to their attention.

Mayor Smith emphasized that since 2020, the Town has made significant efforts to improve Code Enforcement and enhance the community's appearance. She also noted that residents have praised the Town's Code Enforcement for their excellent work in keeping Landis clean.

2.2 Consider Discussion of Personnel Policy Updates to Articles 1-3

Human Resources Director/Town Clerk Madison Stegall provided a brief overview of the personnel policies and procedures update. She explained that a resolution will be made to align with the updates once everyone has reviewed and approved the new personnel policy. Director Stegall discussed the policy updates with the Board members.

Mayor and Board had some discussion between them regarding bringing the policy back to the Board when all members would be present.

Human Resources Director/Town Clerk Madison Stegall provided an overview of the key highlights and updates to the policy to ensure Board Members were informed. She explained that several sections had been revised and newly introduced. These included Article I, Section 3 on the Merit Principle, Section 4 outlining Employee Responsibilities, and the addition of Definitions to clarify the role of immediate family members concerning bereavement leave.

In Article II, Section 4, updates were made to the administration of the position classification plan. Additionally, Article III, Section 16 now specifies that employees designated to an interim position for 30 days or more will receive a 10% pay increase. Director Stegall also noted that Sections 17, 19, and 20 are new additions to the policy.

Town Manager Michael Ambrose noted that in Article III, Section 17, certification and educational increases would be contingent upon budget allowances.

Alderman Nelms suggested adding a clause to the entire policy, making it subject to change based on budget constraints and Board approval.

Director Stegall highlighted that Article III, Section 20, introducing Specialty Pay, is a new addition to the policy and would require approval from the Town Manager.

Mayor Smith requested clarification on the difference between Interim Pay and Specialty Pay. Director Stegall explained that Specialty Pay applies to employees taking on dual roles, whereas Interim Pay is designated for employees temporarily filling another position for 30 days or more.

The Mayor and Board engaged in a discussion regarding the policy. It was decided that the term "dual role" would be reevaluated for clarity within the policy. The Board also agreed to revisit the policy at a future meeting when all members are present to vote on it prior to moving forward with more articles.

2.3 Police Department - Police Chief Matthew Geelen

Chief Geelen provided a brief overview of the Police Department's accomplishments for Fiscal Year 2025. These achievements included the purchase of new first aid kits for all personnel, the successful repair of the police department roof, and securing a grant to acquire five new ballistic vests. Additionally, an internship program was established, and the department continued its commitment to community engagement through events such as Coffee with a Cop and Cone with a Cop. Chief Geelen also outlined the department's needs for the next four fiscal years. For Fiscal Year 2026, Chief Geelen requested funding for the purchase of (2) new patrol vehicles with upfitting, (3) new ballistic vests, repainting the hallway and lobby at the police department, (1) pair of alcohol simulated impairment goggles for community outreach events, and uniform-worn lights for all officers.

For Fiscal Year 2027, Chief Geelen requested (2) new patrol vehicles, (3) new ballistic vests, (2) updated portable breath testing devices, and new LVP flooring at the police department.

In Fiscal Year 2028, the request included (2) new patrol vehicles, (2) updated portable breath testing devices, (3) new ballistic vests, and a radar trailer.

Lastly, for Fiscal Year 2029, Chief Geelen requested (2) new patrol vehicles, (3) new ballistic vests, replacement of the HVAC unit at the police department, and a remodel of the kitchen at the police department.

2.4 Fire Department - Fire Chief Jason Smith

Chief Smith provided a brief overview of the Fire Department's accomplishments for Fiscal Year 2025. These achievements included the arrival of Engine 441, the purchase of a new fire safety house, and the construction and renovation of the pantry and shower at Station 44. Additionally, new saws, rescue tools, and hoses were purchased using grant funds, and a pickup truck was donated by Colonial Pipeline for medical call responses. Chief Smith also outlined the department's needs for the next four fiscal years. For Fiscal Year 2026, Chief Smith requested funding for the purchase of (2) new Class A uniforms for personnel (2) new sets of turnout gear, a set of water intakes and deluge set for Engine 441, and a remodel of Station 44.

Mayor Smith inquired whether it would be possible to request three sets of Class A uniforms and three sets of turnout gear instead of two, considering that the Town typically has three fire personnel assigned to each truck.

Town Manager Michael Ambrose clarified that this adjustment could be made, but the topic would be further discussed during item 2.5 of the meeting.

Additionally, there was a discussion among the Mayor and Board Members regarding potential ideas for the remodel of Station 44 and the idea of adding a fourth person to each shift at the Fire Department.

For Fiscal Year 2027, Chief Smith requested (2) new Class A uniforms for personnel (2) new sets of turnout gear, (4) sets of ballistic protective gear, and new Hurst eDraulic Extrication tools for Engine 441.

Mayor Smith asked if it would be possible to move the purchase of the ballistic protective gear to Fiscal Year 2026, as it is an immediate need.

Chief Smith explained that all fire personnel have been trained by the County in mass casualty response. He further added that Rowan County has an act of violence directive in place and is set to provide ballistic protective gear in the event of a mass casualty situation.

Mayor Smith then discussed the possibility of using the police department's spare vests in the meantime until additional vests could be purchased.

In Fiscal Year 2028, the request included (2) new Class A uniforms for personnel (2) new sets of turnout gear, new rescue struts and a multi-purpose training prop. Lastly, for Fiscal Year 2029, Chief Smith requested (2) new Class A uniforms for personnel (2) new sets of turnout gear, thermal imagers for each truck, and gas monitors for each truck.

Mayor Smith asked for a 10-minute recess.

ACTION: A MOTION WAS MADE FOR A RECESS AT 10:13 AM.

Motion Moved by Ashley Stewart, seconded by Ryan Nelms

Motion Passed: 2-0

Voting For: Ashley Stewart, Ryan Nelms

ACTION: A MOTION WAS MADE TO COME OUT OF RECESS AT 10:23 AM.

Motion Moved by: Ashley Stewart, seconded by: Ryan Nelms

Motion Passed: 2-0

Voting For: Ashley Stewart, Ryan Nelms

2.5 Consider Discussion of the East Landis Fire Tax Fee

Town Manager Michael Ambrose provided a brief overview of the East Landis Fire District, explaining that the Town has consistently maintained a tax rate of 0.0425 cents per one-hundred dollar valuation for fire department fees. He reported that the expected revenue from this tax for the current year would be \$43,663.15 as of the meeting date. Manager Ambrose explained that if there is no increase in tax revenue, the Town would only be able to cover roughly half of Engine 441's annual payment.

He outlined the potential impact of various tax rate increases: a 0.01 cent increase would bring in about \$9,000 more per year, a 0.02 cent increase would add roughly \$18,000 per year, a 0.03 cent increase would result in about \$27,000 more per year, and a 0.04 cent increase would generate approximately \$36,000 more per year. Manager Ambrose clarified that once the Board officially votes on any proposed increase, the decision would be submitted to Rowan County for approval as well.

Mayor Smith asked if the Board approved a 0.04 cent increase, whether the department would be able to hire a part-time firefighter position.

Manager Ambrose explained that this would indeed be possible if the Board approves the 0.04 cent increase. He further added that East Landis currently has the lowest fire tax rate in the County, with the next closest town, Union, charging 0.0625 cents per one-hundred dollar valuation.

The Mayor and Board engaged in a discussion about how the current system of volunteers operates within the Fire Department.

ACTION: A MOTION WAS MADE TO RECOMMEND A .04 CENT INCREASE IN THE EAST LANDIS FIRE TAX AND BEGIN THE PUBLIC HEARING PROCESS.

Motion Moved by: Ashley Stewart, seconded by: Ryan Nelms

Motion Passed: 2-0

Voting For: Ashley Stewart, Ryan Nelms

2.6 Consider Discussion of Priority Projects

Town Manager Michael Ambrose provided a brief overview of the Town's priority projects, excluding those related to utilities. He emphasized that having a defined list of top projects will assist in securing grant funding by providing town staff with clear guidance on project priorities.

The Mayor and Board discussed how to organize the project lists and concluded that separating projects by department would make it easier to identify each department's top priorities and effectively consolidate them into a single comprehensive list.

Town Manager Ambrose sought input from the Mayor and Board regarding the future of Town buildings and potential construction projects.

Mayor Smith expressed her desire for a new town hall in the future. She also suggested the construction of a new fire station on the opposite side of the railroad tracks in town.

The Mayor, Board, and Town Manager engaged in discussion.

3. CLOSING:

3.1 Motion to Adjourn

ACTION: A MOTION WAS MADE TO ADJOURN AT 11:15 AM

Motion Moved by: Ashley Stewart, seconded by: Ryan Nelms

Motion Passed: 2-0

Voting For: Ashley Stewart, Ryan Nelms

Respectfully Submitted,

Madison T. Stegall, Town Clerk