

**TOWN OF DUCK
TOWN COUNCIL
MID-MONTH MEETING
January 21, 2026**

The Town Council for the Town of Duck convened at the Paul F. Keller Meeting Hall at 10:00 a.m. on Wednesday, January 21, 2026.

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT: Mayor Monica Thibodeau; Mayor Pro Tempore Sandy Whitman; Councilor Kevin Lingard; and Councilor Marc Murray.

COUNCIL MEMBERS ABSENT: Councilor Brenda Chasen.

OTHERS PRESENT: Town Manager Drew Havens; Development and Infrastructure Director/Assistant Town Manager Connor Winstead; Deputy Police Chief Melissa Clark; Public Information and Events Director Kristiana Nickens; Finance Administrator Lauren Creech; and Deputy Town Clerk Christy Hanks.

OTHERS ABSENT: Town Attorney Robert Hobbs; Police Chief Jeffrey Ackerman; Fire Chief Matthew Dudek; and Town Clerk Lori Ackerman.

Mayor Thibodeau called the meeting to order at 10:01 a.m. She noted that Councilor Brenda Chasen was excused from the meeting.

GOALS PLANNING SESSION

Town Manager Drew Havens was recognized to speak. Town Manager Havens stated that this meeting was Council's 2026/2027, looking into 2028 priority setting session, as well as starting on the Fiscal 2027 budget season. He noted that this would be the first interaction that staff have with Council as they begin to think about preparing the annual budget.

Town Manager Havens stated that Vision 2032 had six unifying principles in order to frame where Council currently was. He stated that this meeting was primarily for staff to hear from Council what they want to accomplish in the coming year. He stated that Council would be discussing goals, how they set them, and what they do with them.

Town Manager Havens stated that Council would be discussing some next level goals as well as thinking about where they would fall under the six unifying principles. He noted that each principle has goals assigned to it and hoped that Council was thinking about the goals they wanted to bring forward that would reflect not only the three-to-five-year goals, but what they wanted staff to focus on in the coming year. He noted that it was important for staff to know that as the draft budget is prepared so that they are doing things that are responsive to what Council believes to be the most important with the understanding that staff could do just about anything Council wanted but they could not do everything because the Town is resource limited.

Town Manager Havens stated that the six unifying principles were as follows:

1. Duck and Our Village
2. Enhanced Movability
3. Environmental Stewardship
4. Active, Engaged Community
5. Vibrant, Thriving Business Community
6. Responsive and Responsible Leadership

Town Manager Havens asked Council if they had any questions about the six unifying principles. Mayor Thibodeau stated that it was nice to see how they have held up so long since the exercise started back in 2012. Town Manager Havens stated that when the revisioning process was completed, Council changed some of the wording to make it clearer, but there wasn't anyone that wanted a complete change.

Town Manager Havens stated that each Council member would state and explain one idea for the six unifying principles and then move on to the next for three rounds. After that, Council would be discussing things and then vote on what they thought were the most important.

Councilor Lingard asked if Council could have a consensus on maintaining or growing the fund balance with little or no tax increase since it was an overarching principle of everything Council does so it would not need to be put on the list each year. He pointed out that it was something that all of Council agreed on and it was something that received a unanimous vote. He thought that rather than putting it on the list, it could be an overarching principle and it would not need to be put on the list as a priority. Mayor Pro Tempore Whitman thought it needed to go on the list so everyone in the community that was a voter was aware that Council was looking at it regardless if it was agreed on or not. He felt it needed to be on the list even if it was not counted as a vote.

Town Manager Havens stated that Council could put it on the list and if it received no votes, it would still be on the list but may not rise to the highest. Councilor Lingard agreed, adding that he thought that all of Council felt obliged to at least vote for it and if not, to give it three points. He added that every year Council votes that it was important and he had no problem putting it on the list. Mayor Pro Tempore Whitman reiterated that he thought it should be on the list so everyone knows that Council knows they were thinking about it. Councilor Lingard stated that he didn't want to have someone tell him that he didn't vote for it at the next election. Mayor Thibodeau understood what Councilor Lingard was saying, adding that she didn't vote for it last year. She stated that it was nice to keep it on the list, noting that there was always something aspirational that Council tries to do.

Mayor Thibodeau asked how input from Councilor Chasen would be received. Town Manager Havens thought once the list was completed, he could send it to her. He thought that was what was done one of the years that Mayor Thibodeau was absent. Mayor

Thibodeau stated that she wanted Councilor Chasen to participate. Town Manager Havens stated that he would seek Councilor Chasen's input.

Councilor Murray stated that he wanted to start with advancing the shoreline work to protect the park and serve as an example, which he thought would go under Environmental Stewardship. Town Manager Havens clarified that Councilor Murray wanted to keep the same item that was on the list from last year, adding that it did not have to be the same thing. Councilor Murray stated that he understood, adding that if he was looking at it, he would advocate more heavily for it. He thought if the park was completed, things like that needed to continue in different areas of the Town. He felt that beach nourishment was nailed down on the ocean side but saw issues arising on the sound side and would like for Council to make that a priority to get ahead of it. He stated that he would like to see the Town fund efforts to get ahead of it so there weren't pools and houses hanging in the sound due to erosion. Town Manager Havens clarified that Councilor Murray wanted to support efforts for soundside/shoreline stabilization and preservation. Councilor Murray stated he was correct, noting that he wanted to add mitigate erosion and maintain or increase water quality.

Councilor Lingard stated that he wanted to start with the west side Duck Trail and to start building it. He thought it has been discussed the last two years and from what he could tell, it has been designed, but now the Town needed to spend some money and start building it. Town Manager Havens suggested that it go under Enhanced Mobility. Councilor Lingard agreed.

Mayor Thibodeau stated that she wanted to start with aggressively pursue the Public Safety building. She thought it should go under Responsive and Responsible Leadership.

Mayor Pro Tempore Whitman stated that he wanted to start with advancing on the Herron property and figure out what will be done with it once the results were back from the consultants. Town Manager Havens thought it should go under Duck and Our Village and be worded as follows: Review and approve plans for the use of the Herron property.

Councilor Murray asked if the stormwater management program that was listed in 2025 was project-specific or if it was overarching. Town Manager Havens stated that there were a lot of things under that umbrella. Councilor Murray stated that he wanted to add that and put it under Environmental Stewardship. Town Manager Havens thought it should be worded as follows: Pursue opportunities to plan and implement stormwater management improvements.

Councilor Lingard stated that he wanted to add improvements to the playground equipment. He thought there were grants available to help the Town with it, but the equipment was getting pretty old. He didn't think it should be something that was very expensive and it does enhance the Town for the younger visitors. He thought it should go under Duck and Our Village. Town Manager Havens suggested it be worded as follows: Replace playground equipment.

Mayor Thibodeau stated that she was in favor of continuing outreach to businesses including all property owners in their thoughts and Council's decision making. She stated that all of the property owners in Duck have a stake in the business community. She thought it could read as follows: Encourage ongoing engagement with the business community and all property owners. She noted that she was trying to say that Duck's property owners were also business owners in a way because what was good for the business community was good for the homeowners. Town Manager Havens suggested it be under Vibrant, Thriving Business Community and have it worded as follows: Increase engagement with the business community and all property owners.

Mayor Pro Tempore Whitman stated he wanted to maintain the Town's infrastructure and have it under Responsive and Responsible Leadership.

Councilor Murray stated that he was in favor of taking a comprehensive look at e-bikes and how they will interact with the Duck Trail and the Village Commercial District. He thought it should go under Enhanced Movability. Councilor Lingard asked that since it was dependent on the State taking action, if there was some way to incorporate wording in Councilor Murray's suggestion, which reflects the fact that Council wanted to put pressure on the local and state representatives to do something about it. Councilor Murray explained that the reason he used the term "comprehensive" was because he didn't think Council fully understood the problem and the way it relates to the Town's village. He thought there were a lot of solutions outside of the State in policy rather than regulation, adding that this also related to the business community because the Town was working with its business community partners to get a sense of what was being rented. He thought that when the State makes regulations that deny the Town the ability to manage its own affairs, Council gets up in arms about it. He did not want to rely on them to solve what was a hyper local problem, adding that his focus was understanding the problem and seeing if Council could come up with a community-driven way. He pointed out that he was not proposing that the Town make e-bike regulations necessary but was proposing that Council understand the problem and see if there were any community-based solutions that do not necessarily involve regulation at this point. Assistant Town Manager Winstead suggested the following language: Comprehensively review the interaction with e-bikes on the Duck Trail. Councilor Murray stated that he had a few ideas to help mitigate the problem in the absence of State intervention or regulation from the Town. He noted that he wanted to understand very clearly and wanted all of Council aware of the differences in the products that were out there and how they interact with people on the ground, so Council could come to a consensus on the way to deal with it.

Councilor Lingard believed that at Council's Retreat that Planning & Permits Manager Sandy Cross would be bringing forward a discussion about the Town's ordinances. He thought with regard to the last two Board of Adjustment hearings, if the Town's ordinances were clearer and more specific, the two hearings would not have happened. He stated that he asked Town Manager Havens what it cost the Town for those hearings and that it cost the Town a considerable amount of money. He stated that he would like to have consultants brought in to review the ordinances. He thought it was also what Manager Cross would be pushing for at the Retreat, to bring a consultant in to review the

ordinances and see how they could be improved. He pointed out that they were written over 20 years ago and experience since then has been that they may need to be looked at. Town Manager Havens asked if it should be put under Responsive and Responsible Leadership or Vibrant, Thriving Business Community. Councilor Lingard thought it should be put under Responsive and Responsible Leadership. Town Manager Havens thought it should read as follows: Review and update zoning ordinances. Mayor Pro Tempore Whitman asked if definitions should be added in. Town Manager Havens stated that it would be good to start with the definitions, adding that the Planning Board has started discussing them.

Mayor Thibodeau stated that her last choice was to maintain the Town's commitment to the Dare County Housing Foundation and the issue of workforce housing in the community. She thought it would be under Responsive and Responsible Leadership. Town Manager suggested it read as follows: Maintain the commitment to the Dare Housing Foundation and work towards finding solutions to the workforce housing issue.

Councilor Lingard stated that someone needed to mention maintaining and grow the fund balance, adding that no one had mentioned it.

Mayor Thibodeau pointed out that nothing was listed under Active, Engaged Community. Assistant Town Manager Winstead stated that last year Council chose to share the history of the Town in that category.

Mayor Pro Tempore Whitman stated that his last choice was to explore creative solutions for code enforcement duties and continue enforcement of the SUPs. Town Manager Havens clarified that Mayor Pro Tempore Whitman wanted to use the same one as last year. Mayor Pro Tempore Whitman stated he was correct.

Town Manager Havens stated that because Councilor Chasen was not present, there were three ideas that did not get put on the list. He asked, between the four Council members, if there were three ideas that were missing that should be added. Councilor Murray thought the fund balance should be one. Town Manager Havens asked Council if they wanted it listed. Mayor Thibodeau asked if it would be to maintain and grow the fund balance or just maintain the fund balance with little or no tax increase. Mayor Pro Tempore Whitman thought it should be both. Town Manager Havens asked if it should be the same language as last year. Mayor Thibodeau stated it should be maintain and grow the fund balance with little or no tax increase.

Councilor Lingard stated that Councilor Chasen had brought up last year was to explore passenger ferry service options. He wasn't sure where that was. Mayor Pro Tempore Whitman stated that it has not moved in the last year and a half. Mayor Thibodeau stated that she heard a lot regarding the soundside event site and the connectivity to Manteo more so as something that may happen.

Town Manager Havens stated that two more items were needed, asking what was missing. Mayor Pro Tempore Whitman stated he was in favor of exploring additional

restrooms and parking at the Town facilities and not the Town park. Mayor Thibodeau clarified that Mayor Pro Tempore Whitman was in favor of restrooms at the park. Mayor Pro Tempore Whitman stated that they could be at the park or somewhere on the park property as well as expanding the parking. He stated that he would also like to see the playground expanded. Town Manager Havens noted that it was listed last year under Duck and Our Village. He asked Council if they wanted that on the list. It was *consensus* of Council to have it on the list.

Mayor Thibodeau pointed out that traffic was not listed anywhere. She thought it was addressed last year as continue to address traffic issues and support construction of the Mid-Currituck Bridge. She asked the rest of Council how they felt about that one. Mayor Pro Tempore Whitman noted that it did not receive any votes last year. Councilor Murray thought the Town was completely free to continue submitting resolutions to the State in favor of building the bridge. He wasn't sure if Council wanted to take up priority space for it. He asked if there was a way the Town could spend funds on it. Town Manager Havens stated that there wasn't. Mayor Thibodeau added that no one voted for it last year but it was on the list. Councilor Murray stated that he would like to continue thinking about it but he didn't want to take up budget space. Councilor Lingard did not think it needed to be added just for the sake of adding it. Mayor Thibodeau pointed out that she didn't want people to think that Council was not thinking about traffic issues. Councilor Murray agreed. Councilor Lingard thought it could work the opposite way in that if it was listed and no one voted for it, it could be worse than not putting it on the list. Town Manager Havens stated that if traffic was something Council wanted to continue to evaluate each year, it should be on the list. He pointed out that Town staff has not invested a lot of time with traffic this year, but the police do continue to monitor and report on it.

Councilor Lingard thought until someone comes up with a novel idea that will work, adding that the Town has completed surveys and ideas, and working on it for the sake of working on it was pointless. He added that if someone had a good idea to change things, then Council should pursue it, otherwise the Town was reinventing the wheel. Mayor Thibodeau stated that Council and staff have looked at traffic over the years and tried to have studies and surveys completed and put money towards the analysis with traffic engineers. She added that a pedestrian traffic engineer would give a different report than an automobile traffic engineer and what was best practices. She stated that it was something that was important to the community at large, whether it be worried about getting an ambulance through Town or worried about getting someone to work, it was something the Town deals with based on the geography and constraints. She did not want to dismiss it as something Council could not do anything about at this point. She thought keeping alert to opportunities for improving things and the data collected from the police has been helpful, adding that Council can point out that half the people traveling through Duck keep going to Corolla. She pointed out that it will get worse but it is not entirely the Town's fault. She thought it was something that involves the neighboring towns and is on their minds, adding that she didn't want to take it off Council's minds. Town Manager Havens suggested that it be listed as Continue to

evaluate solutions for traffic issues. Mayor Thibodeau suggested Monitor traffic and be open to helping.

Councilor Murray stated that he was going to suggest keeping it on the list but also incorporate LSVs. He knew the police department was working on registering them but he thought that and the e-bike item he suggested earlier would be good. He pointed out that the LSVs were affecting traffic but they also may be part of the solution. He added that if traffic was going to be kept on the list, he would like to add in LSVs. Assistant Town Manager Winstead suggested the language be as follows: Continue to monitor traffic information and review the impact of LSVs. Town Manager Havens stated that it would go under Enhanced Movability.

Councilor Murray asked what would happen if another priority came up during the year. Mayor Thibodeau stated that Councilor Murray or any other Council member could state that they wanted to discuss it, adding that it does happen frequently with Council, whether it was under Council Member Agenda or an email to Town Manager Havens. Town Manager Havens explained that it should be free flowing but not, adding that once Council has this list of priorities, it was where Council was telling him and Town staff what they wanted time spent on. He added that if something comes up mid-year, the question staff may ask is that it could be completed but what didn't Council want to do because Town staff's time was a finite resource and if it was something that required money, Council would need to decide how it should be budgeted.

Town Manager Havens suggested that Council discuss the items they had chosen as priorities. Council went on to vote on what priorities they felt were the most important.

Town Manager Havens stated that the tally may change slightly because Councilor Chasen still needed to vote. He noted that the Public Safety building received the most votes. Assistant Town Manager Winstead stated that soundside stabilization was tied with the westside Duck Trail for second. Town Manager Havens stated that he would get the rest of the information to Council once Councilor Chasen submits her votes.

Town Manager Havens asked if there was anything that was surprising. Mayor Pro Tempore Whitman asked with regard to the items that were voted on in 2025 if some time during the budget year Town Manager Havens could show what has been implemented and if any money was spent on it or not. Town Manager Havens explained that the report that Council had in their agenda packets contained the status of where all of the items were. Mayor Pro Tempore Whitman asked if something could be provided to Council by the end of the year to see what was done and then review it for next year. Town Manager Havens explained that the Public Safety building was a carryover, the westside trail was also a carryover and was something that was proposed in the Fiscal 2025-2026 budget but the Town was not able to fund it because Council needed to balance the budget and that was one of the items that fell off. Mayor Pro Tempore Whitman clarified that staff was still looking for grants for the first phase of it. Town Manager Havens stated he was correct.

Councilor Lingard stated that the League of Municipalities was holding a workshop for small municipalities with regard to strategic planning in New Bern on February 17-18, 2026. He stated that there needed to be at least three people to take part in it and thought it would be useful. He stated that he would like to go and that Town Manager Havens was also going. He asked if another Council member was interested in attending. Mayor Thibodeau stated that she would be out of town. Councilor Murray and Mayor Pro Tempore Whitman stated that they were not available to attend. Councilor Lingard thought Council could look at a future workshop since at least two Council members had to attend it.

Mayor Thibodeau thanked Town Manager Havens for the exercise.

Assistant Town Manager Winstead stated that Tom Burton had submitted his resignation from the Planning Board and staff was requesting authorization from Council to advertise filling the vacancy. He noted that the term would expire on May 1, 2028.

Mayor Pro Tempore Whitman moved to allow staff to advertise the vacancy on the Planning Board and have it addressed at Council's March 4, 2026 meeting.

Councilor Murray asked that staff make it clear in the advertisement that applicants will need to attend the March 4, 2026 meeting.

Motion carried 4-0.

Mayor Thibodeau noted that the next meeting would be the Regular Meeting on Wednesday, February 4, 2026, at 1:00 p.m.

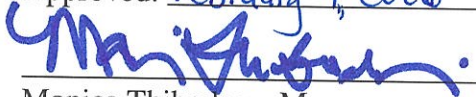
ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Pro Tempore Whitman moved to adjourn the meeting.

Motion carried 4-0.

The time was 11:13 a.m.


Lori A. Ackerman, Town Clerk

Approved: February 4, 2026

Monica Thibodeau, Mayor

