



MINUTES

February 28, 2025

REGULAR MEETING OF THE CITY COUNCIL

BUDGET RETREAT PART 2

CLAYWOOD | 317 7TH AVE. E. | 8:30 A.M.

Present: Mayor Barbara Volk; Mayor Pro Tem Dr. Jennifer Hensley and Council Members: Lyndsey Simpson, Melinda Lowrance and Gina Baxter

Staff Present: City Manager John Connet, Assistant City Manager Brian Pahle, City Clerk Jill Murray, City Attorney Angela Beeker, Budget & Evaluation Director Adam Murr, Management Analyst II Jennifer Floyd, Public Services Director Brent Detwiler, Public Works Director Tom Wooten, Community Development Director Lew Holloway, Finance Director Krystal Powell, Communications, Deputy Fire Chief Justin Ward, Police Chief Blair Myhand, Director Allison Justus, Communications Coordinator II Brandy Heatherly, IT Manager Jay Heatherly, Stormwater Director Mike Huffman, City Engineer Brendan Shanahan, Utilities Director Adam Steurer, HR Director Jennifer Harrell

Facilitators: Warren Miller & Drew Finley of FountainWorks

1. CALL TO ORDER

The retreat started promptly at 8:30 a.m. and Warren Miller let everyone get something to eat and get settled. He then welcomed everyone and had everyone in the room introduce themselves. He went over the agenda for the day and then began the meeting.

AGENDA

Day 2 – Claywood – 317 7th Ave E

1. Welcome & Breakfast	8:30 – 8:40 a.m.
2. Team Building	8:40 – 9:10 a.m.
3. Strategic Plan Update	9:10 – 9:40 a.m.
4. Helene Recovery/Resiliency	9:40 – 11:00 a.m.
5. G.O. Bonds	11:00 – 12:00 p.m.
6. Lunch	12:00 – 12:30 p.m.
7. Accomplishments	12:30 – 2:00 p.m.

Captain John Connet made an appearance before we got started!



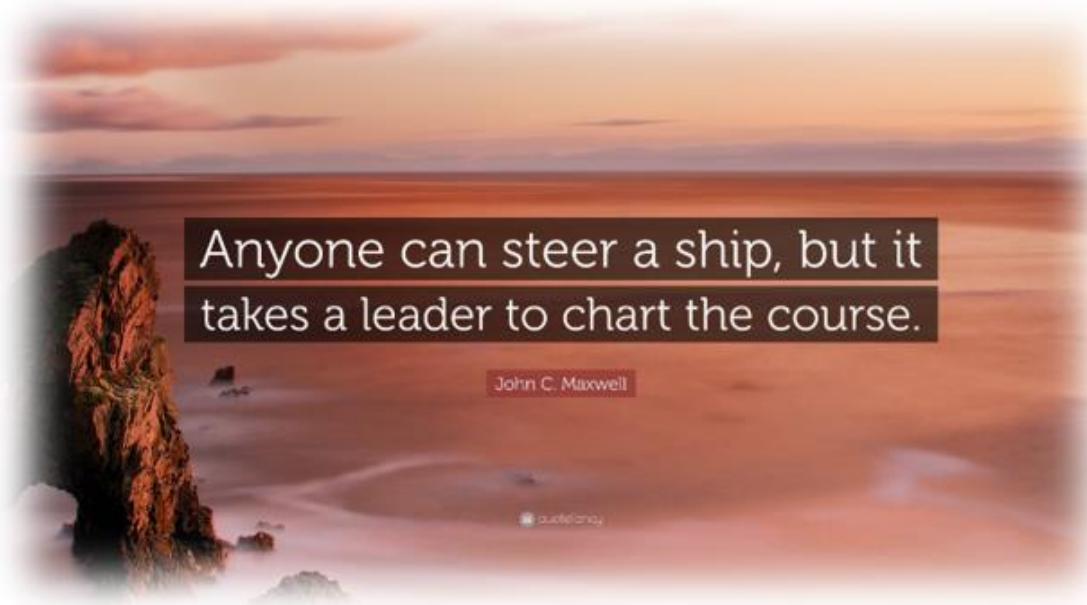
2. “CHARTING THE COURSE”

Warren and Drew led City Council through the retreat and put together the report below.



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Retreat Background & Overview

The Hendersonville City Council retreat, held on Friday, February 28, 2025, at Claywood Restaurant, primarily focused on Hurricane Helene recovery and resiliency.

This retreat provided an important opportunity for the Council to reflect on progress, collaborate on solutions, and strategize for the year ahead. City staff delivered a financial update to Councilmembers the day before to familiarize them with the City's current financial status.

With a focus on balancing ongoing recovery efforts with the City's regular operations, the retreat also celebrated the accomplishments of the past year and looked ahead to strengthening the City's organizational and financial capacity.



The objectives of the retreat were as follows:

- Strategize about how to effectively balance Helene recovery efforts with ongoing City needs
- Celebrate accomplishments from the past year and engage in team-building activities
- Plan for the year ahead, with a focus on strengthening organizational and financial capacity

Agenda Items:

- Welcome and Retreat Overview
- Team Building: What Inspired You to Run for Council?
- Strategic Plan Update
- Helene Recovery & Resiliency
- Considering Options for Financing Recovery

- Celebrating Our Accomplishments & Wrap-Up

Participants:

- City of Hendersonville City Councilmembers
- City of Hendersonville Management Team
- Fountainworks (Facilitators)

In addition to the Council retreat, City staff also held their own retreat to focus on the priorities that will guide recovery efforts. Originally planned for December, the staff retreat took place in two parts due to adverse weather conditions. The first day was held in December, while the second day was rescheduled and took place the day before the Council retreat on February 27, 2025. During this time, staff worked together to identify the top priorities for Helene recovery, which include the following:

Staff's Identified Helene Recovery Priorities:

- Emergency Response Plan
- Debris Management
- Flood Mitigation
- Financial Resiliency
- Trained & Right-Sized City Staff
- Investment in Redundant & Resilient Critical Infrastructure
- Public Communication, Messaging, & Storytelling



The City Council agreed with these priorities, which will be used to chart a clear and focused course for recovery, ensuring that the City can address its most critical needs and emerge stronger and more resilient for the future.

Teambuilding – What Inspired You To Run for Council?

To kick off the retreat, Councilmembers reflected on why they originally ran for City Council and became involved in local government. This activity provided Councilmembers with the opportunity to share their personal motivations for public service with each other, fostering deeper connections among the group.



The responses (as seen above) highlighted a common drive to serve others and make a positive impact on the community. Many spoke of wanting to help, whether through giving a voice to those not represented on the Council, advocating for more government transparency, or being part of significant projects that improve the City.

Several Councilmembers expressed a commitment to long-term planning and leadership, emphasizing the importance of looking beyond immediate concerns and focusing on the future. Councilmembers also shared personal stories about mentorship, service, and the desire to challenge themselves while being part of the City's ongoing evolution. Ultimately, these reflections reinforced a shared dedication to public service and the responsibility they feel to improve the community for everyone.

Strategic Plan Update

City staff provided an update to the Council on the strategic plan, presenting the dashboard that tracks the progress of key objectives. Brian Pahle, Assistant City Manager, led the presentation and shared the current status of these strategic goals.



Helene Recovery and Resiliency

The City Council then moved into the core of their retreat discussions. Building on staff's identified priorities for Hurricane Helene recovery, the Council refined staff's priorities and identified potential actions for each priority. The Council's agreed-upon recovery priorities are as follows:

1. **Emergency Response Plan**
2. **Financial Resiliency**
3. **Public Communication, Messaging, and Storytelling**
4. **Flood Mitigation**
5. **Investment in Redundant and Resilient Critical Infrastructure**
6. **Trained and Right-Sized City Staff**
7. **Debris Management**

The Council also suggested two other potential priorities:

8. **Citizen Support & Protection**
9. **Pedestrian Accessibility and Public Transportation**



Summary of Priorities:

- **Emergency Response Plan:** Focus on improving communication, enhancing emergency protocols, and addressing vulnerabilities, particularly in flood-prone areas
- **Financial Resiliency:** Strengthen the City's financial position, explore changes to fund balance policies, and ensure adequate funding for recovery efforts
- **Public Communication, Messaging, and Storytelling:** Improve communication with residents, educate Council on recovery progress, and engage the community in recovery through various outreach efforts
- **Flood Mitigation:** Continue analyzing floodplain redevelopment practices, pursue FEMA buyouts, and establish requirements for developers to mitigate flood risks
- **Investment in Redundant and Resilient Critical Infrastructure:** Focus on building resilient infrastructure with federal support, and improve communication systems during storms

- **Trained and Right-Sized City Staff:** Ensure staff are trained in emergency response, civil unrest management, and preparedness for future disasters
- **Debris Management:** Streamline debris removal, manage blight through code enforcement, and improve communication on debris removal timelines and funding sources
- **Citizen Support & Protection:** Support and protect City residents by bringing case management needs together with the recovery needs assessment. Put up guardrails to ensure City residents are not taken advantage of, particularly those who are vulnerable and navigating precarious housing situations
- **Pedestrian Accessibility and Public Transportation:** Gain momentum on the BikeWalk Hendo initiative and the walkability analysis, with a focus on improving pedestrian accessibility and public transportation. This aligns with the City's overall strategic plan, where transportation is ranked #8 in priority.

Details of this conversation are in the [Appendix](#).

Considering Options for Financing Recovery

An important consideration in the discussion was how to fund the recovery plan and implement mitigation strategies to protect against future natural disasters. The conversation followed a presentation given by an architect and engineer, focusing on the rebuilding of Patton Park, Whitmire Activity Center, and Tom's Park as part of the hurricane recovery efforts. The primary focus was on how to finance the projects and the timing of decisions needed to move forward. Key points include:

- **Financing Options:**
 - There was a discussion on the interest in using a General Obligation (GO) bond for financing the projects. Staff will compile more information on this option.
 - The GO bond process is favored, but there is concern about waiting until 2026 for a bond election, with a suggestion to aim for November 2026 and make key decisions by September this year.
 - There's a desire to fill the funding gap from FEMA quicker, possibly using traditional financing methods, and not wait for voter approval.
- **Project Timeline & Community Involvement:**

- A public education campaign will be needed throughout 2025 to inform citizens ahead of the 2026 election for the bond vote.
- Bond could coincide with the 2026 election for three city council seats.
- Concerns about the long timeline if the GO bond process is pursued, potentially delaying the pool's opening until 2028.
- **Other Considerations:**
 - There is a discussion about whether the bond would include other projects beyond Patton and Whitmire or just focus on those parks.
 - A suggestion to look into refinancing options for the financing, though costs for issuance are high.
 - If the city moves forward, property taxes might need to support the bond.
- **Public Sentiment & Support:**
 - The community's support for a GO bond is considered important, with concerns about delays leading to frustration among residents who want to see progress.
 - Some flexibility may be needed in how the project is phased (e.g., aquatic center first, then activity center).
- **Next Steps:**
 - City staff will provide several financing options, including hypothetical scenarios with different timing, interest rates, and costs, to help decide the best approach.
 - Discussions will continue with the design team about potential project timelines.

Celebrating Our Accomplishments & Wrap-Up

To wrap up the retreat, Councilmembers reflected on accomplishments while looking ahead to the future.

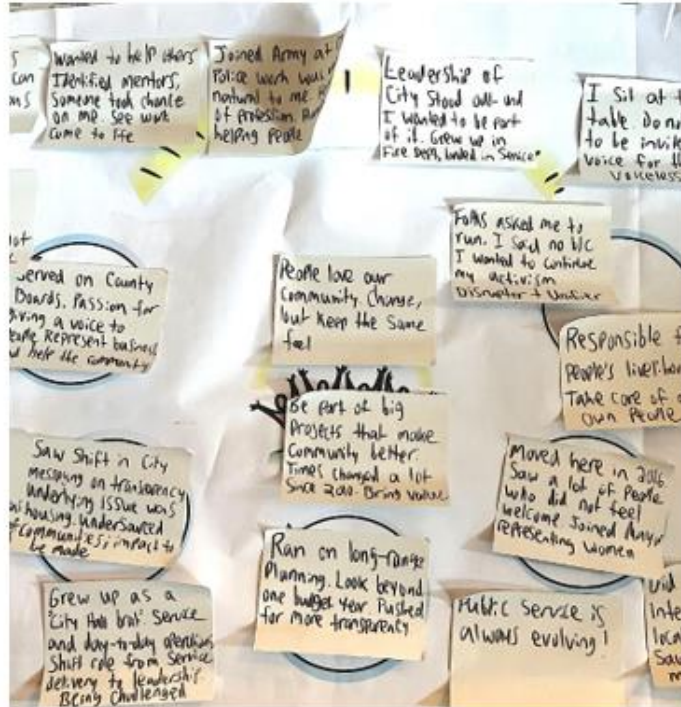


Councilmembers thought creatively about what newspaper headlines and cover stories might say if the recovery was a complete success and everything went according to plan. This forward-thinking approach helped inspire a sense of achievement while reinforcing a collective commitment to overcoming challenges and building a stronger, more resilient future for the community.

Details can be found in the [Appendix](#).

Appendix

Teambuilding – What Inspired You to Run for City Council?



Helene Recovery and Resiliency Discussion

Emergency response plan

- South side of city - had to ferry people across during storm (vulnerability)
- Ensure public communication component is included
- EOC lessons learned and training on ICS system
- As we increase density, more potential to build in floodplain impacts on development
- Council needs way to communicate with staff in emergency

- Pedestrian accessibility and public transportation
- Gaining momentum on Bikewalk Hendo, walkability analysis
- Ranked #8 in strategic plan

Financial Resiliency

- Staff are handling the reimbursement process well – lean on our networks
- Council has advocated for \$ to state legislators
- How much \$ do we need in the bank? What is the situation without bridge loans?
- Financial position is good, but worth exploring fund balance policy change
- Conversation on fund balance policy - do we adjust up?

Public Communication, Messaging, and Storytelling

- Educate council to be better communicators to residents
- Conduct effort similar to affordable housing summit for emergency response
- Give space for council to learn and understand recovery process
- Multiple types of communication and outreach on disaster preparedness
- Designate neighborhood representatives to spread the word
- Citizen emergency response team
- Connects to our goal to build a citizens academy
- Allow people to tell their individual stories and input for others

Flood Mitigation

- FEMA buyouts we will need assistance from council on acquisition
- Continue streambank restoration and waterway projects
- improvements and floodplain redevelopment are important
- What requirements can we mandate when developers want to build?

Investment in Redundant and Resilient Critical Infrastructure

- Lapse in communication was hardest during storm
- Federal investment is critical. Be conscious of how we build back - resilience
- Maintain strong capital investment and planning
- Build coalitions with organizations to lobby collectively (many voices)

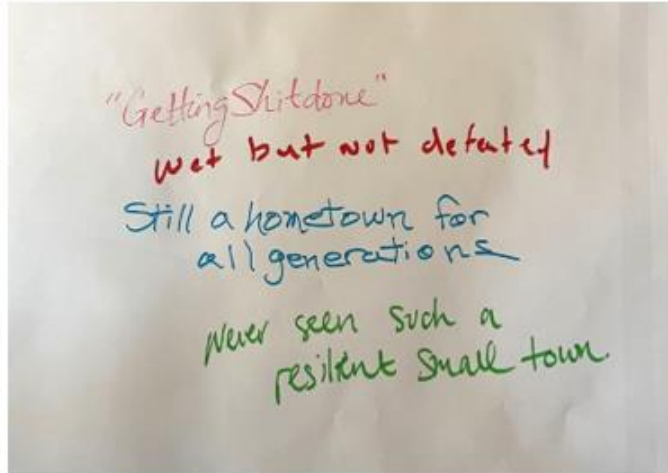
Trained and Right-Sized City Staff

- Connects to ERP. Training on ICS needs to be at the forefront for all staff
 - Staff needs to be sufficient to address civil unrest
 - Council trusts staff to identify gaps continue fostering strong mutual aid networks
 - Ensure new staff are well-trained and gain experiences (handle next event)
-
- Partnerships are important to focus on
 - Housing replacement and workforce housing
 - Bring case management needs together with needs assessment
 - Ensure people are not taken advantage of put up guardrails

Debris Management

- Personal property debris removal program
- Private, commercial and abandoned properties becoming blighted CDBG-DR
- Money and staff support to help people in community
- City is receiving mixed messages. Communication is critical!!
- Code enforcement - at what point do we take a heavier hand?
- More comms between council and staff. Housing is connected to this
- Give council updates and details on anticipated timelines
- Public health and safety hazards. Reminder of trauma of the event
- Dumping costs us \$ storm/vegetative debris. Strike a balance
- Debris is being hauled to SC. need better site content service level on case by case basis
- Remove construction debris. Can we spend city \$ on private property?
- Exhaust funding sources before turning to city funds
- If using city funds, focus on vegetative debris
- Piles of insulation and bulky items difficult to move should be a focus
- Commercial debris is not reimbursable if in ROW

Celebrating Our Accomplishments – Wrap-Up Activity



Cover Story

- "Getting shit done"
- Wet but not defeated
- Still a hometown for all generations
- Never seen such a resilient small town

Cover

- "Hendersonville successfully navigates uncharted territory"

Images

- Sailboat with SSHendo
- Cap. John Steers the ship

Big Headlines

- Teamwork makes the dreamwork!
- Churches feed THOUSANDS!
- Unity
- Fire station 1 - hope and safety
- First response mutual aid shows up in support
- Building back better

3. ADJOURN

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 1:57 p.m. upon unanimous assent of the Council.

ATTEST:

Jill Murray, City Clerk

Barbara G. Volk, Mayor