

Town of Lake Santeetlah

Council Meeting Minutes

February 11, 2025

Mayor Simon called the meeting to order at 12:00 PM. Councilmembers Jim Hager, Ralph Strunk, Kevin Haag, and Keith Predmore were present for the meeting. Town Administrator Kim Matheson and Town Clerk Kala Farley were also present. Attorney Craig Justus was present on Zoom.

Scott Kamps led the Pledge of Allegiance and offered an Invocation.

Approval of the Agenda: Simon requested to amend the agenda and add Presentation of Recommended Ordinance Changes from Planning Board as NB#6 and the Recycle Trailer as NB#7. Haag made a motion to approve the agenda as amended. Strunk seconded. All approved. The motion passed unanimously.

Approval of the January 14, 2025, Council Meeting Minutes: Hager made a motion to approve the minutes. Haag seconded. All approved. The motion passed unanimously.

Financial/Tax Report as of January 31, 2025: Matheson reported the tax collection for January was \$75,309.08.

Mayor Simon read the Ethics Statement Reminder.

Request for Public Comment:

Michol Mullen: Mullen said that she, along with some other residents around the lake, would like the Council to consider having a public comment period at the end of the meeting in case someone would like to comment on something that was discussed during the meeting.

Susan Robinson: Robinson said she would like to second what Michol Mullen said about having a public comment period at the end of the meeting. Robinson also said there was some mention in the Planning Board meeting about a welcome packet to new homeowners and she would like to encourage the Town to make a "top 5 things to be aware of" list, such as basic water billing information and Town Hall hours, to include in the packet.

Old Business:

1. **Zoning Administrator visit:** The Zoning Administrator was in the Town of Lake Santeetlah on January 29th. Matheson said while here, the ZA reviewed all the new applications and followed up with outstanding projects, as well as ones that had been previously approved and completed.

New Business:

1. **November Council meeting date:** The date for the November council meeting was set to November 18, 2025.
2. **Copier contract renewal and upgrade:** Matheson said representatives from Sharp visited Town Hall to talk about renewal of the contract for the office copier. During that visit an upgraded version of the copier was presented, and the contract on it was a little less than what the Town was currently paying. The office is scheduled to receive the upgraded copier within the week.
3. **Switching Internet Provider:** The Town decided to switch internet providers from Zito Media due to the continued outages that the area was experiencing. Town Hall was unable to operate when the internet was out since the computers and phone system were dependent on reliable internet service. There had been some good, positive feedback from Starlink users in Town and the surrounding area, so the switch was made to Starlink. New equipment and firewall software was purchased, and the Town's IT provider is scheduled to come get everything switched over later in the week.
4. **Grant donation by Pastor Eric Reece:** Pastor Eric Reece was in attendance and presented the Town with a check in the amount of \$1,514.77 from the Dogwood Health Trust Digital Opportunities Initiative funds. This donation was made to the Town to help with the expense that came with the purchase of the new equipment required to switch to Starlink. Pastor Reece provided some literature on the Dogwood Health Digital Opportunities Initiative. (see attached)
Kevin Brown was also in attendance and gave an update on the Broadband Challenge project that he had come to speak about at a previous Council meeting. Brown said funds for B.E.A.D. were put on hold, but letters of support were sent in for review and they are awaiting a response from the government.
5. **Budget Amendment:** Matheson said the budget amendment was for the transfer of funds, \$40,000, to paving town roads from road reserves. Hager

made a motion to approve the budget amendment. Predmore seconded. All approved. The motion passed unanimously.

6. Presentation of Recommended Ordinance Changes from Planning

Board: Planning Board Chair Anne Hager said the final recommended ordinance changes were ready for the Council's consideration and approval. (see attached) A public hearing will be held within next month's Council meeting, on March 11, 2025, to discuss the recommendations.

- 7. Recycle Trailer:** Matheson said she has spoken to Graham County about the donation of the recycle trailer that is in Town Hall parking lot, and they said they could use it. The manned dump site that the Town residents use to dispose of their trash has recycle receptacles, so the residents can take their recyclables to that site when they take their trash. Predmore made a motion to donate the recycle trailer to Graham County and have Mayor Simon sign a resolution for that once it is prepared. Haag seconded. All approved. The motion passed unanimously. The Town plans to donate the trailer to Graham County at the end of the month.

8. Council Statements:

Diana Simon: Simon said a dog has been around Town and would like to thank anyone who was involved in helping take care of the dog. Susan Robinson said the owner had been located.

Kevin Haag: Haag said he would like to offer condolences to the family of Scott Kamps on behalf of the Town for the passing of Shalimar Daniels, Kamps foster child.

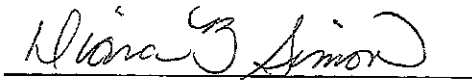
Keith Predmore: Predmore said he would like to thank Alan Davidson for the use of his Starlink internet in recent months. Predmore also asked if there were any other option for the parking of equipment that is located around the front entrance.

Jim Hager: Hager said there is a webinar hosted by the Dogwood Trust for grant writing that he had previously sent to the office and requested that information be sent to the Council.

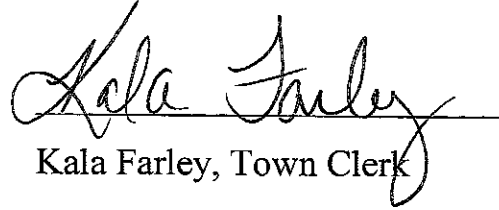
Announcements:

- The next regularly scheduled Council Meeting will be held March 11, 2025, at 12:00PM. This meeting will be held at Town Hall and via Zoom. The link to join by Zoom will be sent out by mass email.

Motion to Adjourn: Hager made the motion to adjourn the meeting. Predmore seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 12:58 PM.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Diana B. Simon", written over a horizontal line.

Diana Simon, Mayor

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Kala Farley", written over a horizontal line.

Kala Farley, Town Clerk

Broader Digital Opportunities Initiative also focuses on research, infrastructure and advocacy

Asheville, N.C. – Dogwood Health Trust today announces 10 local collaboratives as part of its Digital Opportunities Initiative. The collaboratives are one part of a larger, more than \$7 million effort to make broadband internet available, affordable and useful for everyone in the 18 counties and Qualla Boundary of Western North Carolina. Each was selected through an RFP process in 2024.

Recent data shows that one in five households nationally – which translates to approximately 80,000 households in Western North Carolina – lack internet connectivity, with many more facing limited access or missing critical digital skills and devices. This lack of access intensified following Hurricane Helene, which exposed the vulnerability of the region's telecommunications infrastructure and highlighted how quickly communities without reliable digital access can become isolated.

"Helene laid bare just how essential reliable internet access is for our communities' health, wellbeing and safety," said Dr. Susan Mims, president and CEO of Dogwood Health Trust. "This work isn't just about internet access alone, it's ultimately about connecting every one of our neighbors with community information, health care, education, job opportunities, housing or emergency services."

Ten Collaboratives – Engaging Community Members to Find Solutions

The ten Digital Opportunities collaboratives will be led by the following organizations: Avery-Mitchell Yancey Regional Library, Five Point Center, Haywood County Government, Land of Sky Regional Council (leading two collaboratives), Nantahala Regional Library, Southwestern Community College, Through the Trees, Vecinos and West Marion Community Forum. These "hub" organizations are joined by nearly 50 other organizational community partners in this work across Western North Carolina and will expand that network further over the next 18 months and beyond.

Each collaborative is building on digital equity plans developed by NC State University's Institute for Emerging Issues and will focus on implementing strategies like:

- Providing access to devices and building skills to use them effectively (digital literacy)
- Building sustainable community partnerships
- Developing local leadership to champion digital inclusion for all residents
- Supporting workforce development and economic growth through improved connectivity
- Making high-speed internet available and affordable across the region

Dogwood will host the collaboratives monthly as a learning cohort. Together they will develop skills for leading community efforts to implement their local ideas, strategies and solutions. A strong implementation focus will be reaching people and communities that often face the greatest barriers to digital access, including rural residents, older adults, people of color, individuals with disabilities, people who speak English as a second language, justice involved individuals, veterans and families with lower incomes. The cohort gathered for their first meeting on Jan. 16.

Beyond the Collaboratives – Research, Infrastructure and Advocacy

In addition to the collaboratives, the Digital Opportunities Initiative will also focus on the following for the region: gathering research and insights on digital opportunities and challenges, attracting more capital for broadband infrastructure and deployment, and equipping decisionmakers with ideas and recommendations from local communities.

"We're taking a comprehensive and ground-up approach to helping every person in our region gain access to and have the confidence to use the internet each and every day in a manner that contributes to their wellbeing," said Sarah Thompson, vice president for economic opportunity at Dogwood Health Trust. "Our collaborative partners are deeply embedded in their communities and uniquely positioned to move solutions forward. Through collaboration and action, we'll build a stronger, healthier and more prosperous region."

PLANNING BOARD
RECOMMENDED ORDINANCE CHANGES

The Planning Board is recommending the following changes to the Ordinance. The changes are procedural and are needed to align our Ordinance with current procedures. This is the first recommended changes since the adoption of the Ordinance in November 2021.

1. Page 27, Section 807, Correct typo on line 2.

2. Page 27, Certificate of Completion: Section 810. Remove first sentence.

~~Prior to occupancy of any building or commencement of any use, the zoning administrator shall perform a final inspection of the premises to ensure that all applicable local approvals and applicable Town laws have been complied with and satisfactorily completed.~~

3. Page 32, Nonconforming Situations

Section 1200, Continuation of nonconforming situations: Subject to Section 1701, nonconforming situations that were otherwise lawful on the effective date of this Ordinance or any amendments to this Ordinance may be continued and considered approved by the Town, subject to the restrictions and qualifications set forth in this Article.

4. Pages 49 and 50 of Ordinance:

Section 1402, Amendment Applications. With the exception of the Planning Board and Zoning Board of Adjustment, any application for an amendment to the Ordinance shall be submitted to the Zoning Administrator at least thirty (30) days prior to the Planning Board's meeting at which the application is to be considered. Town Council. If the Town Council determines that the proposed change should be considered, the Council shall refer the requested changes to the Planning Board. ... Last sentence of 1402: ~~The Zoning Administrator and Town Council will not consider an application for property denied within the preceding twelve (12) months by the Town Council.~~

5. Page 52 of Ordinance: Zoning Administrator:

Section 1503.01, Questions: All questions arising in connection with the enforcement of this Ordinance shall be presented in writing to the ~~Zoning Administrator-Town Administrator who will be responsible for the day-to-day administration of this Ordinance.~~ If the inquiry cannot be resolved in a timely fashion, the Town Administrator may refer the question to the Zoning Administrator for a binding decision.

6. Page 53, Section 1504.04 (2)

Line 4 change to read: and in accordance in current language at N.C.G.S.160.D

7. Reference to update fee schedule. This is found in Schedule A page 59. Change to read:

SCHEDULE A

PROPOSED ZONING APPLICATION FEE SCHEDULE

(Delete all shown fees and add the following statement)

The current fees for Residential and Commercial applications, Variance applications, PUDs and Special Use Permits applications are contained on the Town's website at www.townofakesantetlah.org. A request can also be made in writing at Town Hall.