



Town of Clayton
Town Council Council Retreat Day 2 Minutes
Thursday, February 26, 2026 at 8:30 AM
Clayton Police Department Training Room
315 E. Second Street

Council Present:

Mayor Jody McLeod
Mayor Pro Tem Andria Archer
Council Member Ruth Anderson
Council Member Porter Casey
Council Member Amanda Underwood
Council Member Gretchen Williams

Council Absent:

Staff Present:

Rich Cappola, Town Manager
Jim Cauley, Town Attorney
Heidi Holland, Town Clerk
Dolores Gill, Chief of Staff and Strategic Initiatives
Lee Barbee, Deputy Town Manager
Greg Tart, Police Chief
David Ranes, Fire Chief
Robert McKie, Finance Director
Nathanael Shelton, Communication Director
Chris Gallant, Capital Program Manager
Michelle Snyder, Assistant to the Town Manager
Todd Melton, Budget Manager
Tim Robbins, Public Works Director
Joe Stallings, Economic Development Director
Shannon Poole, Project Controls Specialist
Emily Denison, Administrative Support Assistant
Sam Shumate, Electus
Chappell Jordan, Jacobs Engineering

1. BREAKFAST AND MORNING CHECK-IN

- a. 8:30 - 9:00 a.m.

2. CALL TO ORDER

- a. 9:00 a.m.
Call To Order

Mayor McLeod called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

3. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

- a. 9:00 - 10:30 a.m.
Robertson Mule Stable Adaptive Reuse Project

- 9:00 - 9:10 a.m.
Outcomes Overview
Presenter:
Dolores Gill, Chief of Staff and Strategic Initiatives

- 9:10 - 9:40 a.m.
Final Presentation Report

Presenter:

Chappell Jordan, Jacobs Engineering

9:40 - 10:20 a.m.

Discussion and Decisions (Council and Town Staff)

10:20 - 10:30 a.m.

Next Steps

Presenters:

Dolores Gill, Chief of Staff and Strategic Initiatives

Chris Gallant, Capital Program Manager

Ms. Gill shared the goals for today regarding the Robertson Mule Stables.

Chappel Jordan with Jacobs Engineering joined us remotely. Mr. Stallings stated what we toured yesterday in Wake Forest is not exactly what we have in Clayton but hoped Council got an idea of an adaptive reuse. The thought was to get Council in buildings similar and show a unique use and how local government can help investment decisions on these projects.

Mr. Jordan stated the Robertson family members who participated in the interview process were excited and all had an idea of an active and open space for the building. He stated the purpose of this study was to identify the most appropriate use to meet the Town's vision. He noted the purchase agreement stated the preservation of the building's historic integrity and façade must be maintained with minimal changes for 10 years.

He stated there are upfront expenditures necessary to get the building in shape. A Facility Condition Assessment was conducted as part of the Town's due diligence prior to purchase, which identified a number of items that need to be addressed in the short term for stabilization. To make repairs to the building and improve the structural integrity, it would cost approximately \$600,000 and to add a new free-span roof would be an additional \$400,000.

He spoke about the most common ideas for the building: affordable and accessible "third place", community and educational use, event venue, cultural and arts center, commercial/rentable kitchen, and museum and event space integration. Things to consider are this building only has one bathroom and there would be improvements necessary to be made to meet code and ADA requirements.

He mentioned this is a 6,600 sq. ft. building and most of what Council toured yesterday was in the 16,000 sq. ft. range. By the time you add restrooms and storage, it reduces the usable space. He stated this building needs to be thought of as a specialized boutique use instead of on a broader scale. He stated when determining usable square footage, think in terms that 1/3 would go to storage, etc. It is his estimate that for this building only 4,000 sq. ft. would be usable. He stated if we decided to use it as an auditorium, we could get 200 people max.

The study stated, "based on our observations, the current condition of the masonry walls of the building are functionally inadequate for its proposed change in use". This confirms there needs to be structural work done.

It was suggested that the structure be designed as a freestanding building without interior columns and that a cupola be incorporated into the structural design. Mr. Cappola noted the

importance of stabilizing the building. Mr. Gallant stated that a structural engineer evaluated both immediate and long-term repair needs and found that many joists were not properly connected; however, the building is considered stable for the immediate future. There was also discussion regarding a small corner area of the site where oil is present in the ground, estimated to be about 10% of the area.

Mr. Cappola stated our sales tax has passed us with what had been anticipated for this year, and it could be approximately \$600,00-\$700,000 and possibly higher. This could potentially produce what is needed to make the necessary repairs to this building.

There was discussion on grants, however, not knowing the end user for this project makes it tough to apply for any grants. Mr. Stallings did state we received a \$15,000 grant from Electricities which was used to complete this study.

Mr. Cappola asked Council if they were comfortable moving forward with paying the \$1-\$1.5 million to secure the building. This would not provide a bathroom or air conditioning but would provide a solid shell. He stated he would get a scope of fees from the structural engineer. In the meantime, Council could think about what they would like to see in this building. This also gives us time to talk with community partners.

Ms. Gill stated she would like to invite all the stakeholders involved as well as the family to a movie showing, possibly in the auditorium, to share information and data points and let all know there are efforts happening.

Mayor Pro Tem Archer shared her thoughts on the project and other projects that have been on the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) list for an extended period. She noted that infrastructure improvements and missing greenway links are priorities listed ahead of this project. Council Member Anderson stated she understands that concern; however, stabilizing the stable structure is an immediate need and the Town should consider the potential increased costs if stabilization is delayed.

Council Member Casey stated this represents a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and that the Town should take advantage of it while possible. He emphasized the importance of stabilizing the structure now until the Town is able to move forward with the next phase of the project.

Mr. Cappola noted that other portions of the building could continue to deteriorate if action is not taken and stated that the issue should not be allowed to persist for too long.

Mayor McLeod stated the Town should focus on what is essential at this time, which is securing the structure. He also suggested creating goodwill by establishing a community-focused project related to the effort. He added that as the Town continues to work through the CIP, it should remain flexible since other projects may arise, and priorities may shift.

Council Member Underwood stated that storage would be needed for items currently inside the building before repairs could begin. She also noted that many citizens have strong feelings about the project but believes that if the Town clearly communicates the plan and explains that other projects are also priorities, the community would understand the need to wait for future phases as long as there is a plan in place and the building is not left to deteriorate.

Council Member Williams stated she thinks we should move forward with stabilizing and find ways to accommodate storage.

There was discussion on when to have the movie showing. It was suggested to email those involved with an email update in the meantime. Ms. Gill asked Council to put their thoughts on their decision matrix sheet.

4. BREAK

- a. 10:30 - 10:40 a.m.

5. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

- a. 10:40 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

Facilities Management and Renovation Plan

- Overview of Acquired Properties
- Property Planning and Renovation Considerations
- Next Steps

Presenters:

Tim Robbins, Public Works Director

Lee Barbee, Deputy Town Manager

Deputy Town Manager Barbee provided background on all town facilities and stated we have outgrown every facility. He stated Fire Station 2, built in May 2000 as a 3,200 sq. ft. building, has had 3 expansions so far. Fire Station 1, built in April 2005, has had 4 upfits so far. The Police Department has had 3 major upfits so far.

There was discussion on working from home options but stated face-to-face working environments are important.

Mr. Robbins stated staff levels have increased significantly over the last decade, 25% in 5 years. Buildings/workspaces to accommodate staff and customer service functions have not kept up with the pace. This results in inefficiencies, safety concerns, and poor public perceptions.

Shared were existing facility needs.

The 653 Veterans Parkway Operations Center does not meet current & future needs. The warehouse, fleet shop, fueling, equipment storage, training/meeting, and office spaces, parking and overall traffic flow do not meet current and future needs. NCDOT planned road improvements will encroach on the property and functionality for our use. Their right-of-way line goes through our loading dock, so we would no longer have a loading dock once those improvements are completed. This will also impact parking in the front. The property's 14 acres is located on a commercial corridor would soon be fronted by roads on 3 sides.

Town Hall is also critical. Major repairs and renovations are needed there that would have to be addressed at some point. Leaking windows and masonry, water damage, fire separation concerns, electrical and mechanical systems that do not meet current needs, and outdated building system controls and technology in conference spaces.

He spoke about properties the Town has acquired.

100 Guy Road (Meehan Property)

This property is 1.73 acres, 7,500 sq. ft. with 50 parking spaces.

Unique Attributes: large front door canopy, large lobby area, and opportunity for collaborative work areas.

Potential Challenges: additional parking is needed, it's a medical facility floorplan.

Potential Use: Community Development Center

Proposed Department Relocations: Engineering – Private Development, Planning, Development Services, Building Inspections

480 E. Main Street

This property is .27 acres, 3,500 sq. ft. with 12 parking spaces.

Unique Attributes: Duplex floorplan (potential abandonment of dead-end), two front doors on the building, well-located.

Potential Challenges: needs full interior renovation before anyone moved in, building is close to property line

Potential Uses: Utilities and Billing Customer Service Center

Proposed Department Relocations: Utilities/Billing Customer Service and Human Resources

501 Atkinson St (The Warehouse)

This property is 4.76 acres, 32,000 sq. ft. with 45 parking spaces and a lot of open land.

Unique: conditioned warehouse space, office space ready for move-in, outdoor storage area

Potential Challenges: Public utility easement on property (it is our utility and we can move it)

Potential Use: Public Services Annex

Proposed Department Relocations: Public Services Leadership Team, Warehouse Operations, Engineering – Capital Projects, Information Technology

317 E. Second Street (IT Building currently)

This property is 2.14 acres, 1,500 sq. ft. (partial) with 35 parking spaces.

Unique Attributed: located in Downtown, minor interior renovations needed, space for quality meeting space

Potential Challenges: limited parking due to Police Department needs

Potential Use: Economic Development Office

Proposed Department Relocations: Economic Development Office and Downtown Development

Shared were wins and next steps.

Wins:

- The Town needs space to accommodate growth, critical renovations to existing facilities, and impacts to the Operations Center property.
- The Town has the opportunity to add 43,000 sq. ft. of space to facility inventory.
- The properties under contract would likely be taken for other uses.
- Open opportunity to market the Operations Center Property.
- Atkins St. Property is "move-in ready"

Next Steps:

- Architect has been engaged to scope the immediate needs.
- Evaluate available rough square footage and site opportunities.
- Perform test-fits for work groups and their respective workflows.
- Develop concepts for upfits and renovations.

- Advance approved concepts to SD's.
- Develop preliminary budgets and schedules.

Items to keep in mind for keeping our eye on the ball:

- Engage Evergreen to provide staffing projections for the Town that align with anticipated growth over 5, 10, 20 years
- Engage with consultant to conduct Space Needs Study using projected staff levels
- Consider existing town properties for potential uses
- Consider temporary facilities for Public Services work groups to facilitate early exit from Ops Center property
- Consider re-use study for 111 East Second Street while pursuing exterior rehabilitation efforts to the building

Mayor McLeod stated we need to do minor renovations on these properties.

6. LUNCH

- 12:30 - 1:00 p.m.

7. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

- 1:00 - 1:45 p.m.
 Capital Improvement Plan Transparency
 ClearGov Module Demonstration
Presenters:
 Christopher Gallant, Capital Program Manager
 Shannon Poole, Project Controls Specialist

Ms. Poole introduced the ClearGov Transparency Capital Project Module link which would go live next week. This module would eliminate misinformation on our projects, builds public trust, centralizes project communication, improves organizational efficiency, and reduces staff time spent obtaining updates to responding to inquiries. There would be an interactive map showing current Town projects.

This is a Phase 1 launch. There are only a select few projects on there now, more will be added but would eventually include all projects currently displayed on the Town's Engineering website. The purpose of Phase 1 is to focus on launching a functional, consistent, and digestible public-facing project dashboard. Phase 2 - Expanded Transparency would include additional projects and show project level financial transparency.

All projects entered would follow a consistent information template and include project title, project description, project phase, project manager, objectives and strategic goals, location, project team, project milestones, public engagement opportunities, anticipated shutdowns or disruptions, project updates, and project history.

Citizens would be able to subscribe to project updates. There is a link for citizens to have the opportunity to send questions or comments. It shows past and future public engagement and would contain notes from those meetings.

Ms. Poole asked for consensus to move forward with going live, which could be tomorrow. It

was consensus of Council to move forward.

b. 1:45 - 2:10 p.m.

Town of Clayton Newsletter Proposal

Presenters:

Nathanael Shelton, Communication Director

Emily Denison, Administrative Support Specialist

Mr. Shelton stated currently the Town has a quarterly newsletter, 8.5x14, which is included in utility bills. With 9,500 utility customers, we are one of the few municipalities that still prints a newsletter. This proposal is to shift from a quarterly to a monthly newsletter which would be two-pages, four pages of content, to allow us to take a deeper dive into different subjects.

He stated we would provide both a printed and digital newsletter for 1 fiscal year. We would use this year to build and update our customer information. The benefit of this is we would gain 200% content for 15% increase in cost, improve transparency, broaden reach, modernize methods, and deepen education efforts.

Mayor McLeod stated he would like to see a larger percentage of content geared toward educating the public. It was suggested including legal constraints as to why projects are approved.

Mr. Shelton stated his department is working with Customer Service on a quarterly digital newsletter that discusses ways to conserve.

There was discussion on educating the public about topics upcoming on the meeting agendas. It was stated there needs to be a consistent message to the public to remind them to check all meeting agendas. There was discussion on creating a Clayton4U to educate the public on how to sign up to receive meeting agendas and how to navigate through them. There was also discussion on more communication to citizens about Town events.

It was stated to keep printed copies as well for those that would prefer a hard copy. There was confirmation there would be a printed copy in all utility bills, utility customers that get a digital bill would receive this digitally, and it would be available on the website.

c. 2:10 - 2:30 p.m.

Community Education Partners Project

Presenters:

Todd Melton, Budget Manager

Nathanael Shelton, Communication Director

Mr. Melton stated the Community Education Partners Project was introduced briefly at the last Work Session. He stated citizens from the community were invited and 20 citizens have accepted to become a partner with the Town. He stated these are citizens that are interested in getting more involved. The first session was on Tuesday, 14 people attended.

This group consists of a broad representation of the community from different neighborhoods, Advisory Board members and even the Student Body President from Clayton High.

He stated he hoped this project would increase public understanding of how the Town operates, especially the budget, so residents can engage confidently and share accurate information.

The primary focus would be on the annual budget process, but other key topics would include Budget 101, Capital Improvement Planning (CIP), Utility Rate Modeling, and Manager Recommended and Adopted Budget.

Each session lasts 90 minutes and includes staff education presentation, interactive activity or workshop, and open discussion and feedback. He stated he is adamant about this being a two-way communication and would be intent about listening.

These meetings would be held on the fourth Tuesday of the month in the Rotary Room.

8. BREAK

- a. 2:30 - 2:45 p.m.

9. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

- a. 2:45 - 3:15 p.m.
Legislative Affairs Update
Presenter:
Sam Shumate, Electus

Mr. Shumate shared state services to include providing clients with strategic counsel on matters involving local, state and national governmental affairs, engaging in regulatory and budgetary lobbying on client's behalf, and serving as liaison between clients and NC Legislature, NC Executive Branch, numerous state agencies/departments, and other pertinent associations (NCDOT, NCDEQ, OSA, NCLM).

He stated things are being done differently this year with the Town. He stated last year, there was an annual trip to the legislature that was productive; players outside of Johnston County met with local delegation.

He shared information on the State Budget process and provided a timeline. This budget operates on a 2-year budget and begins in the Governor's office.

He stated the federal lobbying ban was for a year but ended in December; he is now doing federal services for the Town.

Shared were Federal Services, which included an annual trip to Washington to meet delegation (Congressman Knott/staff, Senator Budd, and Senator Tillis), assist with applying for direct appropriations for specific client projects and identifying opportunities, work with Town Manager to keep Council aware of federal activity that would impact the Town of Clayton, serve as liaison between Town of Clayton, staff, and relevant agencies, and monitor committee action that is relevant to Clayton's long-term legislative interests.

Shared was a Legislative Agenda, created by Mr. Stallings and the Communication Department, which was recently shared with the General Assembly. He stated this blueprint was a great visual to share when he met with agencies to frame conversation and inform legislators what the Town's needs are.

Mayor McLeod stated as we continue to grow and our water and sewer needs grow, it would be important to be able to go to the federal level with our needs.

Mr. Shumate stated the advice that he could give to the Town is when speaking with our legislators, keep great relationships. He also stated that when making an ask, make sure you know what you are asking for.

b. 3:15 - 3:45 p.m.

Tourism Funds

Presenter:

Joe Stallings, Economic Development Director

Mr. Stallings discussed the Town's occupancy tax, which is collected from hotels, bed and breakfasts, and other short-term rentals. Johnston County currently assesses a 3% tax, the Town receives 2%. He noted that current lodging establishments within the Town include Comfort Inn & Suites, Magnolia Inn, and several Airbnb properties.

Mr. Stallings reported that the Town received approximately \$65,000 in occupancy tax revenue last year. Under state legislation, two-thirds of the revenue must be used for marketing purposes, while the remaining one-third may be used for tourism-related expenditures, including capital projects.

There was discussion regarding how the funds should be used. Mr. Stallings suggested allowing the funds to accumulate; however, he noted that the County prefers to see the funds utilized before the balance reaches approximately \$1 million.

It was also noted that the Johnston County Visitors Bureau already conducts marketing efforts on the Town's behalf; however, the two-thirds portion allocated for marketing remains a separate funding source.

It was consensus of Council to allow the funds to continue to accumulate and to revisit potential uses for the funds at a later date.

c. 3:45 - 4:30

Council Discussion Items

Council discussion included social media and closed session.

Attorney Cauley reiterated the importance of not disclosing information discussed in closed session.

Regarding social media, it was suggested for Council and staff not to engage in negativity. It was stated when you post or respond, to think about the optics. It was also stated that social media commentary provides us information on where and how we need to better community out to the public. Regarding commentary, we should stick to the facts and direct anyone to our website where our factual information lives.

There was discussion on the proper process of different topics such as not posting on social media when there is a fire, to call 911 or if there is a water leak call our Operations Center.

There was discussion on making staff agenda cover sheets more robust to provide more information about topics to the community.

- d. 4:30 - 4:45 p.m.
Meeting Closeout and Next Steps

Presenter:
Dolores Gill, Chief of Staff and Strategic Initiatives

Ms. Gill reminded Council that CIP scores are due tomorrow to Mr. Gallant. April 6 and May 4, 2026 work sessions will be held from 12:00 – 5:00 p.m. There was discussion on what went well and what could be better. Mr. Cappola thanked all staff and Council for dedicating two full days.

10. ADJOURNMENT

- a. Adjourn

With nothing further, the meeting was adjourned at 4:27 p.m.

Motion To Adjourn

| | |
|------------------|---|
| Result: | Passed 5-0 |
| Mover: | Ruth Anderson |
| Seconder: | Andria Archer |
| Yes: | Andria Archer, Ruth Anderson, Porter Casey, Amanda Underwood, Gretchen Williams |
| No: | None |
| Absent: | |

Duly Adopted by the Town Council on Monday, March 16, 2026 while in regular session.

Andria Archer

 Andria Archer
 Mayor Pro Tem

ATTEST:

Heidi L. Holland

 Heidi L. Holland, MMC, NCCMC
 Town Clerk

