Town of Clayton
Town Council Work Session Minutes
Monday, July 20, 2026 at 3:00 PM
Council Chambers, Town Hall
111 E. Second Street

Pursuant to N.C. General Statute § 143-318.10(e), these minutes provide a general summary of the Town Council meeting and do not represent a verbatim transcript. A complete video recording of this meeting is available for public access on the Town of Clayton's official YouTube channel: https://www.youtube.com/user/TownofClaytonNC.

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
Meredith Mumford, Deputy Town Clerk
Dolores Gill, Chief of Staff and Strategic Initiatives
Lee Barbee, Deputy Town Manager
David Ranes, Fire Chief
Robert McKie, Finance Director
Nathanael Shelton, Communication Director
Christopher Gallant, Capital Program Manager
Todd Riddick, Parks and Rec. Director
Lauren Box, Assistant Parks and Rec. Director
Joseph D'Agostino, Contracts & Procurement Analyst
Shaun Mizell, Procurement, Contracts, and MWBE Manager
Abi Napier, Planning Intern
Lauren Staudenmaier, Senior Planner
Leigh Sullivan, Zoning & Code Enforcement Officer
Haley Downey, Assistant Planning Director
Carlo Scott, Instrumentation Control/Pump Tech.
David White, Water Reclamation Superintendent
Kenya Walls, Human Resources Director

1. CALL TO ORDER

a. Call To Order

Mayor McLeod called the meeting to order at 3:03 p.m.

2. ADJUSTMENT OF THE AGENDA

a. Adopt or Adjust the Agenda

No adjustments were made to the agenda.

Adoption of Agenda

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

3. STAFF INTRODUCTIONS AND RECOGNITIONS

a. 3:00 - 3:10 p.m.
Joseph D'Agostino, Contracts & Procurement Analyst
Presenter:
Shaun Mizell, Procurement, Contracts, and MWBE Manager

b. Planning Department:
Abi Napier, Planning Intern
Lauren Staudenmaier, Senior Planner
Leigh Sullivan, Zoning and Code Enforcement Officer
Presenter:
Haley Downey, Assistant Planning Director

c. Meredith Mumford, Deputy Town Clerk
Presenter:
Heidi Holland, Town Clerk

d. Carlo Scott, Instrumentation Control/Pump Technician
Presenter:
David White, Water Reclamation Superintendent

New staff were introduced to Council.

4. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

a. 3:10-3:40 p.m.
Parks and Recreation Property Use Study
Presenters:
Sara Burroughs, SAGE Consulting and Todd Riddick, Parks and Recreation Director

Ms. Burroughs presented the results of the Parks and Recreation Property Use Study, which was developed as a follow-up to the Town's recently adopted Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan. The purpose of the study was to evaluate Town-owned land and facility resources to determine how existing assets could help advance the goals and recommendations identified in the master plan.

Ms. Burroughs stated the study examined opportunities and constraints associated with various Town-owned properties, including topography, wetlands, streams, environmental restrictions, and surrounding development patterns. Based on those findings and the recreational needs identified through the master planning process, potential park and recreation elements were assigned to appropriate sites throughout the community.

She reviewed several properties included in the study, beginning with the Weyerhaeuser tract, where passive recreation opportunities were identified. She noted the importance of the Town's open space areas and stated community feedback strongly supported preserving these areas for environmental resilience and community character. At Clayton Community Park, potential improvements included the addition of a dog park, expanded trail connectivity, and improved pedestrian access linking the park to nearby neighborhoods and schools.

Ms. Burroughs discussed the Little Creek Church Road property, stating the site filled an identified gap in park access but would require further analysis due to significant site constraints, including rock formations, wetlands, stream buffers, and topography. She stated additional evaluation would be necessary to determine whether the property should be developed as a park or preserved as open space. She also reviewed opportunities at the former Legend Park site, where passive recreation elements such as mowed meadows, observation areas, walking trails, and birdwatching opportunities could be incorporated while remaining consistent with brownfield restrictions.

Ms. Burroughs stated the Loop Road property offered opportunities for both active and passive recreation facilities. She explained not all community recreation needs could be accommodated on a single site and recommended refining the site master plan, coordinating with the state Brownfields Program, and developing phased implementation strategies. She also discussed opportunities to enhance the existing trailhead, improve open space amenities, and address issues associated with an existing pond that could not be used because of environmental restrictions. She stated stream restoration and alternative fishing opportunities could help meet recreational demands while improving water quality.

Regarding the Sam's Branch Greenway Trailhead, Ms. Burroughs stated the study recommended focusing on formal trailhead improvements, including parking, restrooms, and bicycle support amenities, rather than adding additional recreational facilities within the flood-prone area.

Ms. Burroughs outlined implementation priorities using immediate, near-term, and long-term planning horizons. She explained that immediate priorities included greenway connectivity improvements, indoor recreation opportunities, advancement of the Loop Road master plan, and development of the Sam's Branch Trailhead. Near-term priorities included further evaluation of the Little Creek Church Road property, improvements at Clayton Community Park, and continued acquisition and preservation of future parkland. Long-term priorities focused primarily on the Weyerhaeuser tract due to its location and passive recreation focus.

She stated the cost estimates included in the study were conceptual planning-level estimates developed at approximately a 25 percent design level and would require refinement as projects progressed through detailed design and engineering. The estimates were intended to assist with long-range financial planning rather than represent final project costs.

During Council discussion, Ms. Burroughs explained the goal of providing residents with access to a park within a ten-minute walk was a nationally recognized parks and recreation best practice that promotes health, wellness, recreation, and access to open space. She also stated that community feedback strongly supported investments in parks and open space and indicated a willingness to support future funding initiatives.

Council discussed future implementation strategies, financing options, and the need for additional due diligence before advancing projects. Mr. Cappola stated further site analysis, concept development, environmental review, and cost refinement would be necessary before determining financing approaches or project timelines.

During the discussion, Ms. Gill announced the Legend Park trailhead had officially reopened and thanked Town staff, project partners, and the developer for their collaboration in completing the necessary work to restore public access. Council expressed appreciation for the study and the information provided.

b. 3:40-4:00 p.m.
Community Service Policy
Presenter:
Kenya Walls, Human Resources Director

Ms. Walls presented a proposed Community Service Leave Policy that would provide employees with up to eight hours of paid community service leave annually. The leave would be available on a use-it-or-lose-it basis each year and could not be carried forward. Employees would be required to use the leave in increments of at least one hour and would record the time through a dedicated leave code within NeoGov.

Ms. Walls stated employees seeking to use community service leave would be required to submit a request to their supervisor, along with documentation identifying the organization and volunteer activity. Requests would be reviewed and approved through the employee's department head and Human Resources to ensure compliance with policy requirements. Following completion of the volunteer activity, employees would be required to provide documentation verifying their participation. Employees would also be encouraged to submit photographs or other materials that could be used by the Town's Communication Department to highlight employee involvement within the community.

During Council discussion, clarification was provided that community service leave could not be used for fundraising activities, political activities, or activities otherwise covered under the existing school leave policy. Volunteer activities at schools would qualify only when employees were serving in a volunteer capacity rather than attending routine parent meetings or classroom events. Mr. Cappola stated community service leave hours would not count toward regular work hours for purposes of generating overtime.

Council expressed support for the proposed policy and noted that similar programs were offered by other public-sector employers. It was suggested the policy would provide employees with additional opportunities to engage in their communities and participate in volunteer activities. The proposed policy would be placed on the August 3, 2026 agenda for formal consideration and adoption.

5. BREAK

a. 4:00-4:05 p.m.

A break was not taken.

6. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

a. 4:05-5:00 p.m.
Renovation Concepts - Clayton Wellness & Activity Center
Presenters:
Christopher Gallant, Capital Program Manager
Lauren Box, Assistant Parks and Rec. Director
Daniel Jencks and Jessica Bossiere, HH Architecture

Mr. Gallant stated the presentation would discuss the renovation and study phase of the findings of the Clayton Wellness and Activity Center, located at 1370 Cameron Way and formerly known as the Clayton Fitness Building.

Daniel Jencks, representing HH Architecture, presented the renovation study for the proposed Clayton Wellness and Activity Center. He stated the project was in the preliminary study phase and the purpose of the presentation was to review conceptual layouts, programming opportunities, renovation options, project costs, and anticipated timelines. Mr. Cappola stated the proposed plans had been developed in coordination with Parks and Recreation staff and were aligned with recommendations from the Town's Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

Ms. Box provided an overview of the proposed programming for the facility. She stated the center was designed to serve residents of all ages and abilities through a variety of recreational, educational, and wellness programs. Program concepts included fitness classes, line dancing, social clubs, inclusive recreation opportunities, parent-and-child programs, educational classes, and partnerships with community organizations. She stated the facility was envisioned as a community hub that would provide programs, services, resources, and opportunities for social connection.

Mr. Jencks reviewed the architectural study process, explaining that multiple renovation scenarios had been evaluated before arriving at a preferred layout that met programmatic goals while minimizing modifications to existing building systems. The proposed floor plan included office space, classrooms, a fitness area, group exercise rooms, a central lounge, touchdown meeting spaces, a sensory room, a lactation room, a multipurpose room, a demonstration kitchen, gymnasium space, racquetball courts, and updated restroom facilities. He stated the design maximized the use of existing plumbing, electrical, and mechanical systems to control costs.

Jessica Bossiere, also representing HH Architecture, reviewed proposed interior finish options ranging from low- to high-finish selections. She stated all options were designed to be durable and appropriate for community use, with cost differences primarily reflecting aesthetics, material selections, and enhanced architectural features.

Council discussed the balance between durability, functionality, and appearance and expressed support for strategically incorporating higher-end finishes in key public areas while maintaining practical finishes elsewhere.

Discussion occurred regarding the proposed demonstration kitchen. Ms. Box stated the current concept focused on a residential-style demonstration kitchen that could support cooking classes, life-skills instruction, and facility rentals. Council also discussed the possibility of incorporating a commercial kitchen component to support local entrepreneurs and generate revenue. The consultants advised that a commercial kitchen would significantly increase construction costs and operational complexity and stated the space may be too limited to effectively serve as a business incubator kitchen.

Mr. Jencks reviewed proposed site improvements, including modifications to the building entrance canopy to improve safety, accessibility, and traffic circulation. Additional improvements included accessible parking enhancements, relocation of the dumpster enclosure, new mechanical equipment areas, and identification of future opportunities such as a permanent generator location and potential site circulation improvements.

Mr. Jencks shared conceptual cost estimates comparing renovation of the existing facility with construction of a similar new building. He stated the renovation costs were substantially lower than new construction. Estimated renovation costs ranged from approximately $6.4 million to $9 million, including soft costs and contingencies, while construction of a comparable new facility was estimated to range from approximately $13.3 million to $20.3 million. Potential cost reduction options were also reviewed, including modifications to the kitchen, gymnasium, and racquetball court components.

Presented was a preliminary project schedule showing design, permitting, bidding, and construction activities extending through early 2028. Mr. Gallant shared the funding currently programmed within the Capital Improvements Program and discussed potential strategies for addressing anticipated funding needs, including grant opportunities, partnerships, fundraising support, and use of available Town funds.

Council discussed how the facility would complement existing Parks and Recreation facilities and provide additional programming space to meet growing community demand. Council expressed strong support for the project's intergenerational focus and praised the inclusion of spaces designed for residents with varying needs, including older adults, families, young children, and individuals requiring sensory accommodations.

Council discussed opportunities to provide a dedicated space for senior programming within the facility and suggested further evaluation of the racquetball court area as a potential location for additional senior-focused space. Council also discussed accessibility improvements, including covered walkways, building access from rear parking areas, and opportunities to enhance mobility and convenience for older adults and individuals with mobility limitations.

Council expressed support for continued refinement of the concept plan and encouraged staff to explore partnership opportunities with Johnston County, community organizations, corporate sponsors, and other funding partners. They also requested consideration of future uses for the remaining site area, including portions affected by buffer restrictions, and discussed potential opportunities to utilize portions of the facility before completion of the full renovation project.

Council expressed appreciation for the presentation, the thoughtful planning effort, and the project's ability to address a broad range of community needs while providing a cost-effective alternative to new construction.

7. ADJOURNMENT

a. Adjourn

With nothing further, the meeting was adjourned at 4:45 p.m.

Motion To Adjourn

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

Duly Adopted by the Town Council on Monday, August 3, 2026 while in regular session.

Andria Archer
Mayor Pro Tem

ATTEST:

Heidi L. Holland

Heidi L. Holland, MMC, NCCMC
Town Clerk

TOWN OF CLAYTON
INCORPORATED APRIL 1869
CLAYTON, N.C.