

November 6, 2025

Executive Session

Per the Open Meetings Act, Maryland Code Annotated, General Provisions Article, § 3-305 (b) (2014) (3) consider the acquisition of real property for a public purpose and matter directly related to public business & (7) Consult with Council to obtain legal advice.

At 5:30 PM Councilman Lister made a motion that was seconded by Councilman Branson to open an Executive Session to discuss a real estate matter, passing unanimously.

The Executive Session was held in the Council Executive Office on the 2nd Floor of the Town Office Building.

Present

All Councilmembers were present.

Staff present included: Mr. Scott Getchell, Mrs. Donna Todd, Mrs. Karen Monteith, and Mr. Robbie Gill, CEO of the YMCA.

Mr. Mark Chandler stopped in around 5:45.

Discussion

There was discussion on the YMCA interest in real estate property the Town may have available. The Council asked Mr. Getchell to work with Mr. Gill on a proposal for future discussion.

At 5:55 PM, with no further discussion, Councilman Lister made a motion to close the Executive Session, seconded by Councilman Branson, passing unanimously.

The Executive Session was closed, and the Council relocated to the Council Meeting Room to prepare for their Regular Monthly Meeting.

Regular Meeting

Mayor McNinch called the Regular Meeting of the Denton Town Council to order at 6:00 PM on this date, leading everyone in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

Invocation was given by Pastor Dan Gedman of St. Luke's Methodist Church.

Mayor McNinch thanked everyone for coming and asked to have the record reflect that all Councilmembers were present.

The virtual meeting software was zoom bombed and was temporarily shut down. Once all the guests were controlled, Chief Bacorn reopened the virtual access for listen and view only.

Mayor McNinch announced for the record that an Executive Session was held earlier on this date at 5:30 PM, Per the Open Meetings Act, Maryland Code Annotated, General Provisions Article, § 3-305 (b) (2014) (3) discuss interest in real property matters. This session was informational only; no action was taken.

Councilman Taylor made a motion to approve the minutes of the October 2, 2025 Regular Meeting, and the October 20, 2025 Working Session as presented, seconded by Councilman Branson, passing unanimously.

Public Hearing

Mayor McNinch opened a public hearing at 6:05 PM to receive public comments on Ordinance #760 - An Ordinance of the Town of Denton to amend the Table of Density and Dimensional Regulations of the Zoning Ordinance in Chapter 128 of the Denton Town Code with respect to minimum lot area and dimensions.

Mayor McNinch asked for comments from the State: there were none.

Mayor McNinch asked for comments from the County: there were none.

Mayor McNinch asked for comments from the Council:

Councilman Johnson stated that this was a good amendment that will allow the property owner to use the property development as they see fit, it reverts to something the Town has allowed in the past, and it meets the national standard for the setback.

Mayor McNinch asked for comments from the Public:

Chief Bacorn shared that no comments relative to the public hearing were received online and the virtual access to the meeting was now secure.

With no further comments, Mayor McNinch closed this public hearing at 6:07 PM.

Petitions, Remonstrance's, and Communication

Proclamation – Municipal Government Works Month

Councilman Branson read a Proclamation of the Denton Town Council recognizing November as Municipal Government Works Month.

Proclamation – National Hunger & Homelessness Awareness Week

Councilman Johnson read a Proclamation to recognize the week of November 16-22, 2025, as National Hunger & Homelessness Awareness Week.

The Proclamation was presented to Mrs. Stefanie Johnson, Executive Director of His Hope Ministries.

Ordinances and Resolutions

Resolution #904 – WWTP Financing

A Resolution declaring the official intent of the Mayor and Council of the Town of Denton to reimburse expenditures to be incurred with respect to certain capital projects with the proceeds of debt to be issued by the Town of Denton. The proposed capital project includes sludge processing upgrades to the Town of Denton's Wastewater Treatment Plant.

Councilman Lister made a motion to adopt Resolution #904, seconded by Councilman Branson.

Mrs. Lyndsey Ryan, Town Attorney, provided a summary of the purpose of the Resolution, which will allow the Town to start incurring engineering fees and design fees to be reimbursed once the bond closes. Once the project is approved by the Board of Public Works, an Ordinance will be brought back to the Council for approval for financing and possible interim financing.

Mr. Scott Getchell, Town Administrator, provided a summary of the proposed Wastewater Treatment Plant Sludge Management Upgrade the Town has applied for several years in a row. Mr. Getchell shared that the preliminary project cost is estimated to be close to \$9 million dollars, with about \$5.5 million as a loan, and the rest will be loan forgiveness through the Maryland Department of the Environment.

With no further discussion, Mayor McNinch asked for a vote on the motion to adopt Resolution #904.

The motion passed unanimously.

Ordinance #760 – Zoning Ordinance Amendment

An Ordinance of the Town of Denton to amend the Table of Density and Dimensional Regulations of the Zoning Ordinance in Chapter 128 of the Denton Town

Code with respect to minimum lot area and dimensions, was presented to the Council for consideration.

Councilman Lister made a motion to adopt Ordinance #760, seconded by Councilman Branson.

In discussion, Mrs. Donna Todd provided a summary and shared that the Ordinance has been reviewed by the Town Attorney, and the Planning Commission made a favorable recommendation for the amendment at their September 30th Planning Commission Meeting. The Ordinance supports affordable housing.

Councilman Taylor shared the Planning Commission supports reverting the setbacks for Townhomes to what it was before.

With no further discussion, Mayor McNinch asked for a vote on the motion to adopt Ordinance #760.

The motion passed unanimously.

Ordinance #761 – Habitat for Humanity Real Property Tax Exemption

An Ordinance of the Town of Denton Amending the Town of Denton Code to add provisions to Chapter 114 to establish a Property Tax Credit for Habitat for Humanity Incorporated provided certain criteria are met.

Councilman Johnson made a motion to introduce Ordinance #761, seconded by Councilman Taylor.

In discussion, Mrs. Ryan provided a summary, and shared that upon adoption, the Council will be asked to take separate action for the current year's taxes on the twelve properties currently owned by Habitat for Humanity.

With no further discussion, Mayor McNinch asked for a vote on the motion to introduce Ordinance #761.

The motion passed unanimously.

Ordinance #762 – Water Rate Amendment

An Ordinance of the Denton Town Council revising the Water Rates and Fees for users of the Municipal Water System from 2026 through 2028.

Councilman Lister made a motion to introduce Ordinance #762, seconded by Councilman Branson.

In discussion, Mr. Getchell explained the proposal for a 4% rate increase annually for water is planned to take effect each year for the next three years beginning in January 2026. Along with the rate increases, the Use Table has also been updated.

Councilman Lister shared that the Utility Commission has been working on this with Waterworth for several months to come up with a rate proposal to help sustain the fund.

Councilman Johnson requested the rate proposal be publicly posted online to help everyone understand the purpose for raising the rates.

Councilman Branson shared that the Water Fund is an Enterprise Fund which is required by law to be self-sustaining.

Councilman Lister shared that the ERU Table changes are necessary to have a more modernized and reasonable table.

Councilman Taylor shared how the Waterworth Program provides a real time view of the status of the funds, which is instrumental in supplying an updated view of the maintenance needs and to maintain the funds.

With no further discussion, Mayor McNinch asked for a vote on the motion to introduce Ordinance #762.

The motion passed unanimously.

Ordinance #763 – Sewer Rate Amendment

An Ordinance of the Denton Town Council revising the Sewer Rates and Fees for users of the Municipal Water System from 2026 through 2028.

Councilman Taylor made a motion to introduce Ordinance #763, seconded by Councilman Lister.

In discussion, Mr. Getchell provided an update on the significant changes proposed to be made to the sewer rates. The Utility Commission is recommending going with a lower reserve, proposing to raise the sewer rates 21% in the first year, 4% in 2027, and 4% in 2028. By reducing the reserve, they can propose less of an increase in subsequent years. The Utility Commission recommendation is necessary to keep the Sewer Fund solvent. The same changes are proposed for the Use Table as for the Water Fund.

Councilman Taylor confirmed that the sewer rate is proposed to increase by 21% in 2026, then 4% in following years.

Councilman Lister shared that the Water Fund is in a better situation financially than the Sewer Fund, and that the rates are reflective of the increasing costs for chemicals, electricity, repairs and preparing for the proposed Sludge Management Project.

With no further discussion, Mayor McNinch asked for a vote on the motion to introduce Ordinance #763.

The motion passed unanimously.

Ordinance #764 – 10 N 4th Street Conveyance

An Ordinance of the Town of Denton authorizing the conveyance of property located at 10 N 4th Street.

Councilman Lister made a motion to introduce Ordinance #764, seconded by Councilman Branson.

In discussion, Mrs. Ryan explained the process of declaring a property is no longer needed by the Town for any public purpose, and that the transfer is in the best interest of the public. Mrs. Ryan has drafted an Ordinance that will authorize the transfer of the property and authorize the Mayor to execute a Purchase Agreement to sell the property for \$20,000, and the Deed. The purchaser will be responsible for any cost incurred in the settlement and the property will be sold as is. She mentioned that there are no restrictions included on the future use of the property.

Councilman Taylor, knowing what the intent is for the property, asked if the Town wants to list having restrictions on the use of the property, which was then discussed further.

Mrs. Ann Arnold, interested buyer, shared that she owns the Sole Sanctuary Restoration, a 501 C3 Company that she formed to acquire the property. She shared her concept plan, which includes the intent of restoring the Cobbler House and relocating a railroad turn bridge station that is over at the Dept. of Transportation Building to this property. Everything she has planned will meet the Town's current Arts & Entertainment District guidelines.

The Council shared concerns about setting any precedence and want to make sure the primary use of the property is for the Arts Way.

Councilman Johnson suggested including a restriction to be used for Arts, since they are not going through a formal bid process, and with the property being in the Arts District.

Mrs. Ryan researched the Town Artisan definition from the Town Code and shared that it is not restrictive enough. They could include that the primary purpose of the property must remain as an art use, with allowing someone to reside there as well.

Mr. Mickey McCrea stated that the Town and Denton Development Corporation created the A&E District to be a mixed Art and Residential, live-on premise area.

Mrs. Ryan suggested the Council consider introducing the Ordinance as revised incorporating to include the Purchase Agreement and deed restriction so that the primary use of the property remains in art use, with the ability to have an accessory residential structure, then she can add this to the documents.

Mr. Getchell mentioned that Mrs. Spicher was present representing the Caroline County Historical Society and that she brought some concerns to him today that she would like to share about the amount of money CCHS has invested in the Cobbler House that they would like to recover.

Mrs. Carolyn Spicher, Treasurer for the Caroline County Historical Society, was present and asked Mr. McCrea to speak on behalf of the CCHS.

Mr. McCrea shared his recollection of the history of the discovery of the Cobbler House and that the CCHS invested more than \$22K from 2015 to 2017 in assisting with the relocation of the building and restoration efforts so far.

Mrs. Spicher shared that CCHS was able to recoup about \$7,000 in grant funds to help offset this cost.

There was significant discussion regarding Mr. McCrea's role in bringing the Buyer to the Town with a \$20K proposal to buy the property, and now at the last minute, representing the CCHS, and asking for consideration of almost a \$20K refund.

It was acknowledged that in almost 10 years CCHS had never submitted any expense request to the Town previously seeking reimbursement for their expenses.

Councilman Lister stated that the Town cannot use taxpayer dollars to refund CCHS, and now it would not be proper to ask the Buyer to pay the Town more to reimburse CCHS.

Councilman Johnson shared that with Mr. McCrea representing both sides, and Mr. Mulrine, the former Town Administrator, both being on the CCHS Board, that it's inappropriate to consider giving money to the CCHS Board for something that was never approved by the Council.

Councilman Lister stated that this is an unfortunate situation, and that it would be unfair to ask the Buyer to pay more. Councilman Lister stated that the concept of CCHS is to preserve buildings, and to preserve history. If the Town enters into this agreement with the stipulation that the primary use of the property must remain an art use, then that does exactly what the mission is; the CCHS has served their purpose in preserving the building and preserving history.

Mrs. Ryan clarified that as part of the Purchase Agreement and the Deed, that the Council wants some restrictions added that the building must remain and with a primary art use purpose.

Councilman Lister amended his motion to introduce Ordinance #764 to include the deed restrictions of the art use, and accessory use of the property and retaining the Cobbler Shop. The amended motion was seconded by Councilman Taylor. The amended motion passed unanimously.

Unfinished Business

None

New Business

Agenda #1 – Public Works Purchase of a New Truck

Mr. Mark Chandler, Superintendent of Public Works submitted a request to the Council seeking approval to purchase a 2025 Ram 3500 Utility Body Pickup Truck for \$85,305.

Councilman Lister made a motion to approve the purchase, seconded by Councilman Taylor.

In discussion, Mr. Chandler shared that this truck would replace a 2009 pickup truck that has exceeded its life expectancy. Cost of the new vehicle has been obtained using the State Sourcewell Contract. The Department will plan to sell the 2009 pickup truck at a local auction. The cost of the new vehicle will be split between the Water, Sewer, and Highway budgets. \$90,000 was approved in the budget.

Councilman Taylor asked what happens with the funds when the older vehicle is sold at auction, and Mr. Chandler advised that the funds would roll back into the water, sewer and highway funds.

With no further discussion, Mayor McNinch asked for a vote on the motion to approve the purchase.

The motion passed unanimously.

Agenda #2 –DNR Grant Agreement for Crouse Park Bulkhead Construction

A request seeking approval for the Mayor to sign a Grant Agreement with the State of Maryland Department of Natural Resources for funding in the amount of \$225,000 associated with the renovation of the bulkhead at Crouse Park was submitted for consideration.

Councilman Johnson made a motion to approve the request as submitted, seconded by Councilman Branson.

In discussion, Mrs. Ryan explained the terms of the Agreement, and Mr. Getchell shared that staff is working on securing all the permits necessary to do the work.

With no further discussion, Mayor McNinch asked for a vote on the motion to approve the request.

The motion passed unanimously.

Agenda #3 - 10 N 4th Street Purchasing Agreement

A Purchase Agreement for 10 N 4th Street was submitted to be approved contingent upon the adoption of Ordinance #764.

Councilman Lister made a motion to approve the Purchase Agreement to be amended to include the restrictions discussed earlier with Ordinance #764. The motion was seconded by Councilman Taylor and passed 4-1, with Councilman Johnson voting no.

Reports of Officers, Boards, and Committees

Councilman Taylor shared highlights from the Planning Commission meeting in that Atlantic Coastal Partners, LLC received preliminary approval for the storage units for Phase I portion of their project.

Councilman Johnson shared that they are looking for a speaker from the Town for the Martin Luther King Walk in January, if anyone is interested to let Scott know. Councilman Johnson stated that he is willing to speak again but wanted to mention that there were some negative comments received last year about him speaking.

With no further discussion, Mayor McNinch adjourned the meeting at 7:27 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

*Karen L. Monteith,
Clerk - Treasurer*