

December 8, 2025

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 Don Reynolds of Calvary Baptist Church.

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

Councilman Johnson made a motion to approve the minutes of the November 6, 2025 Regular Meeting and the November 17, 2025 Working Session as presented, seconded by Councilman Branson, passing unanimously.

Public Hearing

Ordinance #761 – Habitat for Humanity Real Property Tax Exemption

Mayor McNinch opened a public hearing at 6:02 PM to receive public comments on Ordinance #761 - An Ordinance of the Town of Denton amending the Town of Denton Code to add provisions to Chapter 114 to establish a real property tax credit for Habitat for Humanity Incorporated provided certain criteria is met.

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: there were none.

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

With no further comments, Mayor McNinch closed this public hearing at 6:03 PM.

Ordinance #762 – Water Rate Amendment

Mayor McNinch opened a public hearing at 6:04 PM to receive public comments on Ordinance #762 - An Ordinance by the Town of Denton revising the Water Rates and Fees, revising the ERU Table, and revising the Administrative Charges Annually for users of the Municipal Water System from 2026 through 2028.

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: there were none.

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

With no further comments, Mayor McNinch closed this public hearing at 6:04 PM.

Ordinance #763 – Sewer Rate Amendment

Mayor McNinch opened a public hearing at 6:05 PM to receive public comments on Ordinance #763 – An Ordinance by the Town of Denton revising the Sewer Rates and Fees, revising the ERU Table, and revising the Administrative Charges Annually for users of the Municipal Sewer System from 2026 through 2028.

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 the information was posted online for both of the water and sewer rate amendments, explaining the impact behind the proposed water and sewer fee increases. The water and sewer studies are also available online.

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

With no further comments, Mayor McNinch closed this public hearing at 6:06 PM.

Ordinance #764 – 10 N. 4th St. Conveyance

Mayor McNinch opened a public hearing at 6:07 PM to receive public comments on Ordinance #764 - An Ordinance of the Town of Denton authorizing the conveyance of property located at 10 N. Fourth St., Denton, Maryland, and identified in the Tax Records of Caroline County as Parcel 812 of Tax Map 0103.

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 Lister commented they do not convey properties without fair market value to any entity other than not-for-profit organizations. The organization they plan to convey this to, does not have their 501C3 Non-profit status completed. He further stated that the conveyance will not happen until the organization has completed and received their Non-profit status.

Mayor McNinch asked for comments from the Public:

Ann Arnold, the interested buyer, stated that she has submitted a copy of her 501C3 paperwork to Scott and Lyndsey.

With no further comments, Mayor McNinch closed this public hearing at 6:09 PM.

Petitions, Remonstrance's, and Communication

None

Ordinances and Resolutions

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 real property tax credit for Habitat for Humanity Incorporated provided certain criteria are met.

Councilman Lister made a motion to adopt Ordinance #761, seconded by Councilman Taylor.

In discussion, Lyndsey Ryan, Town Attorney, provided a summary of the request received from Habitat and provided details of the terms of the Tax Credit.

Councilman Johnson spoke about the long term benefits for the public, how investing and renovating blighted houses impacts the tax base.

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

The motion passed unanimously.

Ordinance #762 – Water Rate Amendment

An Ordinance by the Town of Denton revising the Water Rates and Fees, revising the ERU Table, and revising the Administrative Charges Annually for users of the Municipal Water System from 2026 through 2028.

Councilman Lister made a motion to adopt Ordinance #762, seconded by Councilman Taylor.

In discussion, Scott Getchell, Town Administrator, shared a slide show presentation of the highlights of the long study that was conducted by the Utility Commission while working with Waterworth. Mr. Getchell stated the priorities of the Town are that we must provide safe and reliable water services and we must provide a safe and reliable sewer collection for all users. With the rising cost for electrical needs and chemicals, the water rates are proposed to increase by about 4% annually over the next three years. The first year for the sewer will increase about 21%, and the subsequent years around 4%. Mr. Getchell further shared that along with quarterly rate increases, the

connection fees are also being raised to help cover the proposed \$5.5 million dollar loan the Town anticipates for expanding and improving the sludge management.

Mr. Leroy Womer of the Denton Utility Commission was present.

Councilman Lister shared that the Utility Commission has been working with Waterworth for over a year reviewing both the water and sewer fund. With Waterworth, they can do a live time analysis, which was beneficial to come up with the lowest impact to the user to help sustain each fund. Councilman Lister also explained the difference between the General Fund, which is based on taxes, and the Enterprise Funds which must be self-sufficient.

Mayor McNinch expressed that the Utility Commission has done a phenomenal job throughout this process.

Councilman Johnson stated the prior study was done in 2017/2018, which called for the rates to be higher than what they are, and with the new study, the rates are still below what was projected for them to be at this time.

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

The motion passed unanimously.

Ordinance #763 – Sewer Rate Amendment

An Ordinance by the Town of Denton revising the Sewer Rates and Fees, revising the ERU Table, and revising the Administrative Charges Annually for users of the Municipal Sewer System from 2026 through 2028.

Councilman Lister made a motion to adopt Ordinance #763, seconded by Councilman Johnson.

In discussion, Councilman Johnson confirmed users will first see the rate increases in the first billing in 2026 which will be disbursed at the end of March.

Dona Sorce, of 133 Butler Dr., stated that as part of her work experience, she wanted to share the MDE is starting to look at a model of regional water and sewer systems because every small town in rural Maryland is struggling with these same issues

Councilman Lister stated that is partly the reason the Town has gotten involved with the County and they are working on planning for the west Denton expansion.

Mark Chandler, Superintendent of Public Works, shared that the Maryland Dept. of Environment is constantly increasing regulations, which also increases cost.

Councilman Taylor added the Denton residents are very lucky that the Town has much better systems, which are better maintained than many other systems are.

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

The motion passed unanimously.

Ordinance #764 – 10 N 4th St. Conveyance

An Ordinance of the Town of Denton authorizing the conveyance of property located at 10 N. Fourth St., Denton, Maryland, and identified in the Tax Records of Caroline County as Parcel 812 of Tax Map 0103.

Councilman Lister made a motion to adopt Ordinance #764, seconded by Councilman Taylor.

In discussion, Mr. Getchell provided a summary of the proposal to acquire the property and renovate the Cobbler Shop so that it can be a workshop once again.

Mrs. Ryan shared the steps necessary to convey the property. She also added language to the Purchase Agreement and the Deed to account for some further restrictions the Council wanted regarding the use of the property. She amended them to include a reversion paragraph, stating that if the property ceases to be used primarily for art use purposes, or the cobbler house is removed from the property, the property will be subject to reversion back to the Seller – the Town.

Councilman Lister questioned the status of Sole Sanctuary Restoration's Non-Profit Status.

Mrs. Ryan shared that the company has been legally formed as an LLC. They have applied and are still awaiting the Non-Profit determination letter from the IRS.

Mrs. Ryan further explained that the Council could move forward by adopting the Ordinance to be contingent upon the LLC getting the Non-profit approval or table the motion until the requirements are met.

Ann Arnold, owner of Sole Sanctuary Restoration LLC, acknowledged that she has submitted the application seeking Non-profit status, but she is not sure how long it will take the IRS to approve everything.

Councilman Lister shared that he is going to amend his motion to have contingency upon receiving the letter of determination from the IRS within 90 days.

Councilman Johnson questioned the need to be fast in approving this item, when it looks like there was a delay in that the IRS paperwork was just filed.

Additional discussion was held with Ms. Arnold, who shared that they submitted the paperwork to the IRS in October, but discovered that it was never processed by the IRS, so she resubmitted this week.

Councilman Lister amended his motion to be contingent upon receiving a federal determination letter as confirmation that they have been declared an established Non-profit within 90 days.

Councilman Taylor seconded the amended motion and confirmed with the Attorney that Scott and Lyndsey can make that determination without this having to come back before the Council.

Mayor McNinch asked Ms. Arnold to share what will make Sole Sanctuary Restoration a non-profit.

Ms. Arnold acknowledged that property will not be used for a commercial business, and the property will be an arts use, providing an affordable place for the tenant to share their art, and possibly live on site. They will be engaging with the Arts Council on community events. She also shared that she would like to bring the old railroad ticket booth and place it on the property as well.

Mayor McNinch stated that Ms. Arnold will need to file an application with Planning & Codes Dept. for approval to relocate or make any other additions to the property.

With no further discussion, Mayor McNinch asked for a vote on the motion to adopt Ordinance #764 contingent upon receiving Non-profit status.

The motion passed 4 -1, with Councilman Johnson voting no.

Unfinished Business

None

New Business

Agenda #1 – Planning Commission Reappointment

Dona Sorce submitted a letter of interest in seeking reappointment to the Planning Commission. The current term expires December 31, 2025, and she is seeking reappointment for a five-year term that will expire December 31, 2030.

Mayor McNinch recused herself from the discussion, as she works closely with Ms. Sorce during her day job.

Councilman Lister made a motion to reappoint Dona Sorce for another term on the Planning Commission. The motion was seconded by Councilman Branson, passing with 4 yes votes.

Agenda #2 – Planning Commission Appointment

Gregory “Lee” Graham submitted a letter of interest seeking an appointment to the Planning Commission. Lee would fill the unexpired five-year term that ends December 31, 2029.

Councilman Taylor stated that there has been a vacancy since January 2025 and it will be good to fill the position.

Donna Todd, Planning and Codes Director, shared that the Town Administrator and herself have met with Mr. Graham and based on the interview and his credentials, he seems to be very qualified.

Councilman Lister made a motion to appoint Gregory Lee Graham for a five-year term on the Planning Commission. The motion was seconded by Councilman Johnson, passing unanimously.

Agenda #3 – Historic & Architectural Review Commission Reappointment

Teresa Goss submitted a request seeking reappointment to the Historic & Architectural Review Commission for another three-year term. The current term expires December 31, 2025, and she is seeking reappointment for another term that will expire December 31, 2028.

Councilman Lister made a motion to reappoint Teresa Goss to serve another term on the Historic & Architectural Review Commission. The motion was seconded by Councilman Branson, passing unanimously.

Agenda #4 - Historic & Architectural Review Commission Reappointment

Julie Quick submitted a request seeking reappointment to the Historic & Architectural Review Commission for another three-year term. The current term expires December 31, 2025, and she is seeking reappointment for another term that will expire December 31, 2028.

Councilman Lister made a motion to reappoint Julie Quick to serve another term on the Historic & Architectural Review Commission. The motion was seconded by Councilman Taylor, passing unanimously.

Agenda #5 – Board of Appeals Reappointment

Mary “Lori” Schmidt submitted a request seeking reappointment to the Board of Appeals. The current term expires December 31, 2025, and she is seeking reappointment for another three-year term that will expire December 31, 2028.

Councilman Johnson made a motion to reappoint Lori Schmidt to serve another term on the Town’s Board of Appeals. The motion was seconded by Councilman Branson, passing unanimously.

Ms. Schmidt was present and thanked the Council for their confidence in her.

Councilman Branson expressed his appreciation for all the volunteers.

Agenda #6 - 2026 Council Meeting Schedule

Staff presented the 2026 Town Council Meeting Schedule for consideration for approval.

Councilman Taylor asked for one correction to the meeting schedule noting that the January meeting will be held on the second Thursday, January 8th, due to the holiday being on the first Thursday.

Councilman Johnson made a motion to approve the corrected 2026 Council Meeting Schedule, seconded by Councilman Lister, passing unanimously.

Agenda #7 - 2026 Town Holiday Schedule

Staff presented the 2026 Town Observed Holiday Schedule for consideration for approval.

Councilman Johnson made a motion to approve the 2026 Town Holiday Schedule, seconded by Councilman Taylor, passing unanimously.

Agenda #8 - Water Connection Extension Request

Mr. Getchell shared a letter received from the property owners of 365 Sharp Rd. in Denton seeking an extension to connect the property to the Town water system until the property is sold. The property was transferred to the family in conjunction with closing the estate. As a result of the ownership change, the property is no longer tax waived and is also required to connect within 90 days. The property is currently vacant, and they are actively trying to sell it.

Councilman Lister made a motion to approve the request to extend the requirement for connecting the property to the Town water system until it is sold so long as the property remains unoccupied. The motion was seconded by Councilman Johnson and passed unanimously.

Agenda #9 - Habitat for Humanity – FY2026 Real Property Tax Abatement

As previously discussed, a request from Habitat Choptank is being brought before the Council seeking consideration for a full Town real property tax abatement on the 12 properties currently owned by Habitat for FY2026. This abatement would be retroactive to July 1, 2025 when the taxes were initiated. The combined FY2026 Town real property taxes for all 12 parcels total \$2,642.64. Interest of approximately \$79.30 has accumulated on the taxes. For December, the total Town taxes plus interest is approximately \$2,722.

Councilman Lister made a motion to approve a real property tax abatement on the 12 properties back to July 2025. The motion was seconded by Councilman Johnson, passing unanimously.

Councilman Lister and Councilman Johnson provided a history of Tuckahoe Habitat and the recent plans to transfer to Choptank Habitat, and how Habitat can be successful in rehabilitating blighted dwellings, getting them occupied, and contributing to value on the tax roll.

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

The motion passed unanimously.

Reports of Officers, Boards, and Committees

Councilman Johnson announced that the N.U.T.S. Program was very busy again this year in providing Thanksgiving Dinner to many residents in Caroline County, 135 meals were delivered in Denton.

Councilman Taylor provided highlights of the Nov. 25th Planning Commission Meeting, sharing that Denton Project LLC Phase I, which includes 18 single family homes

was approved and is pending recordation. A special exemption request was approved for a pole barn to be built off Foy Rd., and the revised elevation request for the final 4 town homes to be built in Sandy Meadows was approved as well.

Councilman Lister thanked all those that helped Downtown Denton Main Street with getting the large Christmas tree up.

Mayor McNinch stated the Holiday Parade was amazing and thanked everyone for their help with the parade and events.

Councilman Branson shared that he was riding with Chief Bacorn leading the parade and said when they turned on Market Street and saw all the people it was wonderful. Councilman Branson thanked everyone for helping with the parade and for all those that attended.

Mayor McNinch shared that she recently attended the Maryland Municipal League State of the State meeting, and that they are looking at the State sales tax for a way for it to be shared with the Towns.

Councilman Johnson expressed how much he appreciated the Town's safety during the parade.

With no further discussion, Mayor McNinch adjourned the meeting at 7:06 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

*Karen L. Monteith,
Clerk - Treasurer*