

Town of Rutherford College



2017 Action Plan



Adopted: May 2, 2017

Mayor and Town Council

The Town Council acknowledges its role in Vision and Action Planning for the future of the Town and pledges that this document will be a living, changing, and evolving document to help guide the Town's path to the future.

Mayor

Gary McClure

Council members

Yates Jensen, Mayor Pro Tem

Wayne Annas

Kress Berry

James Huffman

Gerald Smith

Mark Stinson

Town Manager

Kenneth Geathers Jr.

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Executive Summary

On March 18, 2017, the Town of Rutherford College held its sixth strategic planning meeting to develop a clear and concise action plan to guide the Town towards the future. The Town Council and Manager along with facilitation staff from the Western Piedmont Council of Governments, evaluated past major accomplishments, issues, organizational effectiveness, priorities, and concerns for the future. These items were then used to set specific action points, goals, and programs to guide the Town over the next several years. The specific responses of each category discussed are included as an Appendix to this Action Plan.

This Plan will be used to establish the Town's priorities as it undertakes new initiatives or amends existing programs. It is a proactive statement of where the Town wants to be in the future. The Action Plan identifies key initiatives with corresponding goals to direct the Town's actions to help achieve its mission. The Town Council has committed to an annual review of this plan to measure progress and to update the plan to best suit the ever-evolving needs of the community.

The first Action Plan was completed in 2012 and adopted on July 9th, 2012. This plan and each plan since, builds on that process, and acts as a guide for the Council throughout the coming year.

Actions Completed

The Town completed many of the actions put forth in past Action Plans. Listed below are a few of the Action Plan items that were completed, and thus, not placed in the 2016 Action Plan.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLANS/GRANTS

- The Town was awarded an Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) grant for \$300,000. The appropriation will be used to subsidize phases 1 - 5 of the Town's CIP
- The Town was awarded an ARC Grant for \$31,720. Its purpose is to help install and manage a new WiFi system along Malcolm Blvd
- The Town was awarded Drinking Water State Revolving funds for \$474,000. This appropriation can also be used to fund distribution system improvements
- The Town was awarded Asset Inventory & Assessment Grant for \$52,541. This appropriation will be used to digitize and identify the Town's water system
- Transitioning into the final phases of the Town's Land Use/Comprehensive Plan rewrite

ECONOMIC INVESTMENT

- In 2016, the Town Administration established a business development loan program that offers low interest business loans to local and regional businesses
- The Town secured a building Reuse Grant for \$132,000 for Michelle's Bakery to help subsidize building renovations and potential employees
- The Town secured a building Reuse Grant for \$40,000 for JD's Smokehouse to assist with building repair and employee retention
- The Town owns commercial property that it leases out for a local business on an annual basis
- The Town invested over \$20,000 into assisting JD's Smokehouse with run-off and parking issues
- The Town invested over \$14,000 into a new HVAC unit for South Mountain Distillery
- The Town loaned \$10,000 to the White-House Restaurant for facility and ground improvements

ADMINISTRATION/STAFF SUPERVISION

- Went online with new Town website design with improved aesthetics and better customer accessibility
- Hired a new Office Assistant to assist with event planning and manage the Town's social media (Webpage/Facebook/Twitter)

STREET IMPROVEMENTS

- Widened and resurfaced Liberty Street under budgeted amount
- Resurfaced Adams, Buckingham and Camelot Streets

- Paved Azalea Drive Ext, Butler, Locust, Coleman Drive and Tutherow Street
- Bids out for the resurfacing of West, Charles Street and College Circle
- Have improved over 2.5 miles of Town maintained streets

TOWN BUDGET

- Entered into a 10 year Bulk Purchase contract with the Town of Valdese
- The Town's assets exceeded its liabilities at the close of the fiscal year by \$4,077,772.
- Unassigned fund balance for the General Fund was \$904,282 equaling 134%
- Long term debt decreased by \$51,904
- Surplus in General Fund by \$105,307 (Revenue over Expenses)
- Collected 97.77% of taxes

Action Plan Outline

The Action Plan identifies and defines key initiatives and includes corresponding goals to direct future actions by the Town to achieve the vision of the plan and the Town mission and values. The plan is broken down into six key areas:

- Public Utilities
- Public Services
- Parks, Recreation & Culture
- Economic Development
- Partnerships
- Organizational Effectiveness

Each of these key areas includes goals, which reflect the specific desires of the Town Council over the next several years. The goals are seen as comprehensive and give shape and substance to each key area of the plan.

Public Utilities

The Town of Rutherford College desires to provide excellent cost effective water and sewer services to all citizens of the community both residential and commercial. In order to do this, the Town will ensure an efficient operating system and study all options open to them regarding water partners.

Goals

Equipment

- Continue to be proactive in all elements related to building and maintaining the Town's infrastructure programs
- The Town administration is investigating the best utility vehicle for the public works department. This vehicle should be versatile to handle infrastructure programs as well as general maintenance projects

Water Source

- Existing water and sewer is purchased through the Town of Valdese and a smaller portion from Burke County. Continue working on maintaining a proactive relationship with those agencies

Capital Improvement Plan

- The Town was awarded an ARC Grant to improve the condition of the Town's Water/Sewer system. The grant will subsidize Phases 1-5 of the Town's Capital Improvement Plan. To improving long term system management, the administration has implemented an "operational philosophy" that entails a proactive approach to waterline upgrades, hydrant installations, improved lift-station monitoring systems, and sewer line maintenance
- Implement Ridge Street waterline replacement utilizing ARC funding
- Continue pursuing a 6" water line for Azalea Drive

Utilities Revenue

- The administration implemented a new method of accepting credit card payments with MuniPAY which has stimulated an increase in revenue. Focus is now on updating and implementation of a uniform utilities revenue policy to handle customer situations. Long-term this uniform policy should increase revenue

Expansion of Public Works Department

- The administration periodically reviews and updates departmental policies concerning utility billing, operational processes, and staff training/disciplinary matters. Recruit and hire additional personnel to assist in water-line extension project.

Town Wide Fiber-optics and WiFi

- The Town received an ARC grant to install of Wi-Fi in the downtown area. Anticipation is that the system will grow as more and more users learn of the community benefits of the Wi-Fi.
- Town wide fiber-optics is another avenue the Town is investigating. Recently the Town applied for an ARC grant to provide funding for a feasibility study.

Public Services

The Town of Rutherford College will continue to provide high quality public services in transportation, waste collection, and environmental services that ensure safety and quality of life for the citizens of the Town.

Goals

Improve Roads and Sidewalks

- The Town administration has an active Street Improvement Plan (SIP) that is modified periodically. Three gravel roads (Spann Street, Pine Drive, Windsor Drive) are on schedule to be resurfaced with 2" of asphalt. Investigate possibility of reducing Town wide speed limit to 25 mph

Public Services Revenue

- The administration continues to research grants and other infrastructure funding opportunities. The Town Manager and Finance Officer annually conduct cost/benefit analysis in regards to water/sewer rates, revenue collection, and operation cost

Improve Stormwater Program

- The Town administration has subsequently applied for a Section 205 (j) stormwater grant for the last three (3) years. Town staff will continue to research other available funding options

Wireless Internet (WiFi)

- Install equipment for the ARC grant for downtown WiFi and expand the program if considered successful

Parks, Recreation & Culture

The Town of Rutherford College wants to provide recreational and culture activities to meet the needs of all our citizens.

Goals

Expand Town Park

- The administration continually looks for ways to improve the Town's parks and recreation resources. The Town currently offers; WI-Fi, upgraded equipment and facilities, and reasonable rental rates

Recreation Programs/Events

- Continue Town Family Movie Night in the Park
- Expand existing Town events such as Fall Festival, Christmas Parade and Veterans Day Fish Fry
- Begin allocating funding for implementation of newly adopted WALK-RCV pedestrian program

Use of Community Room

- The Town actively promotes the use of all facilities to the public through the Town Newsletter/ Facebook/ Town Website

Economic Development

This key area includes the retention of existing businesses, attracting new businesses, and encouraging the creation of quality jobs for the community. In doing so, the Town must also strive to foster, support, and retain a diverse economic base, to continue long-term financial stability and planned growth.

Goals

Attract Businesses

- Develop a program to attract new small businesses
- Find ways to stimulate population growth

Develop and Maintain Relationships with Existing Businesses

- Support the development of an informal local business association.
- Encourage use of the Town's Business Development Fund to expand, and enhance new, and existing businesses

Create Commercial Land Opportunities

- Make contact with property owners for development of strategic properties.
- Collaborate with DOT, County and BDI, to lobby a new tenant for JOBST property
- Provide industries south of the interstate with water

Market the Town

- Create a new wayfinding signage for the Town
- Improve marketing with welcome packets, website, texting, etc.
- Research and hire a marketing firm to help plan and promote the Town

Grant Applications for Economic Development

- The Town administration has applied for numerous means of grant funding this prior year. The Town applied for the ARC Grant, Section 205 (j) stormwater funding, and NCSRF infrastructure improvement money. The Town was awarded the ARC Grant and been approved for a loan from the NC Division of Water Quality
- Continue to be aggressive in seeking out and applying for grants that pertain to economic development
- Apply for Community Development Block Grants

Form and Strengthen Partnerships

The Town of Rutherford College can benefit from strengthening and adding new partners among the many institutions in Burke County, the results of which should be beneficial for all involved.

Goals

Collaborate with other institutions in Burke County

- The administration has strengthened the Town's standing regionally by taking on leadership roles in the Chamber of Commerce, Burke Development, Inc. (BDI), Valdese Economic Development Investment Corporation (VEDIC), and the Burke County Water Board Co-op. Recently, the Town has made tremendous progress in the evolving relationship between Rutherford College and Valdese
- Negotiations in reference to establishing a contract for bulk water purchasing and a joint DOT Bicycle Pedestrian named WALKRCV planning project are currently on going

Town and Public Relations

Continue working closely with agencies that support growth in the Town

Organizational Effectiveness

This key area describes the Town's responsibility to maintain effective operational standards that will ensure effective use of time and money. This area also seeks to assure citizens that the appropriate services are provided in a manner that reflects both the needs of the community and the ability of the Town to provide them.

Goals

Technology Initiatives and Communication

- Streamline communications with a mobile app
- Obtain software for public notification
- Meet 911 requirements review possible Town 911 Ordinance
- Investigate an innovated Interactive Map of Town utilizing ESRI/GIS programing

Utilize Planning Board

- Continue utilizing the Planning Board abilities to work on developing sustainable growth plans and ordinance for the Town
- Adopt and implement the upcoming updated Comprehensive Plan

Grants

- Continue pursuing any grant that will enhance the Town

Budgeting

- Address the issue of using utility fund revenues for general fund expenditures
- Streamline inter-fund transfers
- Address declining revenues

Staffing

- Improve the Town Manager's authority to address issues quickly
- Continue to seek educational opportunities for staff (and elected officials)

Town of Rutherford College Action Plan Matrix

Goals	Key area	Time Frame	Responsible Party
Water Source	Public Utilities	0 – 2 yrs	Town Council
Capital Improvement Plan	Public Utilities	0 – 2 yrs	Town Mgr/Council
Utilities Revenue	Public Utilities	0 – 2 yrs	Town Mgr/Clerk
Public Works Expansion	Public Utilities	0 – 2 yrs.	Public works
Fiber Optics Study	Public Utilities	0-2 yrs.	Public Works
Improve Roads and Sidewalks	Public Services	Ongoing	Town Council
Wi-Fi Town Wide	Public Utilities	0-2 yrs.	Public Works
Public Services Revenue	Public Services	0 – 2 yrs.	Town Mgr/Council
Improve Solid Waste Collection	Public Services	0 – 2 yrs	Town Mgr/Council
Improve Storm water Program	Public Services	0 – 2 yrs	Town Mgr/Council
Expand Town Park	Parks, Recreation and Culture	0 – 2 yrs	Town Council
Recreational Programs-Town Events	Parks, Recreation and Culture	0 – 2 yrs	Town Council
Community Room	Parks, Recreation and Culture	0 – 2 yrs.	Town Council
Attract Businesses	Economic Development	Ongoing	Pl. Bd/Council
Develop Relationships w/ Businesses	Economic Development	Ongoing	Town Council
Create Commercial Land Opportunities	Economic Development	Ongoing	Town Manager
Market the Town	Economic Development	Ongoing	Pl. Bd/Council
Grants for Economic Development	Economic Development	Ongoing	Town Manager
Partner with other Institutions	Partnerships	Ongoing	Town Council
Town and Public Relations	Partnerships	Ongoing	Town Manager
Technology Initiatives & Communication	Organizational Effectiveness	Ongoing	Town Manager
Utilize Planning Board	Organizational Effectiveness	Ongoing	Pl. Bd/Council
Grants	Organizational Effectiveness	Ongoing	Town Manager
Budgeting	Organizational Effectiveness	Ongoing	Town Staff
Staffing	Organizational Effectiveness	0 – 2 yrs	Town Mgr/Council

Implementation and Review

Plan implementation will be dependent on both the Town Staff and the Town Council taking action on the recommendations in this report. Staff has the responsibility to take on these goals as a part of the operations of the Town and the Town Council must reinforce the desire and need for these actions to occur. The staff and Town Council should update and review progress on these action points throughout the year along with an annual review prior to the beginning of the budgeting process to ensure alignment of priorities and funding.

Appendix

The Appendix includes the results of the visioning retreat held by the Town Council on Saturday, March 18, 2017.

Attendees: WPCOG Facilitators Anthony Starr & Teresa E. Kinney, Town Manager Kenneth Geathers, Town Staff Jessica Bargsley, Pat Stillwell, Nancy Sudderth, Stacie Gory, & John Leger, Mayor, Gary McClure, and Town Council Members Wayne Annas, James Huffman, Mark Stinson, & Gerald Smith.

Top Priorities Identified 2017-2018

These six (6) ideas received the most votes over the course of the planning session. The number of votes is shown in parenthesis.

- Marketing plan for town (4)
- Need more sidewalks and add better lighting to existing (3)
- Lower town wide speed limit to 25 mph (3)
- Purchase vehicle for maintenance and utility department (3)
- More proactive infrastructure program (street, utilities) (3)
- Summer worker for utility/maintenance dept. (3)

Great aspects of the Town-identified

- Location –near Hickory, Morganton, Lenoir
- Hospital in center of town
- Higher property values
- Clean town (aesthetic pleasing)
- Small town atmosphere
- Affordability
- Award winning elementary school
- Small traffic problems
- Proximately to 2 schools (RCE and Draughn High
- Good attractions (JD's and South Mountain Distillery)
- Industrial potential
- Progressive Town government-town staff
- Amenities (town park, town hall)
- Sheriff's Dept, public safety building/service
- Good financial shape
- Churches
- Lowest crime rate in Burke County

Successes of the Town in the last 3-5 years

- Paved almost all dirt streets
- Improvements to water system
- New and existing businesses (JD's, Vet/Medical Clinics White House, etc.)
- Economic stability
- Hiring public works tech
- Success of staff (local, good communication skills)
- Website, good social media
- Improvements to the park
- Wi-Fi deployment
- Speed bump in town addressed
- New water contract with Town of Valdese
- Town events, i.e. parade, fish fry, fall festival, etc.
- No property tax increase
- Software improvements

Issues, and Concerns Facing Town 2017-2018

- Need more sidewalks (3)
- Need lower speed limit to 25 mph (3)
- 6" waterline for Azalea Drive (2)
- Need new utility vehicle and equipment (2)
- Review utility policy/ordinance (1)
- Improve stormwater maintenance/issues (1)
- Improve sidewalk lighting (1)
- Street resurfacing improvement (1)
- Promote vacant building reuse for businesses (1)
- Purchase land adjacent to Town Hall (1)
- Street resurfacing (1)
- Hospital status
- Not to overextend financially
- Need to prohibit "jake braking" with ordinance and signage
- Old Knotty Pine restaurant blight
- Remove storage tanks at Ridge St and US 70

Priorities/Opportunities for Town in next 1-2 years 2017-2019

- Marketing Plan for the Town (4)
- Set Speed limit town wide to 25 mph (3)
- Proactive infrastructure program (3)
- Purchase new utility vehicle for public works (3)
- Summer worker for utility department (3)
- Add sidewalk lighting (3)
- Storm water maintenance improvement (2)
- Focus on vacant building reuse (1)
- Continued effort to retain Rutherford College Elementary School (1)
- Consider purchase of adjacent property to town hall (1)
- New street and wayfaring signs (1)
- Larger Town Hall LED sign (1)
- Implement Ridge Street water project
- Keep utility department efficient, I.D. (staffing, equipment)
- Redo sidewalk from Community Room to parking lot
- Consider 911 addressing ordinance and enforcement
- Explore community gardens on town property

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05/08/2017/TEK_WPCOG