

Town Council Regular Meeting

Meeting Minutes

September 21, 2026, 7:30 PM

1102 Unionville Church Road, Unionville, NC, US

Opening Proceedings

The Town Council Regular Meeting of the Town of Unionville was called to order on Monday, September 21, 2026, at 7:30 PM at Unionville Town Hall, 1102 Unionville Church Road, Unionville, NC. Mayor Baucom, Mayor Pro Tem Andrew Benton, Jeff Broadaway, Lana Kirkpatrick, Gene Price, Jaren Simpson, and all staff were present. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited, and the invocation was delivered by Councilwoman Lana Kirkpatrick.

Public Comment

No members of the public came forward to address the Council. The public comment period was closed.

Action Items

1. Consideration of Minutes — August 17, 2026 Regular Meeting

Motion to approve the minutes of the August 17, 2026 Regular Meeting as written was made by Councilman Jaren Simpson and seconded by Councilman Gene Price. The motion carried unanimously.

2. Financial Report

Finance Officer Darrell Baucom presented the financial report. He noted that the balance sheet showed little change since the prior meeting, with healthy balances in bank accounts and the Pinnacle money market account earning approximately 3% interest. Reviewing the profit and loss budget versus actual, Baucom noted that, as the fiscal year had only begun in July, activity was limited. Total revenue to date stood at approximately \$63,000, including roughly \$25,000 in sales tax and \$8,000 in ad valorem taxes. Total expenses were approximately \$157,000, resulting in an excess of expenses over income of roughly \$95,000. Baucom explained this deficit is expected at the start of the fiscal year and will be offset as ad valorem tax collections increase. Major expenditures from the prior month included \$56,500 in approved contributions, approximately \$8,500 for annual insurance, and various park, payroll, and UDO implementation expenses. Pending bills included reimbursement of expenses for Piedmont Rec, an N-Focus payment for zoning enforcement, and payroll.

Motion to pay bills was made by Councilman Gene Price and seconded by Councilwoman Lana Kirkpatrick. The motion carried unanimously.

3. Consideration of Rezoning Request ZC-26-02

The Council took up Rezoning Request ZC-26-02, with the public hearing having been held prior to this meeting. Attorney Ken Helms reminded the board that their options were to approve, deny, or table the request.

The Council engaged in deliberate discussion, with members raising several substantive concerns.

Councilman Jeff Broadaway cited two principal issues. First, he expressed concern regarding fire apparatus access, noting that emergency vehicles — costing approximately \$1,000,000 each — require adequate ingress and egress, and that maximizing land use in tight developments has increasingly created safety problems. Second, and more significantly, Broadaway referenced the town's prior community survey in which residents were asked to identify preferred locations for commercial and industrial growth. He stated that the overwhelming majority of respondents directed that type of development toward Route 601 and its major intersections, not to the subject location. He argued that approving the request would be inconsistent with the

community's expressed vision and that the town has an obligation to honor that input. Councilman Broadway indicated he was not convinced this constituted a logical extension of the existing industrial district due to potential impacts on existing residential land uses and questioned if Sykes Mill Road was a major thoroughfare where additional non-residential development activity was appropriate.

The Mayor shared concerns about neighboring property values, noting that the adjacent residents were largely opposed to the request and that the site layout appeared too constrained, with structures backing up to the easement line with only minimal space available for access drives. The Mayor also called into question if this constituted a logical extension of the existing industrial zoning given existing development in the area.

Councilman Jaren Simpson expressed skepticism regarding the reported width of the county easement, stating he could not accept a claimed 20-foot easement without an affidavit or direct confirmation from the county manager.

Councilwoman Lana Kirkpatrick echoed the property value concerns and emphasized that the volume of neighbor opposition weighed heavily in her assessment. She affirmed that while she respected the applicant's right to pursue development through proper channels, the level of community opposition to placing storage facilities adjacent to residential properties was a significant factor.

Motion to deny Rezoning Request ZC-26-02 on the grounds that it does not represent a logical extension of existing industrial development as envisioned within the adopted Comprehensive Plan, was inconsistent with the results of the town's community survey directing such development to Route 601 and its major intersections, and was not reasonable or in the public interest due to the requests inconsistency with the overall residential development pattern along Sykes Mill Road was made by Councilman Jeff Broadaway and seconded by Councilman Jaren Simpson. The motion to deny carried unanimously.

Following the vote, Attorney Helms advised that staff should draft a written statement of the findings supporting the denial for formal adoption at the next meeting. Mayor Pro-Tem Andrew Benton offered a brief statement of rationale — that the request was not reasonable based on the board's unanimous decision — but subsequently withdrew the motion upon Attorney Helms' recommendation that Clerk Melody Braswell draft a proper findings statement for consideration at the October meeting.

4. Consideration of Groundskeeping Request for Bids & Set Dates for Bids

Councilman Jeff Broadaway and Clerk Melody Braswell presented a Request for Bids (RFB) for park groundskeeping services. Broadaway explained that the current groundskeeping provider had dissolved due to a separation of business partners and was no longer able to fulfill its obligations. The RFB was developed in consultation with the recreation association to address both in-season and off-season needs. The scope of services includes annual field maintenance, mowing, and trash collection. Excluded from the bid scope are infield and sand maintenance on baseball diamonds, as well as field lining and striping, which will remain the responsibility of the recreation association.

Finance Officer Baucom reported that, following consultation with the North Carolina League of Municipalities — which carries the town's insurance with a \$5,000,000 liability limit — staff is recommending that bidding vendors carry a minimum of \$2,000,000 in general liability insurance. Baucom indicated the town may also consider adjusting its own limit to \$2,000,000 to align the coverage levels.

The Council discussed the bid submission deadline. Braswell recommended a deadline of October 9th so that bids could be included in Council packets prior to the October 19th meeting, allowing for timely action — particularly given the desire to complete lime application and reseeding before the end of the fall season. Bids were confirmed to not require sealed submissions. Braswell asked for direction on where to advertise the RFB; Council directed her to post on the town website, Facebook, and the Enquirer Journal.

Attorney Helms noted that a lease agreement with the recreation association governing use of the fields remains a separate matter under development and indicated he anticipated having a draft ready for the next meeting.

No formal vote was required on the RFB at this time, as the matter will return to Council with bid results in October.

5. Consideration of Streetlight Banner Replacement

Clerk Melody Braswell presented the matter of replacing the town's streetlight banners, noting that several banners had deteriorated significantly. She described the condition of the various banner sets: the November barbecue and holiday banners remained in reasonably good condition, while the patriotic banners were showing wear from extended summer display, and the "Welcome to Unionville" banners were in poor condition and no longer securing properly to their mounting hardware. Braswell requested authorization to research replacement options and obtain pricing for Council's consideration.

Motion to authorize staff to research replacement banner options and obtain quotes for Council consideration was made by Councilman Jaren Simpson and seconded by Councilman Gene Price. The motion carried unanimously.

Reports & Updates

6. Update on Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) Project

Michael Harvey of N-Focus, serving also as Assistant Planner to Clerk Braswell, provided a comprehensive update on the UDO project. He reported that the Planning Board is nearing completion of its review of the draft UDO, and that staff will compile the Planning Board's recommendations along with staff recommendations into a final document for one additional review and comment period. That document will also be transmitted to Attorney Helms for legal review prior to adoption proceedings.

Harvey highlighted several key aspects of the draft ordinance. He noted that procedural requirements — currently scattered across multiple articles of the existing ordinance — have been consolidated into a single central section, making the document significantly easier to follow for staff, applicants, and the public alike. The draft also modernizes and standardizes definitions and measurement standards for setbacks and minimum lot widths, which Harvey emphasized as critically important given the frequency with which ambiguous measurement language leads to legal disputes.

Harvey addressed the topic of down zoning, referencing a December 2024 change in North Carolina state law prohibiting units of local government from reducing property rights without the property owner's permission. He illustrated the practical consequences of this provision using his experience as planning director for the City of High Point, where a four-year redevelopment plan was delayed by a year and a half — and resulted in lost grant funding — due to the inability to rezone properties without unanimous owner acquiescence. He assured the Council that Unionville's draft UDO is designed to avoid triggering down zoning concerns by simplifying existing land use procedures rather than altering established rights.

Additional areas of focus in the draft include updates to the land use table for state law consistency, consolidation of non-residential zoning districts, alignment with the comprehensive plan, and compliance with current FEMA floodplain regulations and state watershed standards. Harvey noted particular attention has been given to watershed provisions to ensure both consistent staff enforcement and defensibility before the Environmental Management Commission if ever challenged.

Harvey indicated the draft UDO is expected to be published on the town website following the Planning Board's next meeting, with the full adoption process anticipated to conclude before the end of the year. He confirmed that the Council will have an opportunity to review and comment on the document, as will the Planning Board, before final adoption. He also reminded the Council that N-Focus's agreement with the town includes a two-year warranty period following adoption, during which the firm will provide guidance and updates to staff at no additional cost — including any amendments necessitated by future changes in state law.

Other Business

Clerk Melody Braswell presented a quote from the town's IT management firm, VC3, for two AI-related services. The first is an AI policy development service priced at \$1,400, which would produce a tailored policy governing how the town uses artificial intelligence, including data confidentiality and protection standards. The second is a managed AI services platform at \$40 per month, which provides a secure interface through which staff could access AI tools such as Claude or ChatGPT while ensuring that municipal data input into the system is not shared externally or sold to third parties.

Braswell explained the importance of the managed platform, noting that using publicly available AI tools without such safeguards exposes sensitive municipal information. Councilwoman Kirkpatrick offered firsthand perspective, describing a similar arrangement at her workplace where employees had been using ChatGPT until the organization implemented a controlled, secured AI interface to protect proprietary information. The Council expressed general support for the proposal on security grounds.

This quote will be considered at the October meeting

Adjournment

There being no further business, the Mayor declared the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Melody Braswell
Clerk/Tax Collector/Land Use Administrator

Approved as to form:

R. Kenneth Helms, Jr., Town Attorney

Note: These minutes were drafted with the assistance of Clerk Minutes by HeyGov. All content was reviewed and approved by the Clerk/Tax Collector/Land Use Administrator prior to submission.