

WINCHESTER REVITALIZATION COMMITTEE REGULAR MEETING
MONROE CITY HALL COUNCIL CHAMBERS
300 W. CROWELL STREET
MONROE, NORTH CAROLINA 28112
JULY 2, 2026 – 3:00 PM
AGENDA
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1. Call to Order – Chair/Councilwoman Anthony
2. Approval of Minutes – April 2, 2026 Regular Meeting Anthony
3. Group Photo of Committee Wells/Communications

STATUS AND UPDATES:

4. Winchester Revitalization Updates Watson/Wells
5. Winchester Community Porch Update Watson
6. Other Business (if any) Watson
7. Adjourn Anthony

Next Meeting: August 6, 2026 @ 3:00pm

**WINCHESTER REVITALIZATION COMMITTEE REGULAR MEETING
MONROE CITY HALL COUNCIL CHAMBERS
300 W. CROWELL STREET
MONROE, NORTH CAROLINA 28112
APRIL 2, 2026 – 3:00 PM
MINUTES**

The Winchester Revitalization Committee of the City of Monroe, North Carolina met in the City Hall Council Chambers located at 300 West Crowell Street in Monroe, North Carolina at 3:00pm on April 2, 2026 with Chair Surluta Anthony presiding.

Members Present: Mayor Pro Tem Surluta Anthony (Chair), Mayor Robert Burns, Council Member Julie Thompson, Eleanor McGinnis, Celestine Alsbrooks, and Clerk Angie Carnes

Members Absent: Eric Hall and Minnie Atwater

Staff: City Manager (CM) Mark Watson, Assistant City Manager (ACM) Lisa Hollowell, Assistant City Manager (ACM) Jeffrey Wells, Downtown Director Ashley Nowell, Senior Planner Keri Mendler, Planner I Patrick Blaszyk, Grant Administrator Lisa Kerner, and Webmaster Payton Mills

Visitors: None

Item No. 1. Call to Order and Item No. 2. Welcome and Introductions. Chair Anthony called the Winchester Revitalization Committee Meeting of April 2, 2026 to order at 3:00pm and welcomed everyone in attendance. A quorum was present.

Item No. 3. Approval of Minutes – February 17, 2026 Regular Meeting. The Minutes from the February 17, 2026 Regular Meeting were presented for review and approval. Council Member Thompson made a motion to approve the February 17, 2026 Minutes as presented. Mayor Burns seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Item No. 4. Winchester Revitalization Updates.

- a) **Winchester Community Engagement Session 2 Recap.** ACM Jeffrey Wells advised the Winchester Redevelopment master planning is rolling along and LandDesign had compiled information from the second public engagement session. Attached as **Exhibit A** is the Community Engagement 02 Summary provided by LandDesign.

He advised in looking at the different ways that the greenway could be connected from Creft Park down to Winchester that some of that ultimately would be dictated by the final design that was recommended by the Committee and then ultimately adopted by Council, but such positive things were said about all three of the concepts and the final thought was in moving forward they would try to take some of the best features of all three and then mesh those into one design.

Member Thompson asked if Jerome Street was the street where the suggestion was made to make it one way, and ACM Wells advised that was correct and it seemed like a feasible thing to do if that was something the Committee wanted to move toward.

ACM Wells advised the overall summary was that feedback confirmed strong support for revitalization provided it preserved historic identity, maintained meaningful open space, and introduced economic development at an appropriate neighborhood scale; that residents were prioritizing balance and signaling a preference for a hybrid of the three concepts anchored by the Roundhouse, strengthened by daily-use gathering spaces, supported by safe and functional connectivity, with parking clearly addressed; and that implementation should follow a phased approach that introduced economic vitality while protecting Winchester's character.

ACM Wells advised that a few weeks after this summary was provided there was a staff follow-up with LandDesign to discuss how to refine the design and start to talk about next steps and those Meeting Minutes are attached as **Exhibit B**.

Chair Anthony advised what was the possibility that the Roundhouse could have an event space in it since now the Country Club is gone and the Community Centers are not used now for events, and this could be used for all of Monroe. ACM Wells advised that was the vision for it and concerts and things like that could be held there as well.

City Manager Watson advised in talking about an open-air market that was a topic he had been talking about for a long time and that Monroe had population numbers large enough to support an open-air farmers' market five or six days a week. He also advised the Winchester property had enough room and space that something like an open-air farmers' market was a very viable thing. He asked ACM Wells to make a note that the town of Landrum, SC used some of their ARPA money to develop an open-air farmers' market and it resembled a peach shed, had roll-up doors, and when the farmers' market was not operating, they rented it out for events and to have fresh vegetables, fresh food, and those types of things that were available would set the Winchester neighborhood apart from anything else that was happening in Monroe. Chair Anthony advised she liked that idea because it gave people an opportunity to walk to get those fresh vegetables and it also gave farmers a nice place instead of being on the side of the road. CM Watson advised he believed something like an open-air market could be a first step; maybe that would be part of the public investment into this along with the sidewalks and the parallel parking along Winchester and some of those types of things, but it was not uncommon for a local

municipal government to sponsor the farmers' market building and that was something to think about.

ACM Wells advised the next step was LandDesign's updating the concept sketches to show some of these ideas and trying to mesh all three of those into one workable concept, and he envisioned the linear trail that they would produce would be along Winchester, making some significant street improvements to Winchester making it a main street, adding parking to it, improving the intersections, adding some additional buildings along there to scale, something that was not as extensive as the main street concept but something that was more extensive than the Park Commons, so something in between, then with the Roundtable being a must, it would be oriented closer to the original location with some additional public space and opportunity around that, so that would be the basic framework. He also advised one thing he and CM Watson talked about was before the Committee considered any draft to be the final draft to consider, it needed to be viable, so they talked about once LandDesign had the updated draft that ACM Wells and CM Watson could reach out to a couple of different private investors or developers and have them take a look at it to see if they thought it looked like something they could do because we did not want to adopt something that the private sector did not see as viable. CM Watson advised he would like to be able to judge their interest; not that we were seeking particular individuals to build but get a couple of different investors or developers interested in the project and excited about it.

Chair Anthony advised she didn't want to dominate the conversation but as far as she was concerned the next step was to move forward but she would like the members of the committee to share what they think. Member Alsbrooks advised she was ready to move forward and that everything sounded wonderful. Mayor Burns advised at what point were they planning on bringing private developers/investors into the conversation. CM Watson advised as soon as we had the concept drawing that everyone agreed on, the final draft, then to start showing it, and ACM Wells advised he was thinking a matter of weeks. Mayor Burns advised one of his concerns was what was the City's role vs. the public/private role and that was one thing he wanted to clear up because one of the things he heard during those meetings was who was funding what and then how much of it was going to be taxpayers vs. how much was going to be private development. CM Watson advised he had given some thought to that and in a conversation with ACM Wells and a conversation with LandDesign, it sparked the thought that this was an economic development project. Mayor Burns advised he would also add to the committee obviously the bridge would be the City's responsibility, too. CM Watson advised the City would lead the planning part, the locating part, the trying to find the money part, and getting CSX maybe involved in that, maybe NC Railroad involved in that, the State of NC, and whoever else could be called on to get the funding to do that, but he saw it as a major City role in coordinating that. ACM Wells advised one way you could look at it, and it wouldn't be exclusively this way, but horizontal work would be City and the public and the vertical work would be private.

Mayor Burns advised the funding of the property and all the projects that we have and after having a designated budget or something along those lines he thought it would be really important in how quickly the Committee could get that information out and the reason he was asking these questions was specifically there were people who were interested and we just hosted them with our legislature and he thought they were really eager and to keep their foot on the gas and the project moving forward.

CM Watson advised the whole package when presented, so here would be the layout, here would be the buildout cost, and maybe it could be in phases and say here was the potential cost for each of the phases and those types of things. ACM Wells advised to remember there were some preliminary engineering to that but they would not be the full engineered drawings, there would still be that step to do and that had its own cost to it.

Member Thompson advised she was thrilled every time there was a meeting because there was something new that was going on so it was just a privilege to see it move along as quickly as it was and she thought the Committee had made a lot of progress and to see everyone's energy and interest there were a lot of good feelings about it and she was just supportive of it all.

Member McGinnis advised she was very anxious for the public at large to know what was going on and she was ready for people to know about it and start talking about it.

Chair Anthony advised she was extremely excited about it.

- b) **Winchester Community Stormwater Project Update.** ACM Jeffrey Wells advised one other, different update but still Winchester related was the stormwater project that Council approved the contract for at the last meeting so that was going through the contract procurement process now and once it made it through that then they would have a precon meeting and they would have six months to complete the project. He advised he did not know if the project would take six months to complete, but that would be the timetable within for them to complete that project, so over the summertime that work should be completed to repair the stormwater issue that had been out there for a considerably long time.

Item No. 5. Other Business (if any). CM Watson advised he wanted to give a quick update of several things related to the City's properties at Winchester. He advised a lot of work was happening on the former ceramics building, the roof replacement was funded in this year's budget along with some hvac work, bids had been submitted on the work, and the work should start and be completed before the end of June. He also advised the fire department would be occupying that building and the old shop portion of the building would become their logistics warehouse and it was big enough that they had one of their reserve firetrucks parked in there along with two swiftwater rescue team boat trailers, along with a considerable amount of equipment. He advised there was still work to do on the inside and on the outside and that some of the outside work would start to be noticeable, like a fresh coat of paint and the windows have all been replaced. He advised

that after July 1 and for the next 12 months, the administration part of the building would be under demolition and reconstruction with the goal of fire administration taking occupancy sometime around this time next year or a little after. He also advised the Winchester Community Center porch which the designs were presented by ACM Hollowell, the cost of that porch, the roof, and the upfit was in the proposed budget, along with the Winchester gym's roof. He advised the City could not find records of when the last time the roof was replaced on the Winchester gym and a water leak had developed in one corner of the gym, and with the brand-new refinished floor it was a blessing that we were in a dry spell right now, but the Winchester gym roof replacement was in the proposed budget. He advised lastly, the Winchester elementary building that was currently rented to Union County Community Action, the federal government that oversaw that program came in and did a preliminary asbestos study and they found that some ceiling tiles and floor tiles had asbestos in them and there were no classes that were being held in that building right now so the City had ordered an environmental asbestos study in that building to verify the findings because the City was the building's owner and then the City would look at that report and get a quote on abatement and once the City knew exactly what that asbestos looked like inside the building, and he advised that right now the study says it is all encapsulated and contained so there is no danger of somebody walking in there and taking a deep breath and being exposed to asbestos, but if someone went in there and disturbed a ceiling tile or an asbestos ceiling tile broke or they were doing maintenance on the light fixture or things like that, there was the potential for asbestos release inside those spaces, so that was the reason for this review as the City did have an obligation as the building's owner, so he said the City would see what that abatement looked like but he expected those costs to be available in the next 60 days or so.

Chair Anthony advised she had one idea before adjournment and while the Committee was discussing talking to potential investors and developers, what about an idea of a breakfast or a luncheon and invite them all in at one time and present it and everyone agreed that was a good idea.

Item No. 6. Adjourn. There being no further business, Council Member Thompson made a motion to adjourn the Winchester Revitalization Committee Meeting of April 2, 2026. Member McGinnis seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 3:15pm.

Surluta Anthony, Chair

Attest:

Angie Carnes, Clerk

MEMORANDUM

DATE	March 03, 2026	PROJECT #	1024248
PROJECT NAME	Winchester Revitalization Initiative		
PURPOSE	Community Engagement 02 Summary		
SUBMITTED BY	Jason McMiller		

Key Takeaways from the Open House

Overall, the community prioritizes a balance of open space and economic development, a hybrid of the concepts. All three concept themes received similar levels of support. Most comments focused on the density and intensity of the proposed buildings rather than the overall vision.

- ***Building scale and intensity are the most sensitive factors***
 - Respondents expressed concern that Concept C: Main Street Winchester is too urban and dense. Possibly too intense for Winchester.
 - Attendees supported the idea to have civic/community spaces, retail, food, and beverage, and expressed a desire to have vendors and coworking spaces.
 - Attendees expressed interest in how the retail, food, and maker spaces will be determined, as well as the ROI of the concepts, and set milestones.
 - Attendees expressed concern about their property taxes rising.
- ***Connectivity is strongly supported with safety and parking concerns***
 - Attendees expressed the desire to improve Winchester's connection to downtown, bringing residents of Monroe in to experience the redevelopment.
 - Respondents expressed concern with getting across the railroad tracks safely to connect Winchester to Downtown Monroe, proposing a pedestrian bridge.
 - Respondents expressed concern about having adequate parking.
- ***The Roundhouse and historic interpretation remain essential***
 - The concept of the Community Roundhouse received immense positive feedback from respondents. Attendees expressed a desire to imitate the Roundhouse and the turntable at its original location.
 - Showcasing and preserving the history of Winchester is a critical element of the redevelopment. Respondents expressed the importance of Winchester's history to be integrated within the design, having an immersive experience through various methods.

Attendance Summary

- Total attendees who signed in: **41**
 - Residents, city staff, county/partner agencies, and community leaders
 - Activity guides collected: **20**, at varying levels of completion
-

Individual Board Summaries

The community responded positively to all three concepts, with Option C: “Main Street Winchester,” receiving the most critique related to scale and intensity.

Option A: Park Commons

- **What did people like about it?**
 - It reflects the history and atmosphere of Winchester
 - The density of buildings and the amount of open space
 - Activity connection to the Community Roundhouse
- **What did people not like?**
 - The lack of everyday use, it's not active enough
- **Suggestions**
 - Incorporate history markers, murals, and or statues
 - A path to travel across the railroads safely
 - To have street parking and or city transportation
 - A trail that goes through the original Roundhouse site. Wildflowers in the partially dug-out turntable pit

Option B: Community Commons

- **What did people like about it?**
 - Design will attract the younger generation, and visitors outside of Winchester
 - The balance of the density of buildings and the amount of open space
 - The blend of community and history
- **What did people not like?**
 - N/A
- **Suggestions / Concerns**
 - Prefer a closed Roundhouse over the pavilion style
 - To have vendors
 - Need adequate parking for visitors
 - Local artist competition to design murals and or sculptures
 - More shade

Option C: Main Street Winchester

- **What did people like about it?**
 - The preservation and exposure to the community's history
 - The linear park route along Winchester Ave
- **What did people not like?**
 - Too urban and dense. Possibly too intense for Winchester.

- Not enough community open space
- **Suggestions / Concerns**
 - Want the Roundhouse to be incorporated
 - Dining cars placed along the railyards
 - Having coworking spaces as one of the building uses

Greenway Connection

- Respondents were drawn to the painted lane of Bazemore and the designated linear park of Skyway Drive
- Respondents proposed a pedestrian bridge
- Respondents had concerns about the feasibility of the Skyway Drive and Morgan Mill Road connections due to traffic demand
- Respondents expressed concerns with private property impacts along English Street
- Respondents provided clarity on the existing conditions of Jerome Street, stating it is currently changing, suggesting turning it into a one-way drive

Other Design Ideas

- To have the linear park, or a trail that goes through the original Roundhouse/turntable site
- To plant wildflowers in the remnants of the turntable
- To incorporate rentable and coworking spaces
- Involve local artists for a design competition to design murals and or sculptures
- Beautiful landscape for photo opportunities
- Incorporate playful elements into the linear park, like hopscotch and boulders to climb
- Pedestrian bridge over railroad tracks
- Dining cars along the railyard

Quantified Responses from the Activity Guides

Based on the 20 completed activity guides, the following results should be viewed as directional rather than statistically definitive.

Which option best reflects Winchester's identity?

- Option A Park Commons: 5
- Option B Community Commons: 5
- Option C Main Street Winchester: 5

Where do you picture yourself spending time?

- Option A Park Commons: 5
- Option B Community Commons: 6
- Option C Main Street Winchester: 6

Does any option feel disconnected from "Who" Winchester is/wants to be?

- Option A Park Commons: 2
- Option B Community Commons: 2
- Option C Main Street Winchester: 8*

If we had to prioritize ONE THEME to lead the design, which should it be?

- History & Legacy: 8
- Community Togetherness: 6
- Economic Vibrancy: 4

Which logo option best reflects Winchester's identity??

- Switchyards: 12
- Guiding Light: 1
- Community Reflection: 6

*The highlighted text indicates clear community input.

Rank the three concepts from most to least aligned with community priorities.

- Average rankings were nearly identical across all three concepts, with concepts A and B tying for first, and concept C ranking slightly lower.
 - Option A Park Commons: 2.00*
 - Option B Community Commons: 2.00
 - Option C Main Street Winchester: 2.09

*Ranked from 1 to 3, with 1 being the most aligned.

Design Implications

A hybrid of all three concepts

- Combining the strongest elements of the three concepts

Building scale and density

- 1-2 story buildings
- Clear transitional design strategies
- Phasing strategy to manage the scale of redevelopment

Increase pedestrian connectivity

- Prioritize pedestrian and bike improvements while minding traffic operations, safety, and residential concerns.

Parking strategy clarity

- Event parking
- Shared parking strategy
- Clearly delineate and communicate the designated parking areas
- Relationship between redevelopment and parking

Utilize the Roundhouse as a signature identity feature

- Include immersive historic elements

Overall Summary

Overall, feedback confirms strong support for revitalization, provided it preserves historic identity, maintains meaningful open space, and introduces economic development at an appropriate neighborhood scale. Residents are prioritizing balance and signaling a preference for a hybrid of the three concepts anchored by the Roundhouse, strengthened by daily-use gathering spaces, supported by safe and functional connectivity, with parking clearly addressed. Implementation should follow a phased approach that introduces economic vitality while protecting Winchester's character.



MEETING MINUTES

DATE	April 1, 2026	PROJECT #	1024248
PROJECT NAME	Winchester Revitalization Initiative		
PURPOSE	Client Meeting		
SUBMITTED BY	Emily Condon, PLA		

Attendees

Mark Watson, Jeffrey Wells, Ashley Nowell, Patrick Blaszyk, Kerri Mendler
Ida Li, Michael Copeland, Christine Harris, Jason McMiller, Jeff Mis, Emily Condon

Business Incubator Discussion

- Monroe is looking at the opportunity for a partnership with SPCC, they offer business support services but lacks physical startup space.
 - Opportunity to create flexible, shared manufacturing or business incubation space
 - <https://www.manufacturingsolutionscenter.org/business-incubator.html>
 - <https://www.catawbacountync.gov/my-catawba-county/msc-manufacturing-innovation/>
 - This approach could serve as a test ground for new businesses, with potential to transition into permanent locations within Monroe
 - Reinforces the goal of creating local jobs within walking distance of the Winchester community.
 - Ashley is working with the small business center at south piedmont community college, interested in parking
 - <https://spcc.edu/business-workforce-solutions/small-business-center/>
 - They are building an entrepreneurial center for a place for people who want to start a new business- lots of support services – but it does not provide them with the initial spaces
- Newton example
 - It is not public space inside. The general public is not flowing in and out, it is a shared manufacturing space / incubator. Training classes are provided by the Community College. Includes space for manufacturing and production.
 - Newton was private investment (P3 with Catawba Valley Community College_
 - In Newton half was paid by community college, and the other half was the private investor. And the investor rents the space to fledging businesses.
 - The investor that built and funded the manufacturing in Newton lives in Monroe.
 - Since we own the property, we are ahead of this.

- Industrial spec buildings
 - One key to success is controlling the utilities, the planning and the zoning.
- **City noted that the goal of this Master Plan should be to attract excitement, interest and ultimately investment.**
- Legislative funding - \$2 Million dollars was asked for – another opportunity for Winchester

Hybrid Concept Discussion

- Park Commons
 - Missing the entrepreneur walkable employment.
 - Heard at the public meeting that the Park Commons concept has a nice mix of the other two concepts.
- The Main Street one is an aggressive scale for what is out there. Park Commons is Jeff Wells' preference – needs a good density level for Monroe. If this project takes off, and a rousing success there is always the opportunity to develop more.
- Views
 - Open-air community building can frame view of the historic courthouse, over the railyard.
 - Ensure the view into Downtown Monroe is not blocked by turning the round house as it was originally sited. Turn the view towards 5 Points – were we have the courthouse and other redevelopment interest underway now to create the “vibe” – through the visual connection
 - Lots can be done at the wooded area, but having the view from the open-air market back across the rail yard is going to give the ambience of the whole thing.
- Pedestrian bridge
 - Provides interconnectivity – people do not need to walk through the woods to connect from Downtown Monroe to Winchester
 - Strengthens physical and visual connections between Downtown and Winchester
- Mix of land uses
 - The recreation complex provides plenty of community space. An open-air market could also add meaningful community outdoor gather space for music and concerts.
 - No need to change where the buildings are proposed in Park Commons but add more traditional round house at its original location.
 - Do not intend to have more civic / community buildings, there are plenty across the street.
 - The turntable area could become a lawn seating area.
 - A venue with public music and performances would be unique and align with traditional Black culture
 - Give more parking to access the linear park, retail and it is not out of the norm.
 - Mark wants to see larger primary structures with high ceilings, with smaller supporting “back shop” elements.
- Mark believes the biggest opportunity is to create a sense of place, culture, more than an economic project and music is key.
- Investment strategy
 - Should focus on site readiness and infrastructure, including:

- Clearing and preparing land
- Street improvements (Winchester Avenue, parking, intersections)
- Trail and open space development
- Private development would:
 - Follow the framework of the master plan
 - Deliver vertical development (buildings, mixed-use, etc.)
- For Winchester, Mark imagines public funding pays to clear it, widen and improve Winchester Avenue with on-street parking and intersection improvements, and perhaps put in the trails.
- The development community should take direction from the master plan and decides which building they want to build.

Next Steps

- LandDesign will update the concept sketch to show some of these ideas so that Jeff W and Mark can use graphics to talk to the development community.
- Changes to the plan will reflect:
 - Entrepreneurial / incubator space opportunities
 - A roundhouse building more closely located to its historic location
 - Refined Park Commons concept, showing the linear park along Winchester Avenue
 - Strengthened visual and physical connections to downtown
 - Placemaking elements (market, music, cultural programming)