TOWN OF RANLO BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS REGULAR MEETING

RANLO LODGE

2000 SPENCER MOUNTAIN ROAD, RANLO, NORTH CAROLINA 28054

THURSDAY, MAY 14TH, 2026

MINUTES

Governing Body Present

Mayor Corey Creech

Mayor Pro-Tem Robin Conner

Commissioner Effie Locklear

Commissioner Schivette Hill (Remotely)

Commissioner Doug Moore

Staff Present

Town Manager	Charlie Hansen
Police Captain	Ralph Dowd
Public Works Director	Charles Harper
Finance Director	Reagan Day

I. Call to Order and Invocation

Mayor Creech called the Regular Meeting of the Board to order on Thursday, May 14th, 2026, at 7:00 PM at the Ranlo Lodge. Mayor Creech then led the invocation.

II. Roll Call

The Town Clerk conducted the roll call. Commissioners Laws was absent. Commissioner Hill joined remotely.

III. Adoption of the May 14th, Agenda

Commissioner Moore motion to adopt the agenda. Commissioner Locklear seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

IV. Comments from Attendees

Katilyn McAndrew- 2706 Lowell Rd

Addressed the Board regarding a zoning concern. She stated that she and her neighbors had recently discovered their properties were classified as industrial zoning, which was preventing her from refinancing her home and would prevent rebuilding in the event of a fire. She expressed frustration that the planning board meeting had been canceled for the month, further delaying any resolution, and asked that zoning changes be expedited.

The Town Manager responded that he was aware of the issue and offered to connect with the resident after the meeting. He explained that the matter would need to go through the planning board before coming to the Board of Commissioners, consistent with the Town's Land Use Plan. He noted that the planning board had faced difficulties meeting quorum due to pending ETJ appointee positions from the county, which had caused the recent cancellation, but that the process was underway. The Mayor affirmed that the town had been actively addressing all resident concerns.

Old Business:

V. Adoption of the April 7th, 2026, Budget Workshop Minutes of the Board

Commissioner Moore made a motion to adopt the meeting minutes for the April 2026 budget workshop meeting. Mayor Pro-Tem Conner seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

VI. Adoption of the April 9th, 2026, Regular Meeting Minutes of the Board

Commissioner Locklear made a motion to adopt the regular meeting minutes Commissioner Moore seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

New Business:

VII. Adoption of Resolution-EbonyFest Juneteenth 2026

The Mayor noted that Tasha White, organizer of EbonyFest, was unable to attend the meeting and had requested the item be moved to the June meeting. The proclamation had been submitted in advance, and the Board agreed to table the resolution to allow for a formal presentation and photograph at the June meeting.

VIII. Presentation from Davenport & Co

The Town Manager introduced Mitch Brigulio of Davenport & Company, providing context that the firm had previously worked with the Town under a 2021 financial advisory agreement. He explained that the Town was now in a significantly improved financial position and was approaching a point where it could leverage its assets toward major capital projects, including the planned Town Hall and Police Station. He indicated the purpose of the presentation was for the Board to consider re-engaging Davenport in a more active advisory capacity.

Mr. Brigulio presented an overview of Davenport & Company, noting the firm had been operating since 1863, with public finance offices in Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, and Georgia. He described the firm's role as a fiduciary financial adviser, sitting on the same side of the table as the Town, not as a lender. He outlined a proposed scope of work in two phases:

Initial Phase: This would include a credit assessment to understand the Town's borrowing capacity and standing, an analysis of financing options available under North Carolina law (including direct bank loans, federal programs, and broader investor pool instruments), a debt affordability analysis weighing the difference between what lenders would extend versus what the Town could realistically sustain within its budget, and full support through the Local Government Commission (LGC) approval process and loan closing if a financing was ultimately pursued.

Longer-Term Phase: This would involve development of a structured Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) that would be revisited on an annual or biennial basis, identifying the Town's future project priorities, phasing, and costs, ultimately becoming a standard component of the annual budget process.

Mr. Brigulio used the analogy of a mortgage pre-approval to illustrate the distinction between debt capacity and debt affordability, noting that being approved for a certain loan amount does not necessarily mean that amount is the right choice given the Town's actual budgetary obligations.

Mayor Pro-Tem Conner asked questions about expected project costs and whether the conceptual designs already presented by architects implied affordability. Mr. Brigulio responded that the question of affordability involves a degree of policy judgment from the Board, how much the Town is willing to build into its budget for debt service, and that this conversation was precisely what the engagement was designed to facilitate. The Town Manager reinforced that the architects had been given realistic parameters and would not have presented options that were entirely out of reach.

A discussion followed regarding the structure of the existing agreement. Mr. Brigulio confirmed that the 2021 agreement remained in effect on an as-needed, evergreen basis, and that an updated addendum had been prepared to reflect the current scope. He described fee options including hourly billing and a retainer arrangement, noting that either could be adjusted as the engagement evolved. Financing transaction fees, if applicable, would be agreed upon separately based on scope and type of financing.

The Board agreed to continue under the existing agreement with the updated addendum, on an as-needed basis without a retainer at this time.

Commissioner Moore made a motion to re-enter into the financial advisory agreement with Davenport & Company under the existing terms with the updated addendum. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Locklear. The motion passed unanimously.

IX. Presentation and Resolution from Wooten Company on Wastewater AIA Report

Matt Echols of the Wooten Company presented the results of the Sewer Asset Inventory and Assessment (AIA) project, which was funded through a $150,000 grant from the NC DEQ Division of Water Infrastructure. He explained that this type of grant is offered twice yearly to encourage utilities to become more proactive in managing their infrastructure assets.

Mr. Echols outlined the scope of work, which included an updated GIS-based inventory of the Town's sewer system, condition assessments using three methods, known deficiencies identified through normal operations, smoke testing, and CCTV robotic camera inspections, prioritization of system deficiencies, development of a 10-year Capital Improvement Plan for the sewer system, and implementation of asset management software called InfraForce.

Key findings included a sewer system consisting of approximately 20 miles of gravity sewer lines, 525 manholes, 3 pump stations, and 3 force mains totaling 1.7 miles. Condition assessments revealed a range of defects including cracked pipes, offset joints, root intrusion, and in some cases utility contractor damage through sewer lines. Mr. Echols explained that minor defects were recommended for trenchless rehabilitation using Cured-In-Place Pipe (CIPP) lining, while more severe defects would require open-cut excavation and replacement, at significantly greater cost.

The 10-year Capital Improvement Plan was presented, with priority projects including a Priority 1 CIPP rehabilitation of the worst-conditioned lines suitable for trenchless repair, estimated at $637,000, followed by additional phased rehabilitation and replacement projects. Mr. Echols also included line items for ongoing CCTV inspections in future years to continue identifying deficiencies, noting that towns with active CIP programs typically establish an annual rehab budget once they understand their inspection outcomes.

The Town Manager highlighted that the grant-funded nature of this study represented significant value and that having this information formally documented, rather than relying solely on institutional knowledge held by staff, was a major milestone for the Town. He also noted that the Town had been selected by the 14th Congressional District as a recipient of a recommended $1,800,000 federal appropriation, pending the full congressional budget and appropriations process, which could be used in part to fund infrastructure improvements.

Mr. Echols encouraged the Town to continue pursuing public funding opportunities such as State Revolving Fund (SRF) loans, USDA, and CDBG grants, and to apply for additional AIA grants when eligible.

Commissioner Moore made a motion to adopt the Resolution. Commissioner Locklear seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

X. Town Hall & Police Station Schematic Vote on Direction

The Town Manager presented three conceptual design options for the new Town Hall and Police Station, prepared by the Town's architectural firm, Moseley. He emphasized that these were still conceptual in nature and that the Board retained full discretion to modify, combine, or reject any of the options. He noted that all three designs were approximately the same cost, as confirmed by the architects.

The site layout common to all three options placed Town Hall in the rear corner of the property with secured parking, a public entrance at the front, green space and a small plaza at the corner, and space designated for future mixed-use or retail development in a future phase. The existing basketball court was proposed to be relocated to the adjacent park area. The common internal program included a main lobby, Town Hall offices, a police station wing, and a multi-use community room with partitions and a small kitchen, designed to serve as council chambers as well as a community gathering space.

Option 1 was described as industrially inspired, referencing the architectural character of local single-story mill buildings. It featured a prominent entrance canopy and monument signs identifying the Town Hall and Police Station wings.

Option 2 was described as reflective of the residential mill village architecture found throughout Ranlo. It presented a lower profile with a steeper roof line. The Town Manager offered a candid observation that this option had some visual characteristics that he felt resembled an apartment complex, though he acknowledged the community room's interior steep roof with exposed wood beams would be an attractive feature.

Option 3 was described as the Town Manager's personal favorite and was designed to reflect elements of the larger textile mill windows and, notably, a tower feature intended to evoke the fire tower atop of the Mountain. The building featured a floor-and-a-half main lobby with tall windows providing significant natural light. The tower could be illuminated and programmed to display different colors for events or celebrations. Commissioner Hill (who was virtual), suggested the tower top could be designed as a rotunda or dome in the style of a civic capital building rather than a square cap, which the Town Manager said could be conveyed to the architects.

The Town Manager described his vision for the main lobby as a community history room, incorporating artifacts such as original bricks from the demolished Town Hall, old Town of Ranlo signage, textile industry memorabilia, and a mural to make the building both a functional civic space and a point of community pride and identity.

Jessica Holtzapple (2321 Sunset Dr)- asked questions about energy efficiency, particularly regarding the vaulted ceilings in the community room and HVAC implications. The Town Manager acknowledged this was a valid concern and noted it would be factored into the detailed design phase.

After discussion, the Board indicated general consensus in favor of Option 3 as the preferred direction to convey to the architects, with acknowledgment that no final decision was being locked in at this stage.

XI. Committee Updates

Ranlo Resource Network — Sherdina Stepney

Sherdina Stepney, chair of the Ranlo Resource Network Committee, reported that committee membership remained unchanged. The committee's first initiative is a Summer Feeding Program, which is on track to provide mobile meal service for children during the summer months via a van visiting a location still to be confirmed. Staff had been trained to serve as a host site. Ms. Stepney noted the program came together quickly and emphasized its importance given the food insecurity that many children face during summer break when school meals are unavailable.

The committee also reported the publication of its first community newsletter, included with the most recent utility bill. The newsletter featured resource information including 211 services and assistance for families in need. Frequency of future newsletters was still being determined. The committee is coordinating with the Town's social media manager to publish resource information on the official Ranlo Facebook page, and plans to develop recurring community programming including a mental health series and youth education events on topics such as cyberbullying. Commissioner noted that the Gaston County YMCA was offering free swim lessons and encouraged the committee to share that information through their channels.

Ranlo Experience Committee — Drew Horine
Drew Horine, chairperson of the Ranlo Experience Committee presented the committee's status and fiscal requests. He acknowledged the committee was newly formed and was working to understand the existing event calendar, budget, and expectations.
He reported that the committee had been informed on May 5th that the remaining event budget for the current fiscal year was $1,200. He noted that due to the limited budget and lack of prior planning or deposits, the upcoming May Milltown Night event would be limited to vendors, food, and bingo/hot dogs for seniors, without live music, a DJ, inflatables, or organized activities for children. He described this as a candid acknowledgment of where the committee was starting, not where it intends to remain.
Mr. Horine also noted that the committee had not yet received an itemized report of prior event expenditures, making it difficult to establish historical baselines for planning purposes.

The committee made two specific funding requests:

1. An additional $5,000 for the remainder of the current fiscal year to stabilize the remaining event schedule and allow basic event elements to be added where possible.
2. An event budget allocation of $80,000 for FY26/27, based on real-cost research across the full event calendar. Events included in the estimate were Milltown Nights, Juneteenth, National Night Out, Fall Festival, Faith in Blue, Senior Thanksgiving Lunch, the Toy Run, the Christmas Parade, and other community events. Mr. Horine noted the prior year's event budget was $50,000, making this a $30,000 increase. Key cost drivers cited included fireworks, carnival rides, float rentals for the Christmas parade, and live entertainment, with the committee intending to lean on local talent and bands with their own sound equipment to manage costs.

The Town Manager responded that the $5,000 current-year request could be addressed via a budget amendment drawing from fund balance, which would be brought to the June meeting for approval. He noted that the $80,000 request for FY26/27 had not been included in the draft recommended budget as it had not been presented to staff prior to budget preparation, and that it would need to be discussed during the budget process.
Mayor Pro-Tem Conner asked about the relationship between the committee's Juneteenth programming and Tasha White's EbonyFest event. Mr. Horine clarified that EbonyFest is scheduled for June 13th and is a private third-party event, while the Town's Milltown Night falls on the official Juneteenth date of June 19th. He noted that Ms. White would be hosting a separate event in Gastonia on June 19th and that the committee did not yet have enough experience to gauge whether the overlap would affect attendance.

Ranlo Public Safety Partnership — Darryl Hayes

Darryl Hayes reported on behalf of the Ranlo Public Safety Partnership Committee. He advised that the rain date for National Night Out had been corrected on the event flyer to August 11th. He also reported that the committee had elected him as chair at its first meeting on April 27, 2026, and that the committee remained short two members, inviting any interested residents to come forward.

Mr. Hayes reported that the committee was exploring a transition from its current structure to a formal Ranlo Police Foundation with 501(c) nonprofit status. He explained that such a designation would enable the committee to pursue non-governmental grants, conduct fundraisers, and receive restricted donations directed toward specific police department needs such as training, equipment, and first responder techniques, none of which could be redirected to other uses. He noted the committee had been in discussions with the Gaston Police Foundation to understand how they established their foundation.

A scheduling conflict was also noted: the committee's meeting had been held at an alternate location (the firehouse) without adequate communication, resulting in members being split between two locations and no quorum being achieved. Mr. Hayes requested that a consistent, confirmed meeting location and date be established going forward. The Town Manager responded that he had requested all committee chairs submit their meeting schedules to avoid future conflicts.

XII. Appointment of Positions to Committees

No individuals came forward to fill open committee positions

XIII. Presentation of Draft Recommended Budget FY26/27- Discussion of Next Budget Workshop

The Town Manager presented the Draft Recommended Budget for Fiscal Year 2026/27. He described the budget's theme as "Progress with Purpose," reflecting a shift from the prior years' focus on rebuilding financial stability to now leveraging that stability toward purposeful community investment.

He characterized the budget as intentionally conservative, citing economic uncertainty, inflation, instability in global markets, and rising operational costs, particularly fuel costs affecting the Town's vehicle-dependent operations. Regional economic forecasting data did not anticipate significant jumps in sales tax revenue or other major revenue increases, and there was no revaluation year to affect property tax revenues.

Key highlights of the budget included:

- **No major increases to general expenditures**
- **No new full-time positions**
- **One new part-time Grant Writer position** (approximately 20 hours per week) to pursue funding opportunities across all town departments, given the volume of capital needs and available grant programs

- **A balanced budget** as required by NC General Statute, totaling $5,674,100, with a stormwater budget of $91,000 and a storm water bond of $60,000
- **No change to the current tax rate** of **$0.45 per $100 of assessed value**, as directed by the Board
- A **line-item budget** provided voluntarily beyond the state's department-level requirement, covering every expenditure down to postage

On the utility rate, the Town Manager explained at length the rationale for a proposed **5% increase to both water and sewer rates**, effective July 1. He noted that Two Rivers Utility had raised its wholesale rates by 7.5% on both water and sewer. He stressed that the Town's rate increase is not a direct pass-through, as the Town's customer base is predominantly in the 0–3,000 gallon usage tier, and a full 7.5% increase would generate excess revenue. A rate study was conducted using the Town's actual customer data and financial audits, and 5% was identified as the minimum necessary to offset the increased expenditure and keep the utility fund self-sustaining, as required by state statutes. He noted that if no increase were made, the utility fund would be operating at a **$1.3 million deficit within three years**, which would trigger state intervention.

The Town Manager also noted that the budget reflected two major presentations from the evening, Davenport & Company's financial advisory engagement and the Wooten Company's sewer CIP, as components of the Town's broader capital planning posture.

The Board decided an additional budget workshop on May 20th was not needed.
The Board also discussed the need to formally set a public hearing for the budget. Commissioner Locklear made a motion to set the public hearing for the Draft Recommended Budget FY26/27 at the June 11, 2026 Board Meeting. The motion was seconded by Mayor Pro-Tem Conner. The motion passed unanimously.

Additional motions were made during this agenda item:
Commissioner Moore made a motion to move forward with paying off the outstanding PD vehicle debt from the Town's Fund account prior to the start of the new fiscal year. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Locklear. The motion carried

.

Commissioner Moore made a motion to authorize the purchase of two new pickup trucks and one used truck at no more than $50,000 from the Town's savings. The motion was seconded by commissioner Locklear. The motion passed unanimously

Commissioner Moore made a motion to appropriate $5,000 into the events line item for this current year. Mayor Pro-Tem Conner seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Mayor Pro-Tem Conner discussed restoring commissioner compensation to pre-reduction levels. Mayor Pro-Tem Conner reflected that several years ago the Board had voluntarily taken a reduction in pay when the Town was operating at a deficit, and that given the Town's significantly improved financial health, the compensation should be restored to encourage qualified candidates to serve. The Town Manager noted the current total line item for all commissioner compensation is $21,600 annually ($3,600 per person, or $300 per month). The Board tabled the direction to staff to incase salaries for Commissioners.

XIV. Presentation of Monthly Financial Report

The Town Manager presented the Monthly Financial Report to the board notating the Town was in good financial standing.

XV. Discussion of RFP/Q for Lodge Land and Water Plant Land

The Town Manager introduced this item, noting that Commissioner Hill had placed it on the agenda to ensure momentum was not lost on potential development or use of the land adjacent to the Lodge and the approximately 20 acres at the water plant site. He indicated there had been various inquiries from board members about whether to issue a Request for Proposals or Qualifications for those parcels, and that high-level direction from the Board would help staff draft an appropriate document.
Given the late hour, the Board agreed to table this item to the June meeting for a fuller discussion.

Other Business:

XVI. Town Manager's Report

- **Congressional Appropriation:** The Town has been selected by the 14th Congressional District as a recipient of a recommended $1,800,000 federal appropriation from Congressman Moore. The Town Manager expressed gratitude to the Congressman and his staff, noting it was a highly competitive process. He cautioned that the funds are still subject to congressional appropriations committee approval and the President's signature, and that the funds are projected for FY27.
- **Billing Software Transition:** The Town has launched a new billing software system, which is causing a high volume of incoming calls and some customer confusion. He asked for patience from residents, noting that accounts may show a $0 balance on the old portal but that payments can still be made there. He described the transition as temporarily difficult but assured the Board and public that the new system would bring significant improvements, including debit card processing and an improved online portal.
- **Milltown Night:** The next Milltown Night event was scheduled for the following evening (Friday, May 15).

Fire Department Report: The Fire Chief's reported the following incident statistics for the period including 17 good-intent calls, 3 brush fires, 3 illegal burns, 2 structural fires, and 1 vehicle fire. Residents were reminded that burning within Ranlo's city limits is permitted only in a pit or as a cooking fire, and that all outdoor burns require a permit from the Forest Service. The drought conditions were emphasized as a reason for heightened caution.

Police Department Report: Captain Dowd on behalf of Police Chief, reported police calls ran for the month to the Board.

Public Works Report: The Director of Public Works advised the Town notice from Two Rivers Utility requiring a 10% water use reduction, which Two Rivers will monitor and enforce with fines if not achieved. The Town is currently requesting voluntary conservation from residents; mandatory restrictions have not yet been imposed but may follow depending on guidance from the Gastonia utility authority.

The drought forecast indicated that recent rainfall had paused but not improved the drought conditions, and severe drought was expected to return within the following week. Public Works staff have suspended truck washing and the Fire Department has been asked to pause hydrant flushing except for essential maintenance. Outdoor watering within Ranlo town limits is permitted twice per week after 6 PM.

NCDOT confirmed that Ranlo's portion of Spencer Mtn Road is scheduled to begin in July, following work in Stanley and Dallas.

Sidewalk plans previously developed have been resubmitted to the state due to an expired right-of-way agreement; reapproval is anticipated.

XVII. Comments from the Mayor

The Mayor commented on the volume of activity and progress underway in Ranlo, expressing pride in the work being done collaboratively by staff, the board, committees, and residents. He noted that the Town had been responsive to resident concerns across a range of issues, including zoning and infrastructure, and that Ranlo would look noticeably different by the end of the year.

XVIII. Comments from the Board

Mayor Pro-Tem Conner thanked attendees for their presence and support, calling it a great time to be in Ranlo. Commissioner Moore raised a follow-up regarding the status of the planning board, and the Town Manager confirmed that the board existed but had faced appointment issues with county ETJ members, which were being resolved. Commissioner Locklear noted attendance at a Ranlo Experience event and described it positively. Commissioner Hill (attending remotely) suggested keeping items on agenda between 7-10 items.

XIX. Adjournment

Commissioner Moore made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Locklear seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously

ATTESTED TO:

____

Mayor Corey Creech