

THE ERWIN BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
BUDGET WORKSHOP
THURSDAY, MARCH 26, 2026 @ 9 A.M.
ERWIN MUNICIPAL BUILDING BOARD ROOM

AGENDA

- 1. MEETING CALLED TO ORDER**
 - a. INVOCATION**
 - b. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**
- 2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**
- 3. DISCUSSION OF PROPOSED FY 2026-2027 BUDGET**
- 4. DISCUSSION OF CURRENT FY 2025-2026 BUDGET**
- 5. ADJOURNMENT**

ERWIN BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**BUDGET WORKSHOP MINUTES****MARCH 26, 2026****ERWIN, NORTH CAROLINA**

The Board of Commissioners for the Town of Erwin with Mayor Baker presiding held its First Annual Budget Workshop for FY 2026-2027 in the Erwin Municipal Building Board Room on Thursday, March 26, 2026, at 9:00 A.M. in Erwin, North Carolina.

Board Members present were Mayor Randy Baker, Mayor Pro Tem Ricky Blackmon, and Commissioners Charles Byrd, David Nelson, and Billy Turnage.

Board Member absent was Commissioner Timothy Marbell and Alvester McKoy.

Town Manager Snow Bowden, Town Clerk Lauren Evans, and Finance Director Linda Williams were present.

Mayor Baker called the meeting to order at 9:00 A.M.

Commissioner Nelson gave the Invocation.

Commissioner Byrd led the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Commissioner Blackmon made a motion to approve the agenda as presented and was seconded by Commissioner Turnage. **The Board voted unanimously.**

DISCUSSION OF PROPOSED FY 2026-2027 BUDGET

Town Manager Snow Bowden provided the Board with a detailed explanation of the tax revaluation. He reminded the Board to inform anyone who calls with questions about taxes that the deadline for the appeal was May 8, 2026, at 5 PM.

Discussion continued among the Board.

Mayor Baker asked the Board to consider the needs of the Erwin Citizens when considering tax rates and estimated revenue. He expressed his concern for the rising fuel prices and the increase in solid waste pickup. Erwin is growing, and our services will have to grow as well.

Town Manager Snow Bowden stated there was a lot of unknown in our economy and a lot could happen from this meeting to June 30th. Fuel prices have gone through the roof, and all of our departments rely on fuel. He informed the Board that he anticipated Powell Bill revenue staying

MINUTES CONTINUED FROM MARCH 26, 2026

the same in the range of \$140,000 to \$160,000. If fuel prices continue to rise, the State could choose to suspend the gas tax, which would impact that revenue. He also wanted to make the Board aware that the General Assembly will more than likely put a constitutional amendment on the ballot this year, and it would impact us on property taxes going forward. The amendment would not affect the FY 2026-2027 budget, but it would impact future budgets.

Commissioner Blackmon asked Town Manager Snow Bowden if he was considering a revenue-neutral budget.

Town Manager Snow Bowden stated he was not considering a revenue-neutral budget at this time.

Commissioner Turnage asked if Public Works Director Mark Byrd needed more employees with the growth coming to Erwin.

Town Manager Snow Bowden stated he had some additional positions to speak with the Board about when we addressed personnel.

DISCUSSION OF CURRENT FY 2024-2025 BUDGET

Mayor Baker asked Town Manager Snow Bowden what needed to be addressed in the current budget.

Town Manager Snow Bowden reported that things have been busy at Town Hall, but something he had planned to do was get plans to the new Police Station to the Board for their review. The Town allocated \$20,000 in the current budget, and we needed to get that done. He also planned to have quotes for a mobile stage to the Board at the next Town Board Meeting. Although no funds were allocated in the Budget for a stage, we could always amend the budget. A lot of projects are going on that were funded in the current budget, such as the ADA Transition Plan, the Bike Pedestrian Plan, the Stormwater Plan, and the Park Expansion Grant.

Mayor Baker verified that all grant funding has been allocated by the set deadlines and no funds have to be returned.

Town Manager Snow Bowden confirmed that all grant funding has been allocated. He informed the Board that there was not a lot of wiggle room in the operating budget. We got hit hard this year with some costs we were not expecting. He showed the Board that the estimated expenses are estimated to be right around our revenues. We did not have any major surplus issues as we have in the past, and we will be cutting back on spending. He stated our current bank balances were in good shape.

Mayor Baker asked how much was currently in the Community Enhancement Fund.

Town Manager Snow Bowden stated there was \$270,558.50 in the Community Enhancement Fund.

MINUTES CONTINUED FROM MARCH 26, 2026

Mayor Baker inquired about any deed restrictions on the lot behind the Fire Department, where we planned to build the new Police Department.

Town Manager Snow Bowden stated we could apply for a new title as "Rightful Owners."

Discussion continued among the Board.

Mayor Baker asked if the Board had any other questions on the current budget.

No questions were asked.

Mayor Baker asked if the stage was purchased under the current budget, where we were looking to fund the excess of \$100,000.

Town Manager Snow Bowden stated it would require a Budget Amendment with funds from Community Enhancement or Cash Management.

Commissioner Blackmon recommended taking half out of Community Enhancement and half out of Cash Management. He asked what the total unrestricted fund balance was.

Town Manager Snow Bowden stated the unrestricted fund balance totaled 7 million. He stated we were in pretty good shape thanks to the Board's leadership. We have been very conservative the last few years and good stewards of taxpayers' funds. We have benefited from the growth coming this way and the additional sales tax.

DISCUSSION OF PROPOSED FY 2026-2027 BUDGET CONTINUED

Town Manager Snow Bowden stated that currently, the revenues were right where they needed to be changed some. He did not predict any drastic changes. He was confident we would bring in more revenue next year. The sales tax was one line item he wanted to keep an eye on, but it had been doing a lot better the past few years. He estimated a \$6.7 million budget. This was based on a 15% reduction in the ad valorem tax base, based on the numbers provided. Our current levy was \$0.50. He stated we can set our tax rate to what we need to bring in to cover the service we want to provide to our residents. We can justify raising taxes with a good budget and showing people the money needed to provide services. People do not mind paying taxes when they can see them at work.

Mayor Baker stated he would like to have contingency funds within the Administrative budget for different projects and events. He knew we would speak on Code Enforcement later in the meeting, but the money we had allocated for demolitions had not been touched. Those funds could be pulled and put into contingency.

Commissioner Blackmon added that we could also move the funds into Community Enhancement.

MINUTES CONTINUED FROM MARCH 26, 2026**Administration**

Town Manager Snow Bowden stated this was a standard operating budget. We allocated money for replacing our computers to help us operate better. He increased the line item for training a little bit since we have expanded our staff somewhat.

Mayor Baker stated he wanted to know with every department if there were any employee increase needs. He also asked if there was any kind of increase for employee salaries or if the presented budget was for current salaries.

Town Manager Snow Bowden stated that this proposed budget included a 3% COLA for all Town Staff. He included extra funds in certain departments to give some employees a little bit more than 3% to keep everything equitable.

Mayor Baker inquired about insurance for employees.

Town Manager Snow Bowden stated he always estimated on the higher end at 10% for health insurance and 5% for dental and vision to be safe. The State Retirement Rate went up to 15.10% for general employees and 17.10% for Law Enforcement. When we discuss salaries, we have to look at not only the salary but also insurance, retirement, and 401K costs. He stated Town Clerk/HR Director Lauren Evans was working with our broker to hopefully make some progress on health insurance this year.

Discussion continued among the Board regarding insurance.

Town Manager Snow Bowden stated that last year, the Board agreed to open the HRA account for all copayments, and that has been a huge help this year for our employees. The main complaint we received was the high copay for specialists.

Commissioner Byrd stated he felt it was important to update the computers in administration and to spend the money you need to protect against cyber-attacks.

Town Manager Snow Bowden informed the Board that we partner with Harnett County, which does our IT support, and they do a good job making sure our computers are protected.

Mayor Baker asked how many physical checks we send out. He stated Harnett County requires direct deposit.

Town Manager Snow Bowden stated that we explored the option before, but with our current system and banking, it was not as practical as possible. He stated that as Erwin grows, we will have to have stricter policies for Accounts Payable, and direct deposit would be the safest way of doing it; it would free up time for Finance Director Linda Williams, and it would save on postage in the long run.

The consensus of the Board was to instruct Town Manager Snow Bowden to obtain quotes on what it would cost to update our software and only have direct deposit going forward.

MINUTES CONTINUED FROM MARCH 26, 2026

Non-Departmental

Town Manager Snow Bowden stated that Non-Departmental was kind of a catch-all department, where we bill things we can not tie to one department. We bill our Town Attorney, Tim Morris, under Non-Departmental. He brought to the Board's attention that he increased professional services this year to cover the Engineer on Call projects. The proposed budget included putting \$20,000 in the HRA fund; he may increase it to \$25,000. One big item was Maintenance/Repair/Building/Grounds. Due to us crossing the 50-employee threshold, we did an ADA Transition Plan this year, which he hoped to have completed by May of this year. The ADA Transition Plan will give us a plan for improvement to our facilities and parking. The Maintenance/Repair/Building/Grounds line item is usually for beautifying our buildings, but in this proposed budget, he included funds to make ADA improvements. He had allocated \$50,000 to contract out someone to build us an ADA-compliant website. Harnett County Economic Development is doing a jobs campaign; they are asking the Town to consider giving a \$10,000 donation. He stated he did not include this donation in the proposed budget, but he did want to bring it to the Board for discussion. Something to consider was that Harnett County Economic Development was helping us with CCIP, but as long as they are bringing jobs to Harnett County, the Town is benefiting from it. He stated we could offer \$1,000. He stated that we contribute to other organizations that benefit the Town, such as the NC League of Municipalities, Mid Carolina Regional Council, and FAMPO.

Mayor Baker confirmed this was separate from the retail strategy they were proposing.

Town manager Snow Bowden said that was correct; this is strictly for the jobs campaign. They asked for money last year, and we were not able to make it work.

Commissioner Blackmon asked if this would be an annual expense.

Town Manager Snow Bowden stated he felt it would turn into an annual thing.

Mayor Baker stated he felt that if the Towns were going to contribute, then there needed to be Town representation on the Board of Directors. Harnett County Commissioner Bill Morris is correctly on the Board, but he will be coming off at the end of the year.

The consensus of the Board was to donate \$1,000, but instructed Town Manager Snow Bowden to speak with the Harnett County Economic Development and voice our concerns on having representation from local municipalities.

Town Manager Snow Bowden stated he planned for the estimates for insurance and bonds to go down. He allocated \$10,000 a piece for the Erwin History Room and the Erwin Area Chamber of Commerce.

Mayor Baker asked if we need to contribute to ECHO or the Lions Club.

Commissioner Blackmon recommended allotting a certain amount of money a year to put in contingency on the chance that a special nonprofit comes and requests help.

The consensus of the Board was to allocate an additional \$10,000 in contingency.

MINUTES CONTINUED FROM MARCH 26, 2026

Town Manager Snow Bowden stated he loves doing the events and would like to continue doing them. He wanted to make the Board aware that the Fireworks show was costing the Town \$32,000. He broke down the cost between the current year budget and the next fiscal year. We will have to put more money in this line item for all the other events next year, possibly \$50,000 - \$75,000.

Planning

Town Manager Snow Bowden stated that one thing that was different in Planning in this proposed budget was that he added an expenditure line item for professional services in the amount of \$50,000, which covered subdivision review fees with WithersRavenel and KCI reviewing our preliminary and final subdivisions. He stated we also paid Harnett County Fire Prevention Code Enforcement, Demolition of condemned properties, and miscellaneous contracted services such as cutting grass out of this department.

Mayor Baker asked if it was obtainable to transition the contract that the Town has with Harnett County for Fire Inspection and start using our own employees at the Erwin Fire Department. He stated he was looking at transitioning in the next 4-5 years, which would give our employees time to train in that field and get the experience they need to perform the service.

Commissioner Blackmon stated that a full-time Town of Erwin employee at the Fire Department, David Warrick, has taken the class and passed it. Mr. Warrick will now have to sit for his state exam to obtain his Level 1. Commissioner Blackmon would like to have Mr. Warrick ride with someone for a while to learn the setup. With a Level 1, he would have to work under someone who is a Level 2 or higher to be signed off.

The Board continued discussing their options for Fire Inspections.

The consensus of the Board was to start the transition next year of the Fire Department handling our Fire Inspections. The transition could take up to three years.

The Board took a 10-minute recess at 10:53 AM and reconvened at 11:03 AM.

Commissioner Byrd asked what our plan was with Code Enforcement, requiring additional certifications.

Town Manager Snow Bowden stated he will be requiring that Code Enforcement get their CZO Certification, attend additional classes, or get rid of the position altogether and contract it out with the COG. He included \$8,000 dollars to cover the training for the Development Compliance Officer and also funds for the Town Planner to attend training and conferences.

Police Department

Town Manager Snow Bowden stated that in the current proposed budget, he did not include any new positions, but he planned on incorporating two new full-time positions in the Police Department. Two new full-time positions would require new equipment as well. They would be Master Sergeant positions, which would add an additional person per squad and allow for an

MINUTES CONTINUED FROM MARCH 26, 2026

additional officer on night shift. The Board had already discussed purchasing two cars for the Police Department in this budget, so that would be a total of 4 new cars for the Police Department. He stated the proposed budget in front of them was scaled back to get the discussion started.

Commissioner Blackmon asked Town Manager Snow Bowden if he felt we could afford it.

Town Manager Snow Bowden stated he knew we could.

Commissioner Blackmon stated he did not know how badly the Police Department needed the new positions, which was up to Police Chief Jonathan Johnson, but we could even look at hiring in September or mid-year to lessen the cost for this year, but we would still need to look at the costs for the coming years. He stated he needed to plan for the growth coming to Erwin.

Mayor Baker stated it sounded like it was a high priority for the Police Department to have extra coverage at night.

Commissioner Blackmon stated that it all came back to preparing for the growth, not only the Police Department, but other departments as well. Public Works may need another person as well.

Mayor Baker mentioned that he noticed that the Police Department was asking for a speed and digital sign trailer for \$20,000.

Town Manager Snow Bowden stated that it was the contract price and felt it was a good thing for us to have because we need them for our detours at events and for speeding. Currently, we borrow other towns' equipment when we have events. He felt this was something small we could have, so we are not relying on other people. He also mentioned that he budgeted for some software called Cellebrite Forensics to help our police officers do their jobs better and more efficiently. Police Chief Jonathan Johnson asked to have a drone program, and he did include funds in this proposed budget to purchase a drone, the software, and send the employees to be trained to pilot the drone.

Mayor Baker stated that if we have to borrow something more than once, then we need it and need to allocate funds to purchase it ourselves. He asked if there was any increase in the Flock Cameras.

Town Manager Snow Bowden stated no, we added two new cameras, so the price went up, but the price per camera was still the same.

The Board requested to invite Police Chief Jonathan Johnson to the Workshop to explain the Cellebrite Forensics request.

Mayor Baker stated that while we were waiting on Chief Johnson to join, he wanted to know if we had started earmarking funds in capital outlay to prepare for the construction of the new Police Department.

Town Manager Snow Bowden stated that we were still in the design phase, and there was \$20,000 in this budget for designs. We would not have a line item in the budget; we need to create a Capital Project Ordinance since it will take more than one fiscal year to build it.

MINUTES CONTINUED FROM MARCH 26, 2026

The consensus of the Board was to instruct Town Manager Snow Bowden to create a Capital Project Ordinance and begin earmarking funds to prepare for the construction of the new Police Department.

Fire Department

No questions on the Fire Department budget.

EPW Admin

Town Manager Snow Bowden stated that Public Works Director Mark Byrd is the only employee in this department, so there is nothing major in this department, just general operating and maintenance of buildings. Public Works Director Mark Byrd requested a pressure washer, which was not included in this proposed budget, but he planned to include it in the final budget if we can afford it.

EPW Streets

Town Manager Snow Bowden stated we currently have four employees in the streets department, including a vacant position. He included funds for a new work truck and a new lawn mower to cut HWY 421. Both pieces of equipment are justified and on state contract pricing.

Mayor Baker asked the Board if they felt we needed to allocate an additional position in Public Works, Streets.

Commissioner Blackmon asked if Public Works Director Mark Byrd had asked for additional employees.

Town Manager Snow Bowden stated he did not ask, but he could definitely use more help. The problem was that he had one vacant position right now, and finding quality help is hard to do.

Mayor Baker thanked Kelly Giles for all his hard work. The median has looked the best it has ever looked.

Police Department (continued)

Police Chief Jonathan Johnson informed the Board that Cellebrite Forensics is a software used when they seize a cell phone that they need to extract data from. They would, of course, get a search warrant first, signed by a superior court judge stating that they can extract the data. Once the data is extracted, it is then put into a large folder that the investigators can go through each file folder and can even pull up images, messages, and things that have been deleted within a certain amount of time. Overall, Cellebrite is a software that extracts data from cell phones for investigative purposes.

Commissioner Byrd asked if the \$20,000 was to buy the software.

MINUTES CONTINUED FROM MARCH 26, 2026

Police Chief Jonathan Johnson stated the \$20,000 was for the equipment, and there was a license you get where you can get six unlocks on this particular one per year. He stated that in most cases, they can talk the suspects into providing the passcode to their cell phone, but when they are unsuccessful in obtaining the passcode, this system will unlock up to six phones.

Commissioner Byrd asked how often they need to do this.

Police Chief Jonathan Johnson stated it varied depending on the investigation. Currently, it can take weeks or months to obtain the data through phone carriers or with the help of other agencies.

Commissioner Byrd asked about the Erwin Police Department paying other agencies to help us.

Commissioner Blackmon stated he has always felt it was important to be independent.

Mayor Baker stated that if it helped solve one case, then it would be worth it. He inquired about DCI.

Police Chief Jonathan Johnson stated that the Harnett County Sheriff's Department, which does all the dispatching for the Erwin Police Department, was switching everything over to a new CAD system. Currently, when they need to run a license plate or a driver's license number, they have to run it through dispatch. Dispatch's goal is to eventually get some things off of dispatch. He stated that when the county switches over to the new CAD system, they are asking that each department send their officer to be DCI certified. DCI certifications allow the officers to run the tags, license plates, and stolen vehicle information on the laptops, versus having to run it through dispatch when they are tied up with calls.

Mayor Baker stated that the Board discussed adding two additional staff their nighttime shifts.

Police Chief Jonathan Johnson stated they have had two officers on days and two officers on nights for a while now, but with the growth in Erwin, call volumes will increase. He stated these two supervisor positions would help with nighttime calls and other things that need to be addressed in the Erwin Police Department. It gives these younger guys something to work towards. His goal was to schedule these positions for Mid-Shifts. Currently, they only have two officers on the day shift and two officers on the night shift. During the day, the Police Administration is working to assist, but at night, if one officer arrests someone and has to go to Lillington, that only leaves one officer in Town. He stated his budget is based on recommendations from Police staff and the needs of the Police Department.

Police SRO

Town Manager Snow Bowden stated this was standard. The contract we have with Harnett County was a 3% COLA, so everything is balancing at the moment.

The Board took a recess at 11:55 AM and reconvened at 12:12 AM.

MINUTES CONTINUED FROM MARCH 26, 2026**EPW Streets (Continued)**

Mayor Baker asked if, with the annexed homes coming in and the limited staff in Public Works, he wanted to know if the vacant position already in the budget was accounted for.

Town Manager Snow Bowden stated that was correct. Public Works had tried to find someone but had not found anyone for the position.

Mayor Baker stated Public Works Director Mark Byrd will need to present the Board with the budget he needs to run his department, but he asked the Board if they felt it was important to add an additional position on top of the already vacant position.

Commissioner Byrd recommended bumping the current vacant position to a CDL driver.

Commissioner Blackmon stated that HR Director Lauren Evans would need to ensure the CDL position was graded correctly.

The consensus of the Board was to add an additional position for a total of 5 positions in EPW Streets and bump the current position to a CDL driver position.

Mayor Baker stated he understood the new truck was needed to replace their old truck.

EPW Sanitation

Town Manager Snow Bowden stated that this department was just an in-and-out budget. We bill Liberty Waste to this department and our tipping fees. Nothing major in this department.

EPW Stormwater

Town Manager Snow Bowden stated he may want to plan to talk about Stormwater at another workshop. TRC planned to have the Stormwater Management Plan ready sometime in May. We will need to discuss the fee and plan structure at that time.

Recreation

Town Manager Snow Bowden stated there were three full-time employees for recreation, with 3% COLAs included. He did increase certain line items for inflation. We saw an increase in sports sign-ups, so he increased the funds for equipment and uniforms. He stated this department needed a new lawn mower, and we needed to start considering improving the shelter down at Al Woodall Park. The Lions Club donated the shelter, and it was the Town's responsibility to take care of it, so he allocated funds to fix it up. He stated the fields were being maintained under contract with McLamb's Lawn service, which can purchase the chemicals cheaper and has people on staff trained to spray the fields.

MINUTES CONTINUED FROM MARCH 26, 2026**Library**

Town Manager Snow Bowden stated that Harnett County had taken over the Library, so our hands were washed of that.

EPW Administration (Continued)

Commissioner Nelson stated he noticed that the Public Works building needed some repairs. If the building was going to stay beside HWY 421, then we needed to fix it up.

Town Manager Snow Bowden stated we needed to sell it.

Community Building

Mayor Baker stated that we recently used grant money to upgrade our bathrooms in the Community Building and make them ADA-compliant. We did some painting and upgrades in the room as well, but something had to be done with the kitchen. He stated this was a public building that we have neglected, other than the bathrooms, for so long. We use this building for the Christmas party, Meals on Wheels uses it most days, and DAV and Lions Club use it for meetings. To make it a fully functional event center, to be a community asset, that kitchen needed to be remodeled to have the stove in there with the proper refrigeration, the cabinets, and the meal prep so that it could be used.

Commissioner Byrd stated he agreed.

Mayor Baker stated he did not know what a dollar amount would look like, or if we could afford it in the upcoming budget, or if we need to set a CIP and earmark money for the next two years.

Commissioner Blackmon stated there were two ways to look at it: we could have a place for a caterer to come in and have a place to warm it, or we could have a fully functional kitchen to cook in.

Mayor Baker stated that having a caterer come in with the ability to warm food and refrigerate properly was a need. He asked Town Manager Snow Bowden to implement a \$50,000 budget in the current budget to improve the kitchen.

Town Manager Snow Bowden stated we should be able to do that, but he would need to look at a few things. He stated he could have a Budget Amendment at the next workshop and be good to go.

The Consensus of the Board was to instruct Town Manager Snow Bowden to plan a budget to upgrade the kitchen in the Community Building.

Mayor Baker stated he wanted to look at our Capital Improvement Plans. He expressed his frustration with capital projects not being completed and kicked down the road. What was our vision? We needed some type of direction. We were looking at buying a property and closing a street; we needed to take action on it. He also expressed his concern for the Porter Park Drainage issue. Commissioner McKoy brings it up every meeting, and nothing has been done. We need to take action. He stated we needed to decide what was important to the Town.

MINUTES CONTINUED FROM MARCH 26, 2026

Discussion continued among the Board.

Final Comments

Mayor Baker asked Town Manager Snow Bowden to reach out to the USDA to plan for the construction of the New Police Department now.

Commissioner Turnage expressed the importance of sidewalks on S 13th Street.

The consensus of the Board was to instruct Town Manager Snow Bowden to bring his plans for the Capital Project Items to an upcoming workshop.

Mayor Baker stated we need to be prepared that Garbage Collection may increase due to increasing gas prices.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Byrd made a motion to adjourn at 1:07 P.M. and was seconded by Commissioner Turnage. **The Board voted unanimously.**

MINUTES RECORDED AND TYPED BY

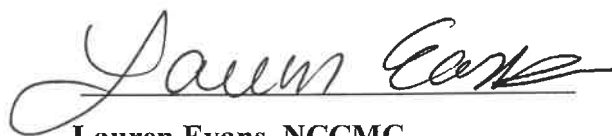
LAUREN EVANS TOWN CLERK

ATTEST:



Randy Baker

Mayor



Lauren Evans, NCCMC

Town Clerk