

APPROVED

**TOWN OF WINFALL
NORTH CAROLINA
Strategic Plan**

April 2023

OVERVIEW

The purpose of this strategic plan is to establish a guideline for the rejuvenation of the Town of Winfall and to reprioritize the currently available resources to facilitate the most effective use and allocation of those resources. The strategic plan will clearly define the goals and priorities, both short term in the reorganization program and the long term asset base improvement goals.

This strategic plan will be the framework for the Town of Winfall to manage budgets and projects effectively and clearly on an annual basis so that consistent progress can be measured and effectively managed by the Winfall Town Council.

This strategic plan will be comprised of two major initiatives, first a short-term program to realign the responsibilities and financial policies of the Town of Winfall to reestablish the Town on a path for financial security and secondly to identify long term goals to improve the asset base available to the Town of Winfall.

The following excerpt from the Annual Financial Report, June 2022 for the Town of Winfall clearly states the challenge facing the Town of Winfall:

“High unemployment, an aged population, no industrial development, and very little retail business help to create a situation where the Town’s customer base is eroded. The resulting ratio of expense versus revenue creates a difficult situation in keeping rates and fees low while maintaining an adequate level of service. In addition, most residents are on fixed income.”

Operating under the aforementioned financial stresses the Town of Winfall is experiencing, this strategic plan will focus on reducing costs and improving revenue until the Town is stabilized. Therefore programs aimed at amenities for residents and tourists will be delayed until the Town is in better financial condition.

SHORT TERM GOALS AND STRATEGIES

The most glaring weakness that the Town is experiencing is the lack of modernization of the policies and culture that the Town is currently operating under. The lack of updating and refining fiscal and operational policies over the past two decades has contributed to the slow financial and operational decline of the Town of Winfall. Therefore, to reverse this decline the following strategies and policy changes should be implemented:

Town of Winfall Operations

- 1- Revise the duties and authority of the members of the Town Council, reducing the authority of the mayor and assign specific oversight responsibility to members of the Town Council.

Action needed: Continue the realignment of the Mayor's duties and compensation as per the Town Council 2022-2023 Budget directives. Provide educational and procedural documents so Council members are well informed on rules and procedures. Improve financial transparency with specific reporting formats for Town revenue and expenditures to include outside contracts and credit card charges.

- 2- Reallocate funds for personnel by reducing the staff across all departments and retaining a Town Administrator to oversee the day-to-day operations of the Town of Winfall.

Action needed: Immediate evaluation of all staff to reduce operating and overhead costs, develop specific job descriptions for each position, develop a job description and training and educational program for each office staff, and to prepare a bid process for selecting outside contractors with a Town Council approved completion

deadline. Determine best value from the \$171,000 of salary/wages and \$125,5000 of contingency funds as approved in 2022-2023 Town of Winfall budget which is approximately Forty Three percent (43%) of the General fund. An additional six plus percent (6.4%) \$44,000 is spent on outside consulting services that needs reevaluation. Develop a strict purchase order and credit charge policy that requires oversight and Town council signatures on purchases over a selected amount. Continue the effort to secure a budget surplus to equal standard yearly operating costs.

- 3- The Town Administrator will report to and be directed solely by the Town Council and be responsible for managing the yearly budget, all departments plus have the expertise to organize a grant application program.

Action needed: The Town Council will develop a job description for the Town Administrator to include education requirements, required management experience, IT skills, and a compensation package based on force ranking with a Town Council approved deadline for completion. Request guidelines from the NC League of Municipalities

- 4- The Town Administrator will, along with the specific Town Council member tasked with oversight, conduct a departmental review focusing on best practices, implement a personnel evaluation system and departmental purchasing policies.

Action needed: Request assistance from the UNC School of Government to provide guidelines to facilitate the development of these programs and policies.

- 5- The Town Council and the Town Administrator will jointly update or create new policies and procedures to guide debt limits, fund balances, utility rates and purchasing.

Action needed: The Town Council will add a two-hour mandatory work session each month to begin development

of the new policies and procedures with a completion deadline before the 2023-2024 budget.

6- Update technology within all departments

Action needed: Before the start of the 2023-2024 budget process proposals for improvement of the following should be in hand, i.e., social media, website, Town email system, online payments for water/sewer, departmental communications to include employee hour tracking, so that discussion and possible inclusion of these items can be considered for the 2023-2024 budget.

Community Improvements

Revenue and community improvements/ appearance are connected and sadly have not been a priority which has contributed strongly to the Town of Winfall's declining financial condition. The following strategies should be implemented.

- 1- The Town will retain a contract advisor to assist consenting Winfall residents in completing applications for USDA Section 502 and USDA Section 504 loans and grants. The benefit to the Town will be improvements in the asset base. i.e property values, with in the Town limits as these low interest, extended payment term programs for new home construction or existing home improvements will improve the appearance of the community.

Action needed: Town Council endorsed and executed information campaign to include scheduled and publicly advertised meetings to educate/inform the Winfall residents of the benefits of these two USDA programs specifically Section 502 and Section 504 grant/loan (No lien, 1 % interest rate, no credit check, extended repayment terms, grants for seniors, etc.) Initiate a discussion with the local USDA and the Albemarle Commission to determine what level of assistance can be provided plus seek out an independent contractor to assist with each application. Establish appropriate compensation for the independent contractor based on each application

completed and submitted. Per USDA a grant is available to cover the cost of the contractor/ advisor up to USD\$ 750 per application.

- 2- Code enforcement, and a budget for such actions, in conjunction with the Perquimans County Sheriff's Department should be implemented.

Action needed: Negotiate with the PQ Sheriff Department for a code enforcement officer on a as needed basis and also investigate a Demolition by Neglect ordinance by requesting an opinion from the UNC School of Government.

- 3- Develop a foreclosure program for derelict properties where the winning bidder contributes to the legal fees associated with foreclosure and is required to reinvest in the foreclosed property within a defined time limit.

Action needed: Request an opinion from the UNC School of Government if such a policy is legal.

- 4- Conduct a street pavement study with a priority list and apply for state/federal grants to cover such expenses.

Action needed: Contact the NC Dept of Transportation for assistance in this study and once completed submit the study along with a funding request to each appropriate state or federal elected official and agency.

- 5- Continue to apply for state/federal funding for a sewer system study and repairs.

Action needed: Establish working relationship with SERCAP for assistance and guidance to develop proposals from qualified engineering firms or specialty contractors for a complete system wide analysis and submit a funding request to the appropriate state or federal agency.

Improved "significant event" reporting will increase the standing of the Town when grant applications for sewer rehabilitation are submitted. Address the effect of reopening the Jessup Street Detention Center on the existing sewer system and seek funds from Department of Corrections for assistance in any rehabilitation of the sewage collection system related to the reopening.

Acknowledge that the sewage treatment agreement with the Town of Hertford at some point will need to be renegotiated only after the Winfall collection system has been completely repaired so that residents can be forewarned of possible sewer rate increases.

- 6- Develop an ongoing “smoke test” effort on the sewer system utilizing Town staff to identify easily repaired issues.

Action needed: *Investigate the cost of such equipment required for this study and contact the Town of Hertford and Perquimans County for assistance in manpower and funding.*

- 7- Continue efforts to prevent deterioration of the Town Hall building.

Action needed: *Develop an inspection and prevention program and policies and implement immediately.*

The strategies and actions outlined in the Town of Winfall and Community Improvements sections will begin to address the most pressing issues, i.e. Town management, debt/revenue oversight, housing, and infrastructure concerns thereby allowing the Town of Winfall to continue as a viable functioning municipality. However, with a small Town staff, limited staff expertise in some subjects, and limited discretionary funds, the Town Council will have to force rank and prioritize the needs listed above. The Town Council may consider using unpaid citizen volunteers to lead specific tasks. Such citizen volunteers will need to be Town Council endorsed and granted limited authority to conduct each task to be effective.

Successful implementation and completion of the above tasks will result in a more streamlined Town staff, reducing the cost of Town operations, providing needed infrastructure improvements and improving the overall appearance of the Town of Winfall, therefore preparing the Town to address future growth opportunities.

LONG TERM STRATEGIES AND GOALS

Asset Base Growth

As any public entity is experiencing in today's economic environment, increasing operating revenue is foremost on the list of issues to be addressed. Currently the Town is not well positioned to seek industrial development due to lack of dedicated industrial land, infrastructure restraints, lack of available housing and trained workforce. The Perquimans County property along Wiggins Road, approximately Fifty (50 +/- acres) is undeveloped but could be a possible location for small manufacturing business or distribution. However, there are future opportunities for expansion for retail and service business to be located within the Town of Winfall.

New US 17 Business Perquimans River Bridge

The completion of the new bridge in the fall of 2022 has provided the Town of Winfall with desirable development property. The property along both sides of Camp Creek Road, beginning from the bridge threshold to the Mill Creek bridge and also land along the east side of Winfall Blvd will attract investors. Existing canals on both ends of the south side of Creek Drive, with proper permitting and planning could attract recreational based marine opportunities.

Action needed: Establish a Camp Creek Planning Zone, develop future building codes and ordinance's specific to these parcels with the assistance of Perquimans County, investigate flood control grants to stabilize the waterfront along Hertford Bay, establish a relationship with a competent real estate developer, seek Opportunity Zone designation.

Winfall Historic District

There are 73 buildings in the Winfall Historic District and the specific buildings/structures facing Main Street, from the intersection of Wiggins Road/Bembury Road , west along Main Street to the intersection of Main Street/ Belvedere are of importance to future development and asset growth. These building are opportunities for food or hospitality endeavors, Airbnb, Bed and

Breakfast hostels, boutique cafes, etc. These types of business could make Winfall a weekend destination, coupled with the possible growth along Creek Drive, the success of the Harbor Town Project and easy access to the Future I-87 corridor.

Action needed: *Reestablish a committee, with Town Council oversight to promote growth in the Historic District, communicate with state agencies to ensure historic preservation tax credits are available, develop marking info that can be sent to culinary schools for food service opportunities, lobby the PQ Commissioners for seed money for entrepreneurial startups.*

As the financial condition of the Town improves there will be additional areas that should be considered for redevelopment along with improvements in resident and tourist's amenities, such as improvements to the land surrounding the Town Hall, a community building/park, and a walking/bike trail within the Town limits. Also the addition of sidewalks were possible in the Historic District will add value and increase desirability for entrepreneurial opportunities.

Grant Program Development

In today's competitive environment to be successful in obtaining grants from federal or state agencies county and municipal governing bodies have discovered that full time professionally trained individuals that can establish working relationships with the staff at each federal or state agency have become the essential norm. Constant contact and attention to details are keys in successfully navigating the varied grant processes of many various states and federal and winning awards. This type of expertise can be costly and sometimes out of the reach of financially strapped local governments. In addition to including grant writing and management skills for any potential Town Administrator, the Town could also consider the following:

Action needed: *Seek out proposals from local individuals or firms that specialize in grant funding management and in addition make contact with other regional municipalities that are seeking funding to*

determine if cost sharing is possible. This investigative effort should be completed promptly and have an agreement in place before October 2023 which is the date that state and federal funding agencies will begin to establish grant funding based on the 2023 census.

Winfall Police Department

As an unexpected result of the current financial condition the Town is experiencing, the Winfall Police department has been suspended to create additional reserves in the General Fund. These funds are slotted in the contingency fund of the 2022-2023 budget. If and when the financial conditions improve a study committee should be established, chaired and co-chaired by elected officials with a limited number of resident shareholders selected for participation, to provide a broad cross section of the need and desires for a Town of Winfall supported police agency. The study committee should collect data points, including but not limited to i.e number of service calls by severity by both the former Winfall Police department and the current Perquimans County Sheriff department, cost of reestablishing a weekend force or full time force versus the property tax funded coverage provided by the Perquimans County Sheriff department, impact on home owner insurance rates, response time calculations from the Perquimans County Sheriff office to downtown Winfall (2.2 miles), feasibility of a Town of Winfall property tax surcharge for funding the Winfall Police department and a written analysis of the data should be published and a public meeting conducted to inform the residents of the findings.

Action needed: *Collection of data should begin immediately.*

SUMMARY

Successful implementation of the stated goals and objectives listed herein should position the Town of Winfall to achieve the following:

- *Improved financial policy decisions from an informed and educated Town Council*
- *Increased efficiency from the Management. Administrative and Operations personnel charged with day-to-day functions as a result of realignment.*
- *Stabilizing the Towns finances and positioning the Town for revenue growth to sustain future endeavors.*

Implementation of these strategies will require a well-conceived and vetted written implementation program to minimize unexpected consequences.

A series of public meetings should be slated for the residents to offer strategic input and to fully understand the approved Strategic Plan for the Town of Winfall. This Strategic Plan is a living document and will need to be updated as the Town's needs and desires evolve.

This Strategic Plan was submitted and approved by the Winfall Town Council as part of the April 2023 Town Council meeting. Therefore, on behalf of the following Council Members, Preston White, Mayor Pro Tem, Valery McDonald, Councilperson, Christopher Richardson, Councilperson this document will be inserted into the Winfall Town record as written and recorded on this 10th Day of July, 2023.



Frederick L. Yates

Mayor

Town of Winfall