

Regular Session, May 18, 2026, at 7:00 p.m.  
Catawba County Board of Commissioners

**Budget**

Budget Transfers 896 05/18/26

**Emergency Services**

Proclamation Declaring May 17-23, 2026, as Emergency Medical Services Week 893 05/18/26  
Pyrotechnics Permit Application: City of Claremont 896 05/18/26

**Planning**

Rezoning Request: 2733 Startown Road (1.32 acre) R-20 to Gen Industrial (GI) 893 05/18/26

**Presentations**

Proclamation Declaring May 17-23, 2026, as Emergency Medical Services Week 893 05/18/26

**Proclamations**

Proclamation Declaring May 17-23, 2026, as Emergency Medical Services Week 893 05/18/26

**Public Comment**

893 05/18/26  
Michael McRee  
Dwight Bowman  
Heidi Rice  
Kenyon Kelly  
Sherrill Watkins

**Public Hearings**

Rezoning Request: 2733 Startown Road (1.32 acre) R-20 to Gen Industrial (GI) 893 05/18/26

**Tax**

April Tax Refunds, Releases and Adjustments 896 05/18/26

The Catawba County Board of Commissioners met in Regular Session on Monday, May 18, 2026, at 7:00 p.m., in the Board of Commissioners Meeting Room, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Catawba County Justice Center, 100 Government Drive, Newton, North Carolina.

Present were Chair Randy Isenhower, Vice-Chair Austin Allran, and Commissioners Robert C. Abernethy, Jr., Barbara G. Beatty, and Cole Setzer.

Also present were County Manager Mary S. Furtado, Assistant County Manager Paul Murray, Assistant County Manager Adam Lindsay, County Attorney Jodi Stewart, Assistant County Attorney Josh Teague, and County Clerk Dale Stiles.

1. Chair Randy Isenhower called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m., noting a quorum was present.
2. Commissioner Cole Setzer led the Pledge of Allegiance.
3. Commissioner Barbara G. Beatty offered the invocation.
4. Commissioner Abernethy made a motion to approve the Minutes from the Board's Regular Meeting and Closed Session of May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2026; and Special Meeting of May 11, 2026. The motion carried unanimously.
5. Recognition of Special Guests:  
Chair Isenhower welcomed everyone present.

6. Public Comments.

Michael McRee came forward and spoke in favor of the school merger, thanked staff for working on landscaping around the Old 1924 Courthouse and requested the monument on the grounds of the 1924 Courthouse not be removed.

Dwight Bowman came forward and shared concerns about data centers, the upcoming recommended budget, school merger and water/sewer infrastructure.

Heidi Rice came forward and shared concerns about data centers related to water conservation and the environment.

Kenyon Kelley came forward and spoke about racism and requested the monument on the grounds of the 1924 Courthouse be removed.

Sherrill Watkins came forward requesting the monument on the grounds of the 1924 Courthouse not be removed.

7. Presentations.

Commissioner Setzer presented a Proclamation Declaring May 17-23, 2026 as Emergency Medical Services Week to Emergency Medical Services Director Brook Redding, Emergency Medical Services Manager William Butler and staff.

8. Public Hearings.

Planning Director Chris Timberlake requested the Board of Commissioners hold a public hearing to consider an application to rezone a 1.32-acre parcel located at 2733 Startown Road owned by Horace Eugene Mauser, Jr. from R-20 Residential to Light Industrial (LI).

The current R-20 Residential district requires a minimum lot size of 20,000 square feet (approx. 1/2 acre) and is considered a high-density "general use" residential district. Predominant uses in this district include single-family homes and agriculture. The Light Industrial (LI) district requires a minimum lot size of 40,000 square feet (about an acre). The LI district "permits light manufacturing, processing and assembly uses, warehousing, distribution and servicing enterprises and limits office activities. This district supports the county's policies to promote economic development opportunities."

The subject parcel is located at 2733 Startown Road, further identified by Parcel Identification Number 3720-0648-6085 within the Startown Area of the Comprehensive Land Use Plan.

The subject property depicted as Parcel 1 is zoned R-20 Residential and is currently developed with a gravel lot providing truck parking and equipment storage on this property. There are also large bins created by positioning concrete blocks to store aggregate material such as mulch and gravel on the parcel. The parcel also contains a sign for "Rockett Grading."

- *North* – Parcel 3 is zoned Residential R-20 and contains a single-family dwelling.
- *South* – Parcel 7 is zoned R-20 and is developed with a single-family home.
- *East* – Parcels 4, 5, and 6 are zoned R-20 and all contain single-family dwellings.
- *West* – Parcel 2 is zoned R-20 and is in the present use value program for agriculture.

This property is actively working through a code compliance issue. County staff received complaints about the residentially zoned parcel being used for a grading business. This parcel has been zoned R-20 since the 2007 Unified Development Ordinance took effect, prior to that, it was zoned R-2 Residential. In June 2025, a demolition permit was approved for the property for "farm house removal."

The acreage of the parcel meets the minimum requirements for Light Industrial (LI) property (40,000 square feet). Uses allowed in the Light Industrial district include commercial nursery/ landscaping business,

contractor's offices, mini-warehouse (self-storage), rental and leasing of heavy equipment, warehousing, wood waste grinding operation, along with other light manufacturing uses.

Public water is located along Startown Road. Public sewer is not available. The parcel will be served by on-site septic.

This portion of Startown Road is considered a minor arterial road within the NCDOT maintenance system. In 2023, the Annual Average Daily Traffic calculation was 9,000. Startown Road is designated for widening in the 2026-2035 the State Transportation Improvement Program. However, it is only funded for preliminary engineering of the widening project.

The Catawba County Comprehensive Plan was adopted in April 2024. The Future Land Use recommendation for this parcel is high-density residential (one dwelling unit per 1/2 acre, R-20). There are not any commercial nodes in this area of Startown. Startown Road is designated for industrial development located near Trivium and also near the intersection with US 321.

The Planning Board held a public hearing on April 27, 2026, to consider the request. The applicant spoke in favor of his request. The Board asked Mr. Rockett about the nature of his business and if he was aware of the residential zoning when he removed the home. One citizen who lives across from the subject property, spoke in opposition to the request based on the current neighborhood development pattern. No one else spoke for or against the request.

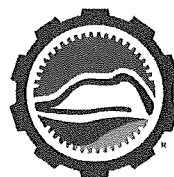
Staff recommended and the Planning Board voted 8-0 to submit an unfavorable recommendation to the Board of Commissioners to rezone the 1.32-acre parcel located at 2733 Startown Road from R-20 Residential to Light Industrial (LI) district based upon:

1. The Catawba County Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map's recommendation for high-density residential for this parcel;
2. The property being located outside areas designated for industrial development on Startown Road;
3. The property being surrounded by other Residential R-20 zoned parcels and residential uses; and
4. Rezoning the parcel to Light Industrial potentially being considered invalid spot zoning by relieving a small tract from residential restrictions that govern the surrounding parcels.

After Mr. Timberlake's presentation, the Board held a brief discussion. Chair Isenhower opened the public hearing. Applicant Alton Rocket came forward and confirmed the lot is being used to park large equipment. He also indicated most of his neighbors were supportive of this rezoning request. Commissioner Setzer inquired from staff whether the adjacent Sarstedt property is zoned residential or commercial. Staff clarified it is residentially zoned. Rusty Lutz, who resides directly across from the site, came forward and spoke against the rezoning request based on its inconsistency with principles detailed in the Startown small area plan and the future land use designations. With no one further coming forward the Chair closed the public hearing.

Chair Isenhower made a motion to deny the rezoning request and adopt the proposed consistency and reasonableness statement, which is consistent with the one adopted by the Planning Board during its consideration of the same matter. The motion to deny such rezoning carried 4-1, with Chair Isenhower, Vice-Chair Allran, and Commissioners Abernethy and Beatty in favor, and Commissioner Setzer opposing.

*The following Plan Consistency and Reasonableness Statement is approved:*



**catawba county**  
planning

**CATAWBA COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

**PROPOSED PLAN CONSISTENCY AND REASONABLENESS STATEMENT**

Zoning Amendment Request: To rezone a 1.32-acre parcel located at 2733 Startown Rd, also identified by Parcel Identification Number 3720-0648-6085, from R-20 Residential to Light Industrial (LI).

The Catawba County Board of Commissioners finds the request to be inconsistent with the Catawba County Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map recommendation of High-Density Residential use on this parcel.

Pursuant to NCGS 160D-605, the Board of Commissioners finds the rezoning request unreasonable and not in the public interest based upon:

1. The Catawba County Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map's recommendation for high-density residential for this parcel;
2. The property being located outside areas designated for industrial development on Startown Road;
3. The property being surrounded by other Residential R-20 zoned parcels and residential uses; and
4. Rezoning the parcel to Light Industrial potentially being considered invalid spot zoning by relieving a small tract from residential restrictions that govern the surrounding parcels.

By a vote of 4-1, the Catawba County Board of Commissioners does not approve the rezoning request.

This the 18th day of May 2026.

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C. Randall Isenhower, Chair

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9. Consent Agenda.

County Manager Furtado presented the following two items under the consent agenda coming straight from staff. Chair Isenhower asked if any commissioner wished for items to be broken out of the consent agenda for individual consideration. None was requested.

a. Staff recommended the Catawba County Board of Commissioners approve a Pyrotechnics Permit to PyroStar Entertainment LLC for a scheduled fireworks display on May 30, 2026.

The City of Claremont has contracted with PyroStar Entertainment LLC. to conduct a fireworks display on May 30, 2026, at the city-owned property located at 3430 E Main St. In support of this event, PyroStar Entertainment LLC has submitted a Pyrotechnics Permit application to the Catawba County Fire Marshal's Office. The display is scheduled to begin at approximately 9:00 PM and will last no longer than 30 minutes.

PyroStar Entertainment has also provided a comprehensive safety plan detailing the security measures for the launch site. The company holds a valid "Outdoor Pyrotechnics Display Operators Permit" issued by the North Carolina Department of Insurance and the Office of State Fire Marshal. Based on the submitted application, all statutory requirements for this event will be met. Should any requirement fail to be satisfied, the Fire Marshal's Office reserves the right to revoke the permit.

b. Staff recommended the Board of Commissioners approve 35 releases totaling \$30,131.07, nine refunds totaling \$7,699.20, and 46 Motor Vehicles Bill adjustments / refunds totaling \$5,151.40 requested during the month of April.

North Carolina General Statute 105-381(b) states upon receipt of a taxpayer's written request for release or refund, the taxing unit's governing body has 90 days to determine whether the taxpayer's request is valid to either approve the release or refund of the incorrect portion or to notify the taxpayer in writing that no release or refund will be made.

During the month of April Tax Office staff have checked records and verified the legitimacy of 35 releases totaling \$30,131.07, nine refunds totaling \$7,699.20 and 46 Motor Vehicle Bill adjustments / refunds totaling \$5,151.40.

Common reasons for the release of tax bill amounts include change in values and months, change in situs, businesses closing / being sold, clerical errors, in addition to adjusted billing to remove watercraft located and billed in another county. The refunds are due mainly to a parcel that was merged into another parcel and should not have been billed individually. The motor vehicle bill adjustments are largely due to pro-ration of tax bill amounts to account for mid-year transfers of ownership, change in values and change in situs.

The consent agenda items came in the form of a motion by Chair Isenhower, which carried unanimously.

10. Other Items of Business.

Commissioner Setzer acknowledged the presence of resident Mr. Curt Abee at the Commissioners meeting and requested discussion of what would be required for the building on Mr. Abee's property, currently under a County stop work order, to be authorized to hold worship services. County Manager Furtado indicated she has been in conversations with Mr. Abee about the need to address the unpermitted electrical and septic work in order for the building to be used for farm purposes, but the matter of using the building for worship services was more complex. County Attorney Stewart confirmed the owner needs to apply for permits, including electric and environmental health, to use the building for farm purposes. The owners would need to submit an application and proceed through the permitting process in order for staff to determine if the building could be used for other non-farm purposes. There was discussion of how "Cowboy Churches" are authorized, and staff shared they are often permitted via special use permit as temporary uses versus authorized to host weekly service. Manager Furtado indicated she would follow up with Mr. Abee to ensure he knows she is available to assist him as he works through this process.

11. Manager's Report.

County Manager Furtado reported the following budget transfer to the Board, which was completed pursuant to Board authority granted to the County Manager:

Contingency Transfer:  
Catawba-Wateree Contingency Transfer

*Transfer*

*From:*

110-190100-994000	Contingency	\$5,000
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*To:*

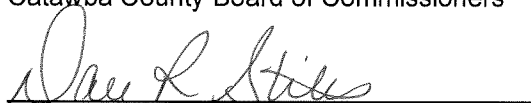
110-270050-868181	Catawba-Wateree	\$5,000
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Contingency transfer to move \$5,000 of contingency funds to Catawba-Wateree for the FY2026 lynchbya cost share program. Earlier in the year, unanticipated additional costs for DEQ aquatic weed control were required from this funding. This transfer will cover the entirety of the FY2026 lynchbya commitment.

12. Attorney's Report. None.
13. Adjournment. No further action was taken. Upon a motion by Commissioner Beatty which unanimously carried, the meeting was adjourned at 7:52 p.m.



Randy Isenhower, Chair  
Catawba County Board of Commissioners



Dale R. Stiles  
County Clerk