

TOWN OF BAILEY MEETING MINUTES
REGULAR PUBLIC MEETING – 7/28/2026

This Regular Public Meeting of the Bailey Town Board of Commissioners was held at Bailey Town Hall on July 28, 2026, at 6:30 PM.

The following Board members were present: Mayor Owen H. Strickland II, Mayor Pro Tempore/Commissioner Walter Wells, and Commissioners Richard Wilson, Dillon Bissette, Ervin Powell, and David Evans.

Also present: Town Administrator/Clerk/CFO Joel Killion, Zoning Administrator/Code Enforcer Shawn Lucas, and Town Attorney Nick Berry.

Mayor Strickland reopened the Regular Public Meeting of the Bailey Town Board of Commissioners that had been recessed on July 20, 2026, and called the meeting back to order.

Then, before proceeding with the Board's meeting, he read a personal statement (see Addendum). [Note: Before the meeting, copies of the Mayor's "Statement to the Town of Bailey" were placed by him on the public chairs in the Council Chambers and beside the Agendas at the Council Chambers entrance without the Board of Commissioners' knowledge or consent.] Afterwards, the Mayor opened the floor for the Commissioners to speak for their meeting.

Mayor Pro Tempore/Commissioner Wells referred the Board to the report prepared by Commissioners Bissette and Wilson and Town Attorney Berry, as directed and approved by the Board on July 20, 2026, at the Mayor's request. He noted that the Mayor's personal statement incorrectly stated that the Board directed "two (2) Town Commissioners to review the documents and then provide a report to the Board." Mayor Pro Tempore/Commissioner Wells clarified that the Board voted to appoint Commissioners Bissette and Wilson to work with the Town Attorney to review the Mayor's report and request, analyze the checks co-signed by Commissioner Wells, and compile the information into a report for the Board. He then invited Commissioner Bissette to present the report.

Commissioner Bissette stated that he, Commissioner Wilson, and Town Attorney Berry prepared the report as directed by the Board of Commissioners. He then asked the Town Attorney to present the report to the Board and the public.

Town Attorney Berry read the report (See Addendum).

Commissioner Evans, referencing the spreadsheet included with the report that showed all thirteen (13) checks co-signed by Mayor Pro Tempore/Commissioner Wells, asked the Town Attorney who the first check was written to and who co-signed it.

Town Attorney Berry said the first check was written on November 6, 2025, co-signed by Mayor Pro Tempore/Commissioner Wells, and paid to Mayor Strickland for his annual stipend.

Commissioner Evans asked if this oversight should have been caught back in November.

Town Attorney Berry said he would leave that to the discretion of the Board.

With no further questions for the Town Attorney, Mayor Pro Tempore/Commissioner Wells moved to approve the report as presented. Commissioner Wilson seconded the motion, and it carried.

Vote: Mayor Strickland: N/A; Commissioner Wells: Aye; Commissioner Wilson: Aye; Commissioner Evans: Aye; Commissioner Powell: Aye; Commissioner Bissette: Aye. [Note: Mayor Strickland called for a show-of-hands vote, and all Commissioners raised their hands.]

When the Mayor noted that there was nothing further to discuss on the Agenda, Mayor Pro Tempore/Commissioner Wells made a motion to go into closed session to review a personnel matter. Commissioner Bissette seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Vote: Mayor Strickland: N/A; Commissioner Wells: Aye; Commissioner Bissette: Aye; Commissioner Evans: Aye; Commissioner Powell: Aye; Commissioner Wilson: Aye.

After closed session, Mayor Pro Tempore/Commissioner Wells made a motion to end the closed session. Commissioner Bissette seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Vote: Mayor Strickland: N/A; Commissioner Wells: Aye; Commissioner Bissette: Aye; Commissioner Evans: Aye; Commissioner Powell: Aye; Commissioner Wilson: Aye.

Then, Mayor Pro Tempore/Commissioner Wells made a motion to move into open session. Commissioner Bissette seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Vote: Mayor Strickland: N/A; Commissioner Wells: Aye; Commissioner Bissette: Aye; Commissioner Evans: Aye; Commissioner Powell: Aye; Commissioner Wilson: Aye.

Mayor Pro Tempore/Commissioner Wells stated that the Board had received a grievance from a Town employee alleging a violation of the Town's Personnel Policy. He said the Board's role was to hold a hearing, consult with the employee, and allow the employee to present the grievance, which had been done. Following that hearing, he made a motion for the Board to discuss the grievance. Commissioner Bissette seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Vote: Mayor Strickland: N/A; Commissioner Wells: Aye; Commissioner Bissette: Aye; Commissioner Evans: Aye; Commissioner Powell: Aye; Commissioner Wilson: Aye.

Commissioner Bissette then said that before the Board has the discussion, he asked Town Administrator Killion if he had anything to add or discuss.

Town Administrator Killion read the letter he had presented to the Board on Monday, July 20, 2026, along with additional information. The letter and additional information are included in the Addendum.

Afterwards, Mayor Pro Tempore/Commissioner Wells asked the Board if there was any more discussion.

Commissioner Bissette asked Mayor Pro Tempore/Commissioner Wells to begin the discussion and share any thoughts he may have.

Mayor Pro Tempore/Commissioner Wells addressed the Mayor's statement made at the beginning of the meeting, in which the Mayor suggested the grievance was an act of retribution. Mayor Pro Tempore/Commissioner Wells stated that Town Administrator Killion first contacted him about the Mayor's misconduct on May 20, 2025. Since then, the Town Administrator had raised several additional concerns with him but, as noted in his letter, was not prepared to bring those matters before the Board; therefore, Mayor Pro Tempore/Commissioner Wells did not bring them to the Board either. He stated that the situation had developed over an extended period and that the grievance was not related to, or made in response to, the Mayor's July 18, 2026 email to the Board regarding the check-signing dispute. He said the claim that the grievance was retaliatory was incorrect.

Mayor Pro Tempore/Commissioner Wells added that, following the Board's meeting with Town Administrator Killion regarding his grievance, the Board needed to discuss and recommend appropriate action. He reminded the Board that the grievance concerned violations of the Town's Personnel Policy. He emphasized that the central issue was whether the Town of Bailey's established personnel policies and grievance procedures had been followed consistently and respected by all parties. He added that the Board had directed employee-related concerns to be handled through the proper process and that it was the Board's responsibility to determine whether those procedures were followed and whether any policy violations occurred. He further stated that the Board must protect employees from unfair treatment or unnecessary interference, uphold the Town's organizational structure, and ensure personnel matters are handled fairly, professionally, and in accordance with the Town's adopted policies and procedures.

Commissioner Bissette stated that the Board's main concern was ensuring that the Town follows its Personnel Policy. He added that Town staff must be able to complete Board-directed tasks without interference.

Commissioner Evans asked whether the Board was requesting that the Mayor follow the Town of Bailey's Personnel Policy as written and approved, refrain from harassment or undue

aggressiveness, and comply with the roles, responsibilities, and limitations placed on him by the Town Charter.

After the Board affirmed Commissioner Evans' inquiry, Commissioner Evans moved to request that the Mayor comply with the roles, responsibilities, and limitations set forth in the Town Charter and Ordinances; not exceed those actions without Board approval; follow the Town of Bailey's Personnel Policy as written; and refrain from undue harassment or aggressiveness. The motion also stated that employees who use the Personnel Policy's grievance procedure "shall be free from discrimination, coercion, restraint or reprisal." Commissioner Bissette seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Vote: Mayor Strickland: N/A; Commissioner Evans: Aye; Commissioner Bissette: Aye; Commissioner Wells: Aye; Commissioner Powell: Aye; Commissioner Wilson: Aye. [Note: Mayor Strickland called for a show-of-hands vote, and all Commissioners raised their hands.]

Mayor Pro Tempore/Commissioner Wells stated that he had no further actions to take and invited the Commissioners to share any additional comments.

Mayor Strickland asked if the Mayor Pro Tempore wished to begin.

Mayor Pro Tempore/Commissioner Wells started by saying that he and the Mayor have had disagreements, but he has always tried to address concerns directly. He said that when he disagreed with the Mayor using the title of Mayor in connection with Nash County Republican Party matters, he brought that concern directly to the Mayor rather than taking it to anyone else.

Mayor Pro Tempore/Commissioner Wells said the Mayor had not previously raised with him the concerns discussed that evening. He explained that, from the Board's perspective, the Board requested an investigation and report regarding the check-signing issue. He said that immediately after the Mayor confronted Town Administrator Killion, the Town Administrator, who was upset by the confrontation, informed him of what had occurred. Mayor Pro Tempore/Commissioner Wells advised the Town Administrator to contact the Town Attorney, the Local Government Commission, the Auditor, and the North Carolina League of Municipalities for guidance. He stated that the Town Administrator did so immediately, and the guidance received was to have the Board formally designate the co-signer as soon as possible if one had not already been designated. The matter was addressed at the next Board meeting, and the same individual who had previously co-signed the checks was then formally designated by the Board. Mayor Pro Tempore/Commissioner Wells stated that none of the checks were in question as to their purpose. He explained that the first check he co-signed was in November 2025, when the Town Administrator asked him to co-sign a \$1,400 check payable to the Mayor for the Mayor's annual stipend because the Town Administrator was hesitant to have the Mayor co-sign a check made payable to himself. He noted that the Mayor received, endorsed, and

deposited that check without raising any concern at that time. Mayor Pro Tempore/Commissioner Wells further stated that he did not sign checks for fourteen months, as the Mayor had stated, and that the remaining checks were signed on only a few occasions when he was already at Town Hall. He said the last checks were signed on June 30, the final day of the fiscal year, to ensure necessary payments were completed before fiscal year-end, including a payment to The Country Doctor Museum Foundation. Mayor Pro Tempore/Commissioner Wells stated that, when asked to sign a check, he confirms that the funds are budgeted, charged to the proper GL account, and approved by the Board when required. He said he believed proper checks and balances were followed, and that the Board later chose to designate the Mayor Pro Tempore as a check signer going forward. He stated that, in his opinion, the issue appeared to be an honest mistake rather than intentional wrongdoing, and that the Mayor had escalated the matter unnecessarily. He also expressed concern that the Mayor had contacted outside agencies without first bringing the matter to the Board. Mayor Pro Tempore/Commissioner Wells said he believed the Mayor's comments about changing the Town's form of government were related to seeking more power and control for himself. He stated that any updates to the Town's General Ordinances should be handled comprehensively by qualified professionals. He also noted that changing to a manager-council form of government would likely require paying a manager's salary and could increase costs to taxpayers.

Mayor Pro Tempore/Commissioner Wells stated that he personally witnessed some of the incidents described by the Town Administrator and believed the Town Administrator's account was accurate. He recalled that, after the Board meeting concerning the data center moratorium, he heard a verbal outburst outside while speaking with the Mayor's aunt. He stated that he turned and saw the Mayor speaking angrily and using profanity toward Commissioner Evans while complaining that information had been kept from him. Mayor Pro Tempore/Commissioner Wells said he escorted Commissioner Evans away from the situation and later told the Mayor that he would no longer engage with him in that manner in public because such conduct could escalate if directed at the wrong person.

Mayor Pro Tempore/Commissioner Wells also described another incident after a separate meeting attended by his daughter and granddaughter. He stated that, as they were leaving, his daughter mentioned that his granddaughter was in college and may take government classes. He said he heard the Mayor respond that she would not learn anything from "this bunch of idiots," which Mayor Pro Tempore/Commissioner Wells said reflected the Mayor's attitude toward the Board. He stated that the Mayor's comments, outbursts, and handling of certain matters have made it difficult for the Board and Town employees to work with him. Mayor Pro Tempore/Commissioner Wells said he regretted making these comments publicly but felt compelled to respond because of the personal attacks and the way the matter had been presented by the Mayor that evening. He apologized to the Town, the Board, Town Administrator Killion, Zoning Administrator/Code Enforcer Lucas, Mrs. Hayman, and Mrs. Sizemore. He acknowledged that some concerns had gone unaddressed for too long because the individuals involved did not want the matters brought forward, and he apologized for not

addressing them sooner. He stated that if he witnessed or became aware of similar behavior in the future, he would bring it back to the Board promptly rather than allowing it to continue unresolved.

Mayor Strickland asked Commissioner Wilson if he had anything to say.

Commissioner Wilson said he believed it was time to pull the curtain down on this. He said that Town Administrator Killion, Ms. Hayman and Mrs. Sizemore are the face of the Town and if the Town lost any of them, the Town would be in big trouble. He added that the Mayor was the right fit for the position but said that he can't whip the ones who are doing the rowing. He finished by telling the Mayor to get us some money, adding that he likes the politics and to rub elbows with the politicians.

Mayor Strickland asked Commissioner Bissette if he had anything to say.

Commissioner Bissette told Mayor Pro Tempore/Commissioner Wells that he hit the nail on the head, that he had nothing more to add, and let him know that he agreed with everything he said.

Mayor Strickland asked Commissioner Powell if he had anything to say.

Commissioner Powell reminded the Board that "The Mission of the Town of Bailey is to provide Consistent Public Service with Competent, Professional Leadership for the Citizens of the Town of Bailey and the Surrounding Region to Improve the Lives of our Neighbors." He added that he felt that the Board sometimes lost focus on why they were there.

Mayor Strickland asked Commissioner Evans if he had anything to say.

Commissioner Evans agreed with Commissioner Powell's statement and said it was good and to the point.

Commissioner Wells made a motion to adjourn the meeting, and Commissioner Bissette seconded. Motion carried.

Vote: Mayor Strickland: N/A; Commissioner Wells: Aye; Commissioner Bissette: Aye; Commissioner Evans: Aye; Commissioner Powell: Aye; Commissioner Wilson: Aye.

Meeting Adjourned.


Owen H. Strickland II, Mayor


Joel Killion, Town Administrator/Town Clerk/CFO

Statement to the Town of Bailey,

Good Evening, by now, most folks have at least heard of what has been occurring here in our Town. I do not intend for this to be a rehash of the entire issue, however there are a few items that I am going to address.

I reported to the Board of Commissioners a potential State of North Carolina Statute violation by a Town Staff member and the Mayor Pro Tempore. I also reported this same potential issue to the State and Local Government Finance Division of the NC Treasurer's Office and I submitted it to the email TipLine of the Office of the State Auditor as well as the Town Attorney and now the contracted Town Auditor.

The Mayor Pro Tempore, admitted publicly that he was unauthorized to be a cosigner of Town of Bailey Financial instruments. However, he also claimed he was unaware of the General Statute in question and attempted to deflect.

The initial response of the Town Board of Commissioners was meek to say it kindly. The report requested a complete and itemized accounting, including copies of each financial payment and every pre-audit review, to the Mayor and each Town Commissioner, made by the undesignated cosigner since the date of the unauthorized expansion of the signature authority, a period of fourteen (14) months. The response of the Board of Commissioners to this request was, at the direction of the individual cosigning without authorization, to require two (2) Town Commissioners to review the documents and then provide a report to the Board. This is exactly why I escalated this situation to individuals outside of the control of the Town of Bailey - Board of Commissioners. Failure of the Board of Commissioners to direct the Chief Financial Officer to immediately provide an accounting of all financial instruments signed and monies expended, during the period in question, to the Mayor and Board is an avoidance of financial oversight and a delaying tactic to obscure transparency. I am still asking for that report.

Following notice that a town employee had provided to the Board a grievance against the duly elected Mayor, the Town Board of Commissioners, then placed themselves as the ultimate arbiter of this situation and began taking actions to give more responsibilities to the Mayor Pro Tempore including signing the very financial instruments that he signed without authorization for fourteen (14) months.

Last Monday's vote, and any future vote that affects the Duties of the Mayor, by the Town of Bailey Board of Commissioners was and will be construed as retaliation for my notice to them via a Mayor's Report to the Town Commissioner's and my report to the proper authorities within State Government of a violation of State Statute by one of their peers. I have a duty as an elected official to notify authorities of the potential of improper financial controls or unauthorized activity. Any attempt, by anyone, to restrict this duty is, in and of itself, improper.

Further, it is my belief that most of the machinations of last Monday evening's meeting were orchestrated by an improper meeting on the afternoon of Sunday July 19th in the 5 o'clock hour between the Mayor Pro Tempore and at least one (1) Commissioner and possibly others. Therefore, I, as Mayor, am reminding the Town Commissioners of Bailey, North Carolina that there are consequences of violating the Open Meetings Law.

I also believe the Mayor Pro Tempore being placed in any singular leadership role within the Town of Bailey is problematic and contrary to the public good of the Citizens, as he has admitted publicly to failing to uphold his oath of office by violating a State Statute.

Further, the Mayor Pro Tempore role is exactly as the latin states "mayor for the time being" or "temporary mayor". This individual is to only act if the mayor is unavailable, unable, or sick, infirmed or hospitalized. This individual has acted and continues to act as something more than is allowed under the Town Charter and State of North Carolina Statute.

In addition, at no time during any action of the Town Board of Commissioners during the June 20, 2026 session did the subject of the violation, the Mayor Pro Tempore, recuse himself from any votes that were directly related to his own actions. In fact he directed a great deal of the actions of the Board of Commissioners nearly exclusively. At no time did the Town Attorney intervene to notify him he shouldn't be voting, on items he was a subject of, which in my opinion is not surprising.

Failure to notify the Mayor of the Town of Bailey of items that need to be addressed does not constitute the Mayor being unavailable or unable to address a duty. This has occurred on an unknown number of occasions as it relates to the NCGS 159-25(b) situation and what I believe to be many other times as a pattern of circumvention of the Mayor's role as an elected official within Town government. My belief is that this was/is a concerted effort to minimize the work that your Mayor has done and attempts to do.

The Charter of the Town of Bailey is clear on one thing: the Board of Commissioners through a majority vote on a resolution can do just about anything it wishes regarding the Mayor's role. If this Board of Commissioners chooses to restrict the Mayor and reduce what few duties the Mayor has, that is your choice, however any action subsequent to my report of this Statutory Violation would be retaliatory and vindictive in nature. If you choose that course, you do so to the detriment of your own constituents and this Town.

Regardless, this Board needs to understand one very important thing: at no time in my mayoral duties have I violated a General Statute. The issue with the signatory authority, appears to me, very clear, this Board never took a vote to add the Mayor ProTempore to be a signatory to financial or any other documents prior to Monday the 20th of July, 2026, the Chief Financial Officer allowed this to occur and the Mayor Pro Tempore was deeply involved, and that is a problem for this Board if you sit by and do nothing, obfuscate the issue with delaying tactics, and attempt to switch the narrative to extraneous actions.

If you will notice, I have not addressed any actions regarding the other individual directly involved in the NCGS 159-25(b) issue. That is not an oversight. It is because the Town Board of Commissioners have not pursued any action. Only the Commissioners know whether they believe in accountability and consequences. Maybe, the Citizens should demand action if none comes.

Accountability and Transparency are not merely buzz words. Several neighboring Towns and Cities are reaping the consequences of poor management and ineffective and possibly extra-legal fiscal controls. I believe it is time for the Town of Bailey to undergo an overhaul in governance. A wholesale change in the Town Charter to bring it into the present day. A change of the type of government from a Mayor/Council form of Government to a Council/Manager form of Government. Eliminate Commissioners being in charge of departments such as Streets, Zoning, and Services. Put professionals with specific education standards, tangible knowledge, and proven experience in those roles. I believe the Board of Commissioners will never do this on their own, the citizens will have to force them to do it. I pray that they will. However, maybe some folks, possibly including Commissioners, want the Town to remain stagnant and unsophisticated. I hope our citizens will rally against those folks.

I have not decided my next course of action. That course of action will be decided by my family and me. Obviously, I will listen to constructive advice from individuals I value the opinion of. I am going to be the Mayor of Bailey until at least December of 2027, unless I decide to do something different. It is an honor to be Mayor for the Citizens of Bailey. However, having nearly everyone in town government work directly against you, is not pleasant. I have attempted to help this Town be more than it is. I will continue to do exactly that, in spite of extraneous factors, opponents, and political or personal attacks.

Owen
H. Stukeland
MAYOR
7/28/26

July 20, 2026

Dear Board of Commissioners,

I come before you tonight with a heavy heart. I have tried to handle these concerns privately and professionally, but the situation has reached a point where I believe Board action is necessary. I requested a closed session to avoid publicly airing internal concerns, limit unnecessary harm, and protect the progress this Board has worked hard to achieve. These concerns have developed over the last three years, and I had hoped this letter would never be necessary.

In my view, Bailey is closer than ever to improving its sewer and water systems, expanding the wastewater treatment plant, and potentially lifting the sewer moratorium so the Town can move forward. When I accepted this role, I did so with a desire to work with you as a team toward that goal.

Before I go any further, I want to affirm my sincere respect for the office of Mayor. It is the people's office and should be honored for its purpose and for all who have served and will serve in that role.

With that said, I believe there is a continuing, persistent pattern of conduct involving Mayor Strickland that has become a serious obstacle to the progress, stability, and working relationships this Board has tried to build. Over the past three years, I hoped his behavior would change. Unfortunately, I now believe meaningful change will not occur unless this Board takes action.

On Monday, July 13, 2026, Mayor Strickland asked me about the \$10,000 donation check the Board approved on June 23, 2026, for the Country Doctor Museum Foundation. I explained that Mayor Pro Tem/Commissioner Wells was present when the check was prepared, so I asked him to co-sign it to avoid delay. Mayor Strickland stated that Mayor Pro Tem/Commissioner Wells had "no business signing checks," although he had been established as a co-signer when the KS Bank accounts were opened in May 2025. I advised Mayor Strickland to discuss the matter with Mayor Pro Tem/Commissioner Wells and the Board. He then demanded that I come into his office and close the door. Because of his tone, I told him he would not speak to me that way and returned to my office to deescalate the situation. He followed me, accused me of violating N.C. General Statute 159, and I again advised him to take the matter to the Board. I also told him he was behaving in a controlling manner, reminded him that he is part of a team, and asked him to walk away so the situation would not escalate further. He did.

I regret that this confrontation occurred. I dislike conflict and prefer harmony, but after numerous demeaning, insulting, and patronizing interactions since Mayor Strickland took office, I can no longer remain silent.

Because of the seriousness of Mayor Strickland's accusation, I sought guidance from the Local Government Commission, our Auditor, and the N.C. League of Municipalities. Their responses are included in your Board packets, and our auditor agreed with their guidance.

It is also worth mentioning that the Mayor and Mayor Pro Tem have both co-signed accounts payable checks with me – as required by our dual-signature system – since May 2025. And yet, the Mayor insisted on being the one to co-sign *this particular* check to the Country Doctor Museum Foundation.

Since Mayor Strickland took office in November 2023, he has repeatedly undermined and disparaged this Board, individual Commissioners, and Town staff in conversations at Town Hall and the Police Department. These statements have fostered division and disorder. While we have tried to work with him professionally, he often responds to unmet demands by denying responsibility, shifting blame, making accusations, or using his position in ways others experience as intimidating or retaliatory.

This conduct has had a significant and negative impact on the working environment at Town Hall, creating unnecessary drama, tension, stress, anxiety, and fear among those who are simply trying to serve the Town professionally. The Mayor has frequently referenced his twelve years as a probation officer, but it is unacceptable for him to treat Board members and staff as if they are subordinates under an authoritarian rule rather than fellow public servants working together for the good of Bailey.

Toxic leadership has contributed to good staff members leaving Bailey. I do not intend to resign, but I respectfully ask the Board to address this behavior before it causes further harm. I have kept a detailed record of these issues and their impact. I chose not to read that record aloud tonight out of grace and respect, but I am willing to share it privately with any Board member who believes it would be helpful.

Board members and staff members have made sincere efforts to address these concerns directly and professionally with Mayor Strickland. Unfortunately, those efforts have not resulted in meaningful change. Instead, Board members and staff have repeatedly had to manage, correct, or repair the consequences of his conduct, yet the same patterns have continued.

One of the Mayor's favorite sayings is that "you cannot make chicken salad out of chicken [poop]." The irony in this being one of his favorite quotes is that the Mayor includes "chicken poop" as an ingredient whenever he makes "chicken salad" and then gaslights, slanders, and

denigrates everyone who dares to not eat his dish. When he first came on board, everyone tried his "chicken salad," believing it would be delicious, but then, when they noticed the awful taste, they started refusing it. And whenever the Mayor has noticed this, instead of removing the "poop" from his recipe altogether, he has continued making it, while blaming everyone else for the negative feedback.

At its heart, this issue is larger than any one personality, disagreement, or election cycle. Bailey deserves leadership that is focused not merely on the next election, but on the next generation. Politicians may focus on what is popular or advantageous in the moment, and selfish leadership may seek control or personal advantage, but true statesmanship and servant leadership require doing what is right for the long-term health, stability, and future of the Town. Mayor Strickland has informed us that Bailey is a stepping-stone for him to higher political offices. With that in mind, the public has a right to understand the conduct, judgment, and character of anyone who may seek greater public authority in the future. Just as certain individuals are unfit to exercise law-enforcement authority because they lack the restraint, judgment, or character required for that responsibility, some individuals demonstrate through their conduct that they should not be entrusted with greater public power. When limited authority is used to intimidate, divide, retaliate, or undermine lawful governance, we have a responsibility to confront that pattern before it causes greater harm.

As you know, N.C. General Statute and our Town Charter place the Board of Commissioners—not the Mayor—in the driver's seat of our Town. Mayor Pro Tem/Commissioner Wells reminded us of this legal reality at the June 15 meeting, not out of personal animosity but out of duty to the law and to what is right. The Board alone has the power to restore order and harmony, and I pray you will.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Joel Killion

Partial List of the Record of Misconduct and Grievances Related to Mayor Owen H. Strickland II from November 2023 to July 2026:

2. Mayor Strickland has repeatedly expressed a desire to control Town staff, including authority to discipline or terminate employees. He has also sought greater control over the Board of Commissioners, asserting that the Town Charter gives him insufficient power and control. This is especially concerning because our system of government is based on the rule of law, not the personal authority or preferences of any one individual. Throughout his tenure, Mayor Strickland has demonstrated a consistent pattern of seeking to expand his authority, often with little regard for the law or for those he works with.

7. After the Board formally voted during the August 18, 2025, Commissioners' meeting to assign Chief Adam Gelo the task of approaching Nash County about purchasing a used patrol car, Mayor Strickland separately approached a high-ranking individual within the Sheriff's Department regarding a patrol car. His action interfered with the Chief's ability to carry out the Board's assigned task and ultimately required Lt. Cone and me to contact a neighboring town about purchasing one of their used patrol cars.

8. Mayor Strickland made several racially charged public comments that resulted in the Town of Bailey being sued by a Hispanic citizen for \$250,000. Thankfully, Commissioners Wells and Evans were able to talk the prosecution down to \$38,000 during mediation, thereby saving Bailey from being financially crippled for a very long time. Then, later, during a public Commissioner meeting, while this same Hispanic citizen and their attorneys were present, the Mayor made a comment regarding an Enforcement and Removal Operation's 287(g) Program Fact Sheet that he was not going to "fall on his sword" for illegal immigrants.

10. Town Staff have struggled on several occasions to know how to resolve issues within various departments when the Mayor has forced himself into various processes we have used for years to resolve said issues. While his intentions may have been good, he has made it harder for staff to work with the Commissioners who oversee those departments, thereby creating confusion and conflict. What is more, his overbearing ego and impulsiveness drive him to overreact to situations in ways that create extremely uncomfortable levels of tension and drama in the office. And in practically every case, he becomes emotionally unhinged, inserting himself into situations without knowing all the facts, jumping to conclusions, and makes suggestions that come across as impulsive and iron-handed.

11. The Mayor has, on occasion, demanded, in one way or another, that I obey him without question or hesitation. For instance, when he emailed me on May 1, 2025 [before the Budget Workshop on May 5] to ask for "...a copy of the un-adjusted original draft and the proposed draft budget with your recommended adjustments", I let him know that the proposed draft

would “...be ready next week, after revenues are reviewed, the budget workshop is complete, and the adjustments made from the workshop are entered along with the updated revenue projections to ensure it balances.” After this, I did not hear back from him until he accused me over the phone, after a conference call he and I were on with Mrs. McCullen (NCLM), of not obeying and respecting him as the Mayor. He told me over the phone, while his wife was near him, that when he asks for something, like the reports he requested, he expects to get it, without being questioned or challenged and that, because he’s the mayor, he ought to get what he wants. I tried to assure him that I was unable to provide him with a copy of the unadjusted original draft because that spreadsheet in Southern Software no longer existed due to being an evolving document, not because I did not respect him. I further added that a proposed draft budget was not yet available since it was still too early in the process. We had not yet had the Budget Workshop and had not yet reviewed the revenues or entered and updated items we needed from the Workshop. Then, during the Budget Workshop on May 5, 2025, the Mayor implied publicly that I had not been involving him and the Board in the Budget process. Later, a day or so after the Workshop, he came into my office and brought up the matter again, after which I repeated that it was not about disrespecting him but was about the impossibility of granting his request.

12. On September 3, 2025, Mayor Strickland claimed he was not coming into the Town Hall office much anymore because I and the Board did not want him around. When I eventually asked him why he thought that about me, he accused me of being “too wedded to the Board” and suggested that I need to be “wedded to everyone.” This seemed to be a very odd statement since, according to our Charter and State Statute, it is the Board of Commissioners that is in charge and that hires and fires.

16. On February 10, 2026, at 12:42pm, Mayor Strickland told me he would craft a public service announcement regarding the Moral March on February 11-13, and I asked that he please consider letting the Mayor Pro Tem, the Police Commissioner, and the Police Chief review it first to prevent unnecessary public relations blowback. He then told me that my tendency to constantly pass things by the Mayor Pro Temp and the Board will always get under his skin. He also said that he doesn’t answer to the Board just as they do not answer to him. In response, I said, “Well, we are a team and, as Solomon said in Proverbs, ‘In the presence of many counselors, there is wisdom.’” He then went on to repeat what he had already said and added he disagreed with everything the Moral March was about, going so far as to say that he would lock everyone of the protesters up if he had the power.

18. On March 31, 2026, during the wastewater treatment plant inspection, Mayor Strickland's behavior was extremely unhelpful and unprofessional. Example 1: When Mr. Michael Hall (with the NCDEQ) commented that the ruts in the spray field needed to be filled in, leveled, and

seeded, Mayor Strickland mentioned that these ruts cannot always be prevented. It was at this time that some of our contractors asked why the Mayor was saying this, adding that he needed to stop talking. Example 2: Near the end of the inspection, Commissioner Wells was notified by one of the Town's contractors that the Mayor had said something about having Mr. Hall's job. And so, after the DEQ inspectors left, Commissioner Wells asked the Mayor about this, while down near the pump house. Soon, the Mayor began yelling so loud that, while I was up the hill close to the lagoon with Envirolink personnel, we could all hear him berating Commissioner Wells, while our engineer, Mr. Rich Moore, was standing right beside him. Needless to say, everyone who observed this was shocked and embarrassed by the Mayor's hostile, unhinged behavior. By the way, it was also during this conversation between Commissioner Wells and the Mayor that the Mayor commented that one of the DEQ inspectors, who was African-American, was a DEI hire, due to his assessment that she was incapable of communicating during the inspection.

19. On the morning of April 2, 2026, Mayor Strickland told me that in my role as Town Clerk I am to notify him of all ARPA-related sewer/water project meetings. Since I could not recall a meeting he had not been told about, I asked him if there were any meetings he had not been notified of and he said he did not know. He then told me he was going to blast Mayor Pro Tempore/Commissioner Walter Wells and Commissioner David Evans in an email to the whole Board and ended by saying that if they thought they were going to spend \$9 million without Board approval, they were mistaken. Note: A few days earlier, Mayor Strickland told me he was setting up a meeting with Senator Lisa Barnes and Representative Allen Chesser regarding issues with the NCDEQ and said he would be the only one in the meeting with them as a representative of the Town of Bailey. He said that the legislators would follow his direction in addressing the Town's issues with the DEQ. This seemed odd since the Board of Commissioners made Commissioner Walter Wells the Department Head over Sewer and Water, with Commissioner David Evans as his assistant. It also seemed odd that he assumed he was being left out of sewer/water-related meetings, while setting up sewer/water-related meetings with our legislators, purposefully without the sewer/water Commissioner.

That same day (April 2, 2026), Mayor Strickland emailed the Board regarding the \$9 million sewer project. In this email, he questioned Commissioners Wells and Evans' integrity, while also subtly accusing them of hiding things from the Board and of making financial decisions without the Board, ultimately claiming they were not being "...completely open, transparent and inclusive with the decisions that are made with every elected official." Then, the next day, Commissioner Wells replied to the Mayor's email, wherein he provided a brief update on the project, and, after mentioning the Mayor's "considerable doubt and lack of confidence" in him and Commissioner Evans, sought a volunteer to assume his duties as the Town's Water and Sewer Commissioner going forward. He explained that he and Commissioner Evans needed to

step down from this role "...to mitigate any negative reactions, by the mayor, in the future..." Later, on April 20, 2026, during the Board of Commissioner's meeting, Commissioner Wells and Evans repeated this same request to the Board, adding that they felt it was in the best interest of the Town that they hand off their sewer/water-related roles to the other Commissioners. However, Commissioners Powell, Bissette and Wilson all expressed confidence in Commissioners Wells and Evans' abilities, encouraging them to remain in these roles and to stay the course. To this, Commissioners Wells and Evans said they would have to get together to talk about this further and then touch base with the Commissioners at a later date.

With this said, it's important to understand that the Mayor has been disrupting sewer/water-related town business from the beginning, throwing wrenches in the gears of what Commissioners Wells and Evans were tasked to do by the whole Board, and Commissioner's Wells and Evans can no longer stomach the Mayor's unprofessional, narcissistic, divisive, and malicious behavior. And since they do not wish to fight him any longer, I feel it is important for the Board to understand what is happening and to act in one accord to check the Mayor so this team can continue its important work with as little disruption and drama as possible. The work before us is uphill. If the Board does not lessen the burden, our chances of reaching the top will decrease, and we will have to explain to the next generation why we could not get it done.