



State Auditor
Dave Boliek

INVESTIGATIVE SPECIAL REPORT

North Carolina
Office of the State Auditor
Investigative Division
1-800-730-TIPS

January 30, 2026

Town of Ayden

WHY WE CONDUCTED THIS REPORT

The Office of the State Auditor (OSA) received a referral from the Pitt County Sheriff's Office (PCSO) regarding the Town of Ayden (the Town). This referral originated from an Incident/Investigation Report submitted to PCSO. A resident of the Town (the complainant) alleged that the Town had altered official Town Council Meeting Minutes, that Town staff intended to destroy official records from 2019 through 2021, and that the destruction of these records was intended to conceal information. Further, the complainant alleged that the Town's Governing Board deliberately overlooked the complainant's application for appointment to the Town's Planning Board.

OBJECTIVES

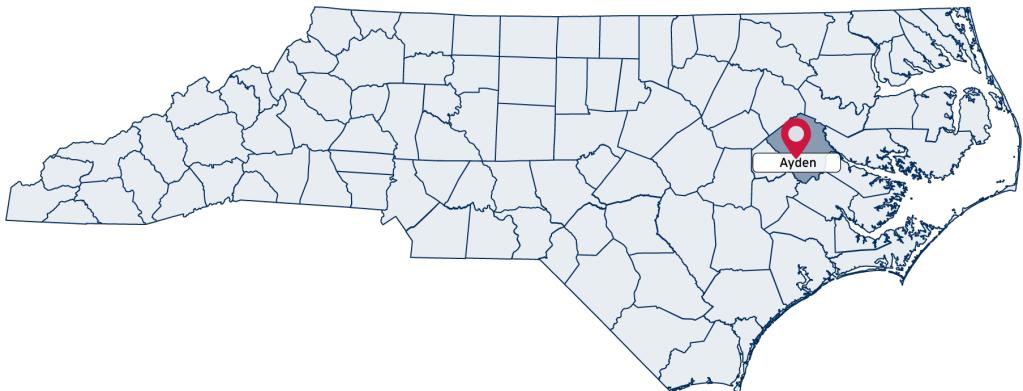
- Determine whether the Town has properly kept official meeting minutes as required by North Carolina's Open Meetings Law, as defined in Chapter 143, Article 33C, and whether any official minutes were altered.
- Determine whether the Town has complied with North Carolina's Public Records Act, as governed by Chapter 132 of the North Carolina General Statutes, by properly retaining and disposing of records according to required retention schedules.
- Determine whether the Town knowingly failed to consider the complainant's Application for appointment to the Town's Planning Board.

WHAT WE FOUND

- The Town has maintained official meeting minutes as required by North Carolina law, and after an evaluation of the meeting minutes alleged to contain discrepancies, OSA found no modifications to the public records.
- The Town did not violate North Carolina's Public Records Act and properly retained and disposed of documents according to the records management program administered by the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources, Division of Archives and Records.
- The complainant's Application for appointment to the City Limits Planning Board was considered, but following a vote by the Town's governing board in a public meeting, the complainant was not selected for the position.

BACKGROUND

The Town of Ayden encompasses over three (3) square miles and is home to over 5,000 residents. The Town is part of the Greenville Metropolitan Area and is the third largest municipality in Pitt County.¹



The Town has been organized in a council-manager form of government since 1957. Under this structure, the Town's governing Board (Town Board)—consisting of five elected Commissioners and the elected Mayor—are the final authority on most matters related to managing the Town and its governance. The Mayor is the official head of the government, the spokesperson of the Board, and the signatory of all documents authorized by the Town Board. The Town Board also employs a Town Manager to oversee the Town's day-to-day operations.²

FINDING 1 DETAILS & RECOMMENDATIONS

OSA determined that the Town has maintained official meeting minutes as required by North Carolina law and that no official Town records were altered.

N.C.G.S. § 143-318.10(e) requires every public body to keep “full and accurate minutes” of their official meetings, and such minutes may be in written form or provided as sound or video recordings.³ In accordance with North Carolina’s Public Records Law as found in Chapter 132 of the North Carolina General Statutes, a public body’s meeting minutes are public records and must be available for public inspection.⁴

The complainant alleged that the Town’s meeting minutes from May 2016 showed altered tax rate information and inconsistent hole punch marks indicating that the meeting minutes had been altered. OSA reviewed the meeting minutes from May 9, 2016⁵; May 18, 2016⁶; and May 30, 2016⁷, and found that only the May 30, 2016, meeting addressed tax matters. That meeting included a Budget Workshop discussion

¹ [Home - Ayden](#)

² [CHARTER](#)

³ [G.S. § 143-318.10](#)

⁴ See generally [Chapter 132](#)

⁵ [GB_Minutes_5.9.16.pdf](#); and [GB_Minutes_5.9.16.b.pdf](#)

⁶ [GB_Minutes_5.18.16.pdf](#)

⁷ [GB_Minutes_5.30.16.pdf](#)

and budget presentation. This discussion generally addressed the Town's tax revenue and an increase in water and sewer tax rates aimed at balancing the general fund. No vote related to these matters occurred; however, OSA observed that the hole punch marks on the minutes appeared consistently across all pages with no notable discrepancies.⁸ Thus, these minutes did not appear to contain any indications that they had been altered.

The complainant also alleged that the Town altered meeting minutes from April 24, 2025, to remove reference to sewer connection fees. OSA determined that the Town held a commissioner's meeting on April 23, 2025, not April 24, 2025, wherein the only mention of "sewer" was related to fees in the Proposed Budget for FY2026.⁹ These minutes were adopted and certified by Mayor Ivory Mewborn and Town Clerk, Jeremy Crawford on June 9, 2025, and the digitized version can be accessed and viewed on the Town's website.¹⁰ Accordingly, it does not appear that the Town held an official meeting on the date indicated by complainant. Further, OSA did not identify any circumstances suggesting that minutes from meetings that occurred around that time were altered.

Finally, the complainant asked OSA to review all 2017 meeting minutes without identifying a specific allegation of wrongdoing or "improper governmental activity."¹¹ Accordingly, OSA determined there was nothing to investigate regarding the 2017 meeting minutes.

FINDING 2 DETAILS & RECOMMENDATIONS

OSA found that the Town did not violate North Carolina's Public Records Act and that the allegations were unsubstantiated.

Local government agencies in North Carolina are subject to the requirements of North Carolina's Public Records Act, as found in Chapter 132 of the North Carolina General Statutes.¹² Under this statute, the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources (DNCR) is tasked with administering a management program for public records, including their retention and disposition.¹³ To that end, DNCR's Division of Archives and Records (State Archives) created records retention and disposition schedules to assist local government agencies in managing their records. Beginning in 2019, all local government agencies were encouraged to use the same General Records Schedule for Local Government Agencies, which can be found online.¹⁴ Local governments must approve use of the General Records Schedule before they may be used to authorize destruction of that local government's public records.

The complainant alleged that Town staff attempted to destroy accounts payable and billing records during a Town Council meeting on August 21, 2025. According to the Town's official 2025 Board of Commissioners Meeting Schedule, meetings are held on the second Monday of each month.¹⁵ August 21, 2025, was a Thursday, and OSA found no evidence of a Special Meeting or any meeting minutes recorded for that date.

⁸ *Id.*

⁹ [04.23.2025-Executed-Budget-Workshop-Meeting-Minutes-With-Attachments.pdf](#)

¹⁰ [Town Boards - Ayden; 04.23.2025-Executed-Budget-Workshop-Meeting-Minutes-With-Attachments.pdf](#)

¹¹ [G.S. § 147-64.6B](#)

¹² See generally [Chapter 132](#), Public Records, G.S. § 132-1, et seq.

¹³ [G.S. 132-8.1](#)

¹⁴ [Local Government Agencies | NC Archives; 2021 General Records Schedule: Local Government Agencies](#)

¹⁵ [2025-Meeting-Schedule-for-Town-Boards-and-Commissions.pdf](#)

However, Town Board meeting minutes from August 11, 2025, indicate that the Town Board and staff discussed the destruction of certain public records related to accounts receivable, accounts payable, and credit card statements that were more than five years old.¹⁶ At that meeting, the Town Clerk sought approval to destroy these records as they had satisfied the retention requirements outlined in the Town's 2021 General Records Schedule, which had been approved by the Town Board in April 2025. Although the Town Board's approval is not required for destruction of records pursuant to the Town's General Records Schedule, the minutes indicate that the Clerk nevertheless brought this item to the Town Board's attention because the Town had not disposed of any records for eight to ten years. Accordingly, the amount of records that were ready for disposal was voluminous resulting in limited storage space in Town facilities. The Clerk noted that it was appropriate to record this "significant" destruction in the Town Board's minutes, even though Town Board approval of the destruction was not required.

Accordingly, it appears this destruction of records complied with the Town's approved General Records Schedule and did not run afoul of the North Carolina Public Records Act.

FINDING 3 DETAILS & RECOMMENDATIONS

OSA found that the complainant's application for appointment to the Town's City Limits Planning Board was acknowledged and considered by the Town Board.

The Town's "Planning Department is responsible for administering land use regulations throughout the [T]own's planning and development regulation jurisdiction."¹⁷

The Town's agenda for the Town Board's August 11, 2025, meeting, references an Agenda Item entitled "City Limits Planning Board Appointment" and provides the following explanation and request for Town Board Action:

"The Planning Board has a current vacancy for a city limits, alternate, non-voting Planning Board member position. Two applications have been received for that vacancy. . . Review the attached application[s], and if an applicant is approved, appoint that applicant to the city limits, non-voting, alternate Planning Board member position."¹⁸

Additionally, bates stamped page 200 of the meeting agenda exhibits a copy of Doris L. Conner's application for Town of Ayden Boards and Commissions, dated and signed by the applicant on June 10, 2025. Bates stamped page 201 of the meeting agenda exhibits a copy of Josh Richardson's application for Town of Ayden Boards and Commissions, dated and electronically signed by the applicant on October 18, 2023.

The complainant's application was acknowledged, as evidenced by its insertion on the Town Board's meeting agenda. However, by unanimous vote of the Town Board, the complainant was not selected to serve on the City Limits Planning Board.

¹⁶ [8.11.25-Sunshine-List-Agenda-Packet-Updated.pdf](#) (p. 99 – 104)

¹⁷ [Planning - Ayden](#)

¹⁸ [8.11.25-Sunshine-List-Agenda-Packet-Updated.pdf](#) (p. 199 – 201)

Accordingly, there does not appear to be any indication that the Town Board failed to consider complainant's application.

NOTE TO READERS

We note that this investigation was not exhaustive and OSA cannot guarantee the absence of any wrongdoing. Furthermore, this investigation does not preclude the possibility of future allegations, whether similar or different in nature, from being subject to investigation or audit by OSA.

A copy of this Special Report has been provided to Town Leadership and is published online for review by the Town's residents and the citizens of North Carolina.

Upon publication of this Special Report, OSA shall formally notify the LGC in compliance with N.C.G.S. § 147-64.6(c)(14).