

**Dunn City Council**  
**Regular Meeting**  
**Tuesday, April 28, 2026**  
**6:30 p.m., Dunn Municipal Building**

## **Minutes**

**PRESENT:** Mayor William P. Elmore Jr., Mayor Pro Tem April Gaulden, Council Members J. Wesley Sills, Raquel McNeil, Billy N. Tart, Alan Hargis, and Dr. David L. Bradham.

*Also present: City Manager Justin Hembree, Assistant City Manager Billy R. Godwin, HR Director Connie Jernigan, Deputy Finance Director Alexa Abling, Senior Planner Stephanie Goodrich, Police Chief Lynn Gay, Parks and Recreation Director Brian McNeill, Public Works Director Dwayne Williams, Collection & Distribution Manager Billy Cottle, Wastewater Treatment Plant Manager Dukes, Code Enforcement Officer Cindy Rodriguez, Administrative Support Specialist Christy Sweeney, City Attorney Tilghman Pope and City Clerk Melissa Matti.*

### **CERTIFICATION OF QUORUM & CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor William P. Elmore, Jr., called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. A quorum was present.

Mayor Elmore welcomed those in attendance, including a group of AP students from Midway High School, who were present as observers. He noted the agenda was relatively brief for the evening.

### **INVOCATION**

The invocation was delivered by Reverend Floyd Ray, Pastor of Mt. Zion Missionary Baptist Church.

### **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Council Member Billy Tart led in the Pledge of Allegiance.

### **CONSIDERATION & APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA**

**Motion by Council Member Bradham, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Gaulden to approve the agenda as presented. The motion carried unanimously.**

### **PRESENTATIONS**

#### ***Child Abuse Prevention Month Proclamation***

#### ***Harnett County Children's Advocacy Center***

Mayor Elmore read a proclamation declaring April as Child Abuse Prevention Month in the City of Dunn.

Amanda Duncan, Center Director and primary forensic interviewer of the Harnett County Children's Advocacy Center (CAC), accepted the proclamation on behalf of the organization. Ms. Duncan introduced her colleagues: Clinician Rebeca Perez-Gonzalez, Family Advocate Dafne Suarez-Torres, and Medical Provider Sarah Kilmer. She noted that Harnett County CAC is one of ten (10) CACs across North Carolina, operating as part of a foster care community managed by South Mountain Children and Family Services. Ms. Duncan highlighted the CAC's evidence-based practices, including family advocacy, mental health services, on-site medical exams, and forensic interviews, all provided in a child-friendly environment. She specifically thanked the Dunn Police Department for its commitment as a member of Harnett County's multidisciplinary team.

Chief of Police Lynn Gay expressed the Police Department's appreciation for the CAC, noting that investigations of this nature could not be conducted without the support of the Advocacy Center. *A copy of the Child Abuse Prevention Month Proclamation (P2026-07) is incorporated into these minutes Attachment #1.*

#### ***Recognition of Kevin Moore for Leadership Training***

Chief Gay recognized Lieutenant Kevin Moore for his completion of the North Carolina Justice Academy Leadership Certificate Program, which required 400 hours of classroom training. Chief Gay presented Lieutenant Moore with a framed plaque from the Justice Academy. Chief Gay commended Lieutenant Moore not only for completing the program, but for consistently demonstrating its lessons in his role as the Department's Training and

Support Lieutenant, noting his willingness to go beyond the formal boundaries of his job description with a positive attitude and a clear understanding of the Department's mission. Lieutenant Moore's family was present at the meeting.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD**

#### **Jay Sills**

#### **206 West D Street, Erwin**

Mr. Sills addressed the Council during the Public Comment Period. He spoke about the long-standing drug problem in the area, referencing personal losses including the death of his son in 2018. He urged the Council, Police Department, and Federal and State agencies to intensify efforts targeting upper-level drug traffickers rather than focusing solely on street-level dealers. He called for greater use of drug interdiction tools such as wiretaps and increased early-morning enforcement in known drug areas. Mayor Elmore thanked Mr. Sills for his concern for the community as the three-minute time limit was concluded.

### **CONSENT AGENDA**

Mayor Elmore presented Consent Agenda Items, which included six (6) items:

- Approval of March 24, 2026 Regular Meeting Minutes
- Approval of April 14, 2026 Work Session Minutes
- 57th Annual Professional Municipal Clerk's Week Proclamation (May 3–9, 2026)
- Public Service Week Proclamation (May 3–9, 2026)
- NCDOT – 2026 Municipal Mowing Extension
- Adoption of the 2025 Cape Fear Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan

**Motion by Council Member Sills and seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Gaulden to approve the Consent Agenda (Items 3–8)** . The motion carried unanimously. *Copies of the Municipal Clerk's Week Proclamation (P2026-08), Public Service Week Proclamation (P2026-09), NCDOT 2026 Municipal Mowing Extension Request, and the Resolution Adopting the 2025 Cape Fear Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan (R2026-13) are incorporated into these minutes as Attachment #2.*

### **ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION & POSSIBLE ACTION**

#### ***Yard Waste Can – Follow Up***

Assistant City Manager Billy Godwin presented a follow-up on the Yard Waste Can contamination issue, which had been introduced at a prior Council meeting. He provided context, noting that Public Works crews were spending approximately two (2) days per week at the County landfill manually sorting contaminated yard waste, and that continued contamination threatened the County's Landfill Permit. The loss of that permit, he explained, would force the City to transport yard waste to a facility in Roseboro at significantly greater cost.

Mr. Godwin outlined a proposal submitted by Republic Services, the City's solid waste contractor, described as an "enhanced screening process." The plan involved three (3) components: placing informational decals on all yard waste cans to clarify what materials are permitted; adding a second crew member to walk behind the collection truck and manually inspect each can before it is emptied; and implementing a Two (2)-Strike Enforcement Policy, whereby a contaminated can would first receive a warning tag, and upon a second violation, the can would be removed from service. The additional cost to implement this program would be \$1.86 per unit per month — raising the current yard waste fee from \$4.15 to \$6.01 per month — for a total annual City cost of approximately \$72,000. Republic Services estimated the program could be operational within approximately two (2) weeks of approval.

Council Members raised several questions regarding the practical implementation of the policy. There was discussion about how the decals would be applied, how honest mistakes (such as accidentally placing a small plastic pot in a yard waste can) would be distinguished from deliberate abuse, and whether there would be any appeals process for residents who had their cans removed. City Manager Justin Hembree acknowledged that some degree of discretion would likely be necessary and that the second crew member would be expected to exercise reasonable discretion in the field — treating a stray piece of paper or a small planting container differently from multiple bags of household trash clearly placed in the can intentionally. Both Mr. Hembree and Mr. Godwin emphasized that yard waste service would still need to be provided to households whose cans were removed, as uncollected yard waste risks entering the storm drain system.

The Council also considered whether the City should take over yard waste collection in-house. Mr. Godwin assessed this option was not economically feasible, estimating that the City would need at minimum two (2) additional dedicated personnel (at a combined cost of at least \$120,000 per year) plus an additional vehicle, and that collection would take the full week rather than Republic Services' current two-day schedule.

Council Member Alan Hargis expressed reservations about increasing the contract cost mid-term, arguing that Republic Services, as an experienced contractor working in multiple municipalities, should have anticipated a certain level of contamination when pricing the original contract. He stated he was not opposed to addressing the problem but questioned the fairness of passing the cost on to residents to correct the behavior of a relatively small number of violators, estimated at around 30 to 40 households out of more than 3,400 units.

Mayor Pro Tem April Gauden acknowledged the difficulty of the decision, but ultimately supported the proposal, emphasizing that the risk of losing landfill access — and the far greater costs that would follow — outweighed her reluctance to raise fees. She also expressed appreciation for the work of Public Works Director Williams and his crew, who had been responding to the landfill regularly to address the contamination.

The Council agreed that a public education effort — such as a press release clearly explaining what constitutes yard waste — would be an important first step upon adoption of the plan.

**Motion Council Member Tart and seconded by Council Member Bradham to adopt the enhanced yard waste screening plan as proposed by Republic Services and staff, including the associated fee schedule modification and contract amendments.** The motion carried unanimously. *A copy of the Republic Services Enhanced Yard Waste Screening Plan is incorporated into these minutes Attachment #3.*

## **REPORTS & UPDATES**

### ***City Manager's Report***

#### ***Data Centers***

City Manager Hembree briefed the Council on the emerging issue of Data Centers and how local governments across North Carolina are responding. He noted that neighboring jurisdictions — including Harnett County, Cumberland County, and several municipalities in Wake County — are considering or have already adopted temporary moratoriums on Data Center Development while they study the issue and update their land use regulations.

Mr. Hembree explained that the rapid growth in demand for data centers, driven by cryptocurrency mining, artificial intelligence, and widespread cloud data storage, has created pressure on communities that were not well-prepared for this type of development in their zoning ordinances. He highlighted two (2) primary concerns: data centers can place severe strain on the electrical grid, and they can require enormous volumes of water — potentially one (1) million gallons or more per day — for cooling systems, which could significantly affect the city's water infrastructure capacity.

He further noted that most Unified Development Ordinances (UDOs) adopted under G.S. 160D did not clearly define data centers, leaving communities without clear permitting standards or zoning criteria. Mr. Hembree proposed that staff present a more detailed briefing at the next work session, including an option to adopt a 12-month moratorium that would allow the planning board and staff time to develop appropriate definitions, permitting requirements, and standards to be incorporated into the UDO. He emphasized the importance of acting proactively, noting that if a data center application were received without adequate regulations in place, the City could be in a difficult position.

Council Members expressed general support for further study. Council Member Hargis noted that some data centers are being designed to generate their own power and water supply, which could mitigate infrastructure impacts. Discussion also touched on the broader issue of rising electricity costs and the desire to engage the state legislature regarding utility regulation. The Council reached consensus to place the data center moratorium discussion on the agenda for the upcoming work session.

### ***Downtown Development Director***

City Manager Hembree announced that an offer for the Downtown Development Director position had been accepted. The incoming director, Sandra Osmond, has served as a Downtown Director for eight (8) years in Cuervo, Texas — a community of comparable size to Dunn — and has a background in Historic Preservation Planning and Community Communications, both of which align closely with the responsibilities of the position. Ms. Osmond is expected to begin in July, as she will be relocating from Texas. Mr. Hembree noted that she has family in the Raleigh area and expressed enthusiasm about her upcoming start.

### ***May 12<sup>th</sup> Budget Workshop***

City Manager Hembree reminded the Council that the Budget Workshop is scheduled for May 12, beginning at 4:00 PM, with the Regular Work Session to follow at 6:30 PM. A 30-minute dinner break will be provided between the two (2) sessions.

### **FINANCIAL REPORT**

Deputy Finance Director Alexa Abling presented the March Financial Report in the absence of Finance Director Cary McNallan. She reported the following highlights:

- **Cash and Investment Balances:** Total balances across all funds stood at about \$15,000,000, compared to about \$10,000,000 at the same time last year. The increase reflects the receipt of \$3,300,000 for the Water Treatment Plant Land Purchase and several State grant reimbursements for Water and Sewer projects. The City also holds a balance of about \$5,200,000 in the East Side Pump Station Construction account.
- **Property Taxes:** FY 2026 year-to-date Property Tax Revenues totaled about \$5,600,000 against a total estimated levy of about \$5,900,000 for the year.
- **Sales Taxes:** January receipts of about \$297,000 were about \$28,000 above the same period last year. Year-to-date Sales Tax Revenue stands at about \$2,300,000, or 67% of the \$3,400,000 budget.
- **Building Permits and Development Fees:** March collections of about \$14,000 brought the year-to-date total to about \$170,000, or 92% of the \$184,000 budget — well ahead of the same period last year at about \$118,000.

### **DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS & PROJECT UPDATES**

#### ***Code Enforcement***

Code Enforcement Officer Cindy Rodriguez provided a brief update, presenting before-and-after photographs of two recent enforcement actions. The first involved a property at 109 Carolina Drive, where junk and debris, including trailers, had accumulated; the property owner came into compliance and cleaned the site thoroughly. The second involved a more extensive case at 307 West Barrington Street, where significant debris and junk required tenants to vacate while the property was remediated. The owner acted responsibly, cleaned up the property, and ultimately removed a barn from the site as well. Mr. Hembree added that the season for grass and weed enforcement was underway, and that Code Enforcement staff were actively managing a high volume of related cases across the City.

#### ***Paving***

Public Works Director Dwayne Williams reported that the City's paving project is progressing well and on schedule. Streets recently completed include North Wilmington Avenue, North Wayne Avenue, and Jernigan Tier. Mr. Williams noted that by retaining a base layer rather than milling all the way to the subgrade, the project is conserving asphalt tonnage while improving pavement durability. Coordination with adjacent businesses, including EMS, has gone smoothly. Paving is expected to resume Thursday.

Mayor Pro Tem Gaulden raised a question from a local business regarding the timeline for Broad Street. City Manager Hembree confirmed that Broad Street is included in the project scope and that staff will determine the exact timing once the remaining contract tonnage is assessed. He indicated an answer would be available by the next work session.

### **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Mayor Elmore made the following announcements:

- The Committee of 100 is celebrating its 40th anniversary at the Old Magnolia School Building on Thursday, from 11:00 AM to 1:00 PM. The public is invited to attend and tour the building. The Committee of 100 is a local small business organization that supports new business development.

- The Budget Work Session is scheduled for May 12 at 4:00 PM, followed by the regular work session at 6:30 PM.
- The next Regular Work Session is scheduled for Tuesday, May 12<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 p.m.
- The next Regular Meeting is scheduled for May 26<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 p.m.
- The City has several board vacancies; interested residents are encouraged to apply.

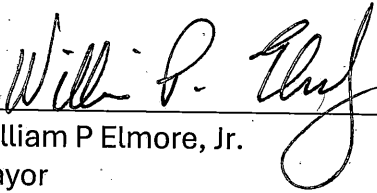
City Manager Hembree announced a City Employee Family Picnic to be held on Friday, May 15 at 4:30 PM at Tart Park. The event is open to all City employees and their families and will feature food and activities. Mayor Elmore noted that City Manager Hembree — a Competition Barbecue Cook and Certified Judge for the North Carolina Pork Council — would be among those preparing food for the event.

Council Member Hargis inquired about the status of the Water Tower Project. City Manager Hembree reported that the project is on schedule and on budget. Foundation work and concrete pad installation are currently underway, and the tower structure is expected to begin rising visibly within the next couple of months.

**ADJOURNMENT**

**Motion by Council Member Sills and seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Gaulden to adjourn the meeting.** The motion carried unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:52 p.m.

  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 William P Elmore, Jr.  
 Mayor

Attest:   
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Melissa R. Matti  
 City Clerk

