

Dunn City Council
Work Session
Tuesday, May 12, 2026
6:30 p.m., Dunn Municipal Building

Minutes

PRESENT: Mayor William P. Elmore Jr., Mayor Pro Tem April Gaulden, Council Members Raquel McNeil, Alan Hargis, and Billy N. Tart.

ABSENT: Council Members J. Wesley Sills and Dr. David L. Bradham

ALSO PRESENT: *City Manager Justin Hembree, Assistant City Manager Billy R. Godwin, Finance Director Cary McNallan, Senior Planner Stephanie Goodrich, Police Chief Lynn Gay, Administrative Support Specialist Christy Sweeney, City Attorney Tilghman Pope and City Clerk Melissa Matti.*

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor William P. Elmore, Jr. called the City Council Work Session to order on Tuesday, May 12, 2026, at 6:30 PM at the Dunn Municipal Building, 401 East Broad Street, Dunn, North Carolina.

INVOCATION & PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The invocation and Pledge of Allegiance were led by Council Member Alan Hargis.

CONSIDERATION & APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Mayor Elmore called for a motion to approve the agenda as presented.

Motion by Council Member Tart and seconded by Council Member Hargis to approve the agenda as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

CONSENT AGENDA

- Approval of April 28, 2026 Regular Meeting Minutes
- 66th Annual Public Works Week (May 17–23, 2026) Proclamation. *A copy of the Public Works Week Proclamation is incorporated into these minutes as Attachment #1.*

Mayor Elmore noted that two (2) Council members were unable to attend due to prior obligations, but that a quorum was present. Both Consent Agenda items were brought forward together for approval.

Motion by Mayor Pro Tem Gaulden and seconded by Council Member Hargis to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. The motion carried.

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION & CALENDARING FOR MAY 26, 2026

Designated Truck Routes & No Through Trucks - Phase 2

Lieutenant Apelles Hart presented Phase 2 of the City's truck route review, building on the prior Work Session discussion. He explained that the presentation covered three (3) areas: the Proposed Designated Truck Routes, the No-Through-Truck Routes, and a Proposed City Ordinance Amendment.

As a recap from Phase 1, Lieutenant Hart noted that the City currently has twenty-nine (29) outdated Designated Truck Routes, and that under the existing codification, any route that is not specifically designated a Designated Truck Route is essentially a No-Through-Truck Route.

Proposed Designated Truck Route

Lieutenant Hart presented a map showing a single proposed Designated Truck Route, depicted in yellow, running north-to-south and east-to-west through Dunn. This route mirrors the secondary alternate route already established by the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) for use in emergencies such as an I-95 closure, so the City adopted it rather than creating a new designation. Red lines on the map indicated streets where No-Through-Truck signage is already posted.

Council Discussion on Route Concerns

Council Member Hargis raised a recurring concern about South Wilson Avenue, which is not currently on the No-Through-Truck list but has been a source of repeated complaints. He described a pattern of trucks turning onto Wilson Avenue to bypass the congested US-301 intersection, traveling down to Pearsall Street, and in the process repeatedly damaging cable lines along the route. He noted that he had previously requested no-truck access on that street. Lieutenant Hart explained that the purpose of the ordinance amendment is precisely to address such situations—once the new framework is in place, officers will be able to properly enforce the law and issue citations on any street not on the designated route, absent a legitimate delivery reason.

Council Member Billy Tart raised a safety concern about the proposed route directing trucks to turn left onto Granville Street to access US-301, noting that the intersection at Granville and Ellis Avenue is not well-suited for large tractor-trailers making that turn, particularly under congested conditions. He suggested that a safer alternative would be to designate Jonesboro Road as a Designated Truck rather than Granville Street since that street runs through a residential corridor. Lieutenant Hart acknowledged the concern and agreed to explore that option with NCDOT, noting that any modification to the route along a DOT-maintained road would require NCDOT's approval. City Manager Justin Hembree clarified that the approach would likely be to request NCDOT add Jonesboro Road as an alternate truck corridor in addition to the existing US-301 route.

Enforcement

The Council asked how officers would determine whether a truck had a legitimate reason to be on a non-designated street. Lieutenant Hart explained that officers would stop trucks found on non-designated routes and ask for documentation. Truck drivers are required to carry logs indicating their origin and destination, and if no delivery or legitimate business purpose can be established for that street, a citation may be issued. He noted that enforcement activity, once begun, tends to produce results quickly, as word spreads among drivers.

Ordinance Amendment

City Manager Hembree summarized the overall intent of the amendment: to correct a historical misunderstanding in which streets were codified as designated truck routes when the intent was to identify delivery areas—effectively making almost every City street a designated truck route. The proposed amendment, drafted by staff, would establish a single designated truck route, after which all other streets would be inherently no-through-truck routes subject to enforcement. The amendment also updates the definition of "commercial vehicle" to align with NCDOT's standards, avoiding the need to separately update the City's own definitions going forward.

Lieutenant Hart confirmed he would follow up with NCDOT regarding the potential addition of Jonesboro Road to the truck route. No formal action was taken; the item is calendared for the May 26, 2026 regular meeting.

Rezoning / Map Amendment (RZ-26-02)

809 & 811 E Cumberland Street

Planner Goodrich presented a preview of a rezoning request for the properties at 809 and 811 East Cumberland Street, proposing a map amendment from Office and Institutional (O&I) to General Commercial (C-3), consistent with the surrounding commercial corridor. The Planning Board has reviewed the request and forwarded it with a unanimous recommendation of approval. The two (2) lots have been recombined into a single parcel, and site plans are currently undergoing Technical Review Committee review.

City Manager Hembree clarified that no action was requested at this meeting; the item is scheduled for a formal Public Hearing and full presentation at the May 26, 2026 Regular meeting.

Mayor Elmore expressed his primary concern regarding traffic, specifically the need for a turn lane in front of the subject property, drawing a comparison to the backup issues experienced at the Starbucks location across US-421. Ms. Goodrich confirmed that NCDOT has been invited to comment as part of the site plan review process, though a response has not yet been received.

Data Center Discussion

City Manager Hembree presented a staff overview of data centers, their characteristics, and the emerging regulatory landscape, noting that research for the presentation was largely conducted by staff member Alex Abling.

Overview and Context

A data center, as defined for purposes of this discussion, refers to the physical building that houses and stores data—not the data itself. Data centers range from small server rooms to large hyperscale facilities exceeding 10,000 square feet, consuming megawatts of electricity and significant volumes of water. Examples of large-scale facilities already operating in North Carolina include Google's data center in Lenoir, an Apple facility in Catawba County, and a Facebook facility in Bradford County.

Benefits and Concerns

Staff presented both sides of the issue. Potential benefits include property tax revenue (particularly from the building and equipment), construction-phase employment, possible community infrastructure contributions, and the potential to attract ancillary tech industry activity. Concerns noted included significant environmental impact (diesel generator exhaust, PFAS), very high water consumption for cooling systems, high energy demand and grid strain, a notably low number of permanent jobs relative to building size, and localized noise and light pollution. Staff cited a Federal study acknowledging that the true long-term impact of data centers remains under-researched due to the novelty and pace of the land use type.

Legislative and Regulatory Landscape

At the Federal level, the Clean Cloud Act (HR 6179) has been introduced to place energy accountability standards on data centers. At the State level, Bills under consideration include one that would remove tax incentives for data centers and the Ratepayer Resource Protection Act, which addresses who bears the cost of grid expansion needed to serve these facilities. Both State Bills are in committee.

Locally, City Manager Hembree noted that North Carolina General Statute 160D allows municipalities and counties to adopt temporary development moratoriums for the purpose of studying a land use and developing appropriate regulations. Five counties in central North Carolina have already adopted moratoriums, including Harnett County, which acted the week prior. Several municipalities including Apex, Wendell, and Durham have also adopted moratoriums, and Cumberland County is actively discussing one.

Current Status in Dunn

Based on staff analysis, approximately twenty (20) parcels within Dunn's planning jurisdiction could currently meet conditions for a data center under the existing ordinance, primarily within the I-100 (Heavy Industrial) zoning district, assuming a minimum of ten (10) acres and a 500-foot buffer from residential areas. City Manager Hembree stressed that because data centers are not explicitly listed in Dunn's Unified Development Ordinance, staff is currently relying on interpretation of other uses—and that if a qualifying applicant walked into the Planning Department tomorrow, there may be limited grounds to deny a zoning permit. Any approval would also require a public utilities review to ensure adequate water supply capacity. City Attorney Tilghman Pope confirmed that Harnett County's moratorium does not apply within the City of Dunn's jurisdiction.

Council Discussion and Direction

Mayor Elmore expressed support for a 6-month moratorium, citing concern that allowing a data center to consume industrial land and City Water resources for a use that generates very few permanent jobs would undermine the City's Economic Development priorities. Council Member Hargis agreed and asked about counties that have chosen to permit data centers. City Manager Hembree indicated those decisions were likely driven by the significant addition to the tax base, particularly in more rural counties, and noted that at least one recent attempt to locate a data center near Tarboro was denied and has since resulted in litigation.

City Attorney Pope noted that a moratorium under 160D would require a Public Hearing before formal adoption, and that it would buy staff the time needed to properly address a land use that is not currently defined in the City's ordinance. He confirmed that the Council could lift the moratorium at any time. The consensus of the Council was to direct staff to prepare a Moratorium Ordinance for consideration, with a Public Hearing to be calendared

for the May 26, 2026 Regular meeting if the timeline permits. *A copy of the Data Center Presentation is incorporated into these minutes as Attachment #2.*

**Dunn Representative for
Harnett County Library Board of Trustee**

City Manager Hembree introduced Dunn Branch Library Manager Leslie Schultz, who was present to provide an annual update on library operations. He noted that the anticipated appointment recommendation for a seat on the Harnett County Library Board of Trustees was withdrawn because the prospective appointee was no longer available, and that portion of the agenda item was deferred.

Ms. Schultz, who has served as Dunn Branch Manager since April 21, 2025, provided the following statistical highlights for the past year:

- Circulations: 47,977 items circulated, including books, magazines, audiobooks, DVDs, and various specialty kits.
- Patron Visits: 43,396 visits to the branch.
- Programs: 261 programs held across all age groups, with 4,094 total program attendees. Programming included adult and youth cooking classes, book clubs, fitness classes, computer literacy classes, and story times.
- Resources: The branch offers access to Libby (digital books and audiobooks), NC LIVE databases, Northstar Digital Literacy, Ancestry.com, and the Thousand Books Before Kindergarten program.

Ms. Schultz thanked the Council and City staff for improvements made to the library facility over the past year, including bathroom upgrades, a new HVAC unit, a ramp for the book drop, parking lot restriping, grounds maintenance, and pest control. Upcoming branch events include a screening of the Paul Green documentary *Playmaker* on May 29, a Summer Reading Program kickoff on June 1, and a book sale at the main Lillington branch on June 5–6.

REPORTS & UPDATES

City Manager's Report

Upcoming Agenda Items

City Manager Hembree noted that the May 26, 2026 Regular Meeting agenda is relatively light, as a Special Use Permit previously expected for that meeting has been delayed to June. The primary substantive item anticipated is a budget discussion, as the Council works toward finalizing and publishing the formal recommended budget. He indicated he would be reaching out to Council members to schedule additional two (2) -by-two (2) Budget Meetings. Mayor Elmore noted that a Special Workshop Meeting could be called if needed.

Highway 301 South Elevated Storage Tank

Assistant City Manager Godwin provided an update on the construction of the half-million-gallon elevated water storage tank on Highway 301 South, which will be the City's fourth water storage tank. Construction is divided into five (5) phases: preconstruction, fabrication, tank construction, painting, and punch list.

The preconstruction phase, including foundation work, was completed in March 2026. The fabrication phase—during which tank components are manufactured off-site—is scheduled for June and July. A gap of several months then exists on the contractor's schedule before the on-site tank construction phase begins in October, with completion expected in mid-January 2027. Painting and punch list work would follow, with full project completion anticipated in early spring 2027.

Assistant City Manager Godwin noted that the tank was originally scheduled for completion in fall 2026. Staff has engaged the project's managing engineering firm to seek an explanation from the tank contractor, Phoenix, for the delays and the gaps in the schedule. Council Member Hargis asked whether a penalty provision existed for delays. Mr. Godwin confirmed there is a liquidated damages clause of \$2,000 per day of delay, and that staff is actively raising that provision with the contractor's team to determine whether it may apply.

West Broad Street Paving

City Manager Hembree addressed questions the Council has been fielding from residents regarding the status of West Broad Street paving. He explained that the paving project is

currently on a planned two-week pause and then work will resume. However, the West Broad Street segment requires a more complex approach than a standard resurfacing due to the need for curb and gutter work and issues related to truck loading areas in front of businesses such as Sherwin-Williams.

As a first step, the City has engaged East Coast Land Surveying to conduct a Survey and Topographic Assessment of the corridor. City Manager Hembree explained that over years of paving activity, the road surface has likely crept outside the original right-of-way, and a precise survey is needed to determine the correct road alignment and right-of-way boundaries before any reconstruction work is designed. The Topo Survey will also help address existing stormwater drainage concerns in the area. Once survey data is available, staff plans to consult with the contractor, Holland, on the best approach for reconstructing the segment.

Family Day Picnic

City Manager Hembree reminded Council members and staff of the City's Annual Family Day Picnic scheduled for Friday, beginning at 4:30 PM. Activities include cornhole, an egg race, and a home run derby at one of the City's baseball fields.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mayor Elmore announced that Fann Family Medical Center has opened on US-421, in the building formerly known locally as the "purple building," across from the former Motorcycle Madness location. The facility has been substantially renovated. A Grand Opening Ribbon Cutting is scheduled for Wednesday, May 13, 2026 at 10:00 AM.

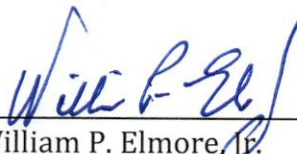
Mayor Elmore also reminded the Council that:

- the next Regular meeting is scheduled for May 26, 2026, and
- the next Work Session is scheduled for June 9, 2026.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Council Member Hargis and seconded to adjourn. The motion carried unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:35 p.m.



 William P. Elmore Jr.
 Mayor

Attest:



 Melissa R. Matti
 City Clerk

