

# Dunn City Council

## Work Session

Tuesday, August 12, 2025  
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, and Alan Hargis.

**ABSENT:** Council Member Dr. David L. Bradham

*Also present: City Manager Justin B. Hembree, Assistant City Manager Billy R. Godwin, Finance Director Cary McNallan, Chief of Police Cary Jackson, Human Resources Director Connie Jernigan, Administrative Support Specialists Christy Sweeney and Amber Groves, City Attorney Tilghman Pope, and City Clerk Melissa R. Matti.*

### CALL TO ORDER:

Mayor William P. Elmore, Jr. called the work session to order at 6:30 PM on August 12, 2025. He welcomed everyone in attendance and noted that Council Member Bradham was absent due to another commitment. Mayor Elmore also mentioned that the agenda format had been modified to simplify and reduce paperwork for staff.

### INVOCATION & PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

Mayor Pro Tem Gaulden led the invocation and then led the Pledge of Allegiance.

### CONSIDERATION & APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA:

***Motion made by Council Member Sills, seconded by Council Member Hargis, to approve the agenda as presented.*** Motion unanimously approved.

### CONSENT AGENDA:

Mayor Elmore stated that consent items A through D were before the Council for consideration.

- A. July 22, 2025 Regular Meeting Minutes
- B. July 28, 2025 Special Called Meeting Minutes
- C. Special Event Permit – Dunn Elementary School Festival
- D. Special Event Permit – Chalk Fest

***Motion made by Council Member Sills and seconded by Council Member McNeil to approve all Consent Agenda items as presented.*** Motion unanimously approved.

### ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION & POSSIBLE ACTION:

#### A. Future Use of Council Chambers for District Court

City Manager Justin Hembree introduced the item, explaining that the Council Chambers has been used as a venue for District Court in Harnett County for many years, but the frequency of use has declined to only once per month.

Assistant City Manager Billy Godwin provided historical context, noting that discussions about ending court sessions in Dunn had occurred previously but didn't progress. He explained that about a year ago, he began conversations with Clerk of Superior Court Renee Whittington and Chief District Court Judge Frank Wood about revisiting the idea. Judge Wood is now ready to move forward with closing district court operations in Dunn.

Mr. Godwin clarified that while Council approval is not technically required as this is the Chief Judge's decision, Judge Wood wanted the Council's input. Representatives from the Clerk's office, District Attorney's office, and Sheriff's department were present to provide information.



Police Chief Jackson explained that having court in Dunn requires the department to assign two (2) officers to work the door, supplementing deputies from the Sheriff's office. This removes officers from patrol or investigative duties, sometimes for an entire day.

District Attorney Suzanne Matthews described logistical challenges with the current arrangement, noting that everything is now digital and court personnel must bring and set up technology each time. She also mentioned that inmates aren't transported to Dunn for court appearances, so cases involving people in custody must be heard in Lillington anyway. She added that many people mistakenly go to Lillington on Dunn court days, creating confusion.

Clerk of Court Renee Whittenton confirmed these logistical issues, noting particular challenges with network connections that sometimes prevent clerk staff from accessing court records. She requested that if court is eliminated in Dunn, the City maintain network connectivity for emergency purposes, as Dunn is designated as an alternate court location in their continuity of operations plan.

A representative from the Sheriff's Department stated that providing security for court in Dunn requires two deputies to be pulled from other duties.

After discussion, the Council considered taking action.

***Motion by Council Member Hargis and seconded by Council Member Tart to direct staff to inform all relevant parties that the City has no objection to City Hall no longer being used as a venue for Harnett County District Court, with the amendment that network connectivity be maintained for emergency purposes.*** Motion unanimously approved.

#### **B. USDA Loan - Vehicle/Equipment**

##### ***Public Hearing***

Mayor Elmore opened a Public Hearing regarding a USDA loan application at 6:48 p.m.

Finance Director Cary McNallan explained that staff was requesting Council approval to apply for a USDA loan for a boom truck and cab tractor, both of which were approved in the FY26 budget. He noted that USDA loans typically include \$25,000-\$50,000 in grant money that does not have to be repaid. If approved, the loan would likely be for ten (10) years with annual payments of approximately \$37,000.

Hearing no comments from the public or additional questions from Council members, Mayor Elmore closed the Public Hearing at 6:50 p.m.

##### ***Decision***

***Motion by Mayor Pro Tem Gaulden and seconded by Council Member Tart to approve City staff to submit an application to USDA for financing the FY26 Equipment Purchases.*** Motion unanimously approved.

#### **C. Funding of Police and Inspection Vehicles**

Finance Director Cary McNallan reported that the City's February USDA loan application for five (5) police vehicles had been denied. He explained that USDA will not approve applications if local banks can provide loans with equal or better terms, and in this case, local bank rates were lower than USDA's 4.8% rate.

Mr. McNallan recommended using cash reserves to pay for the five (5) police vehicles (\$304,975) and a Planning/Inspections vehicle (\$50,000) instead of seeking financing. He noted that the City's cash reserves are currently earning approximately 4.2% interest, making it more economical to use cash than to borrow at higher rates.

Council members discussed the recommendation, with Council Member Tart asking if there was any way to still get the USDA grant without taking the loan. Mr. McNallan confirmed this was not possible, as the grant is tied to a USDA loan.



***Motion made by Mayor Pro Tem Gaulden and seconded by Council Member Sills, to approve the Capital Budget Ordinance Amendments and the Budget Amendment.*** Motion unanimously approved. *A copy of the Capital Project Ordinance Amendment – FY26 Vehicle & Equipment Purchases Project (O2025-17), Capital Project Ordinance Amendment FY25 Vehicle and Equipment Purchases Project (O2025-18), and Budget Amendment (BA-2025-1) are attached as Attachment #1.*

**D. FY26 Fee Schedule Revisions**

Finance Director Cary McNallan presented two (2) corrections needed for the FY26 Fee Schedule: a correction to the Peddling Permit fee, which should reflect three (3) different categories with different fees rather than a single \$20 fee; and the addition of a Precious Metal Dealer Permit fee of \$180 annually, plus a \$10 Registration fee per employee.

Council members discussed the Peddling Permit, asking about its purpose and application. Police Chief Jackson clarified that the permits are for people selling door-to-door, and that officers inform peddlers of the requirement when they encounter them. She noted that the permits are valid for thirty (30) days, and the department is careful about issuing them due to neighborhood nuisance concerns.

There were also questions about the Precious Metal Dealer Permit, which applies to jewelry stores and pawn shops selling precious metals, as required by state statute.

***Motion made by Council Member Hargis and seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Gaulden to approve the Revised Fiscal Year 2026 Fee Schedule as noted in red in the attached draft.*** Motion carried, with Council Member Sills voting in opposition. *A copy of the Revised Fiscal Year 2026 Fee Schedule attached as Attachment #2.*

**E. Capital Project Ordinance Amendment and Budget Amendment for CDBG-1 Sewer Collection System Project**

Finance Director Cary McNallan explained that the CDBG Sewer Project had been completed, but there was a funding gap of \$6,227.08. He explained that the project had been scaled down from its original scope due to higher-than-expected bids, resulting in some early engineering costs not being eligible for CDBG funding. Mr. McNallan requested a Budget Amendment to transfer funds from the water and sewer fund to close out the project.

***Motion made by Council Member Sills and seconded by Council Member McNeil to approve the CDBG-1 Sewer Collection System Capital Project Ordinance Amendment and related Budget Amendment.*** Motion unanimously approved. *A copy of the Capital Project Ordinance CDBG-1 Sewer Collection System Project (O2025-19) and Budget Amendment (BA-2025-49) are attached as Attachment #3.*

**F. Personnel Policy Amendment – Exempt Employees Working During States of Emergency**

Human Resources Director Connie Jernigan explained a Proposed Amendment to the Personnel Policy regarding Overtime Pay for Exempt Employees During Declared States of Emergency. She clarified that exempt employees (primarily department heads) do not normally receive overtime pay, but the amendment would allow them to receive their normal rate of pay (not time-and-a-half) for hours worked over 40 during a declared state of emergency.

Manager Hembree noted that this amendment was partly due to lessons learned from Hurricane Helene, as FEMA will reimburse overtime pay for exempt employees if the policy is in place before the disaster occurs. He emphasized that the policy language cannot include conditions related to FEMA reimbursement.

Council members discussed whether the emergency declaration needed to come from the Governor or if a local declaration by the mayor would suffice. Mr. Hembree clarified that while the mayor can declare a local state of emergency, FEMA reimbursement typically follows Governor-declared emergencies.



***Motion made by Council Member Hargis and seconded by Council Member Tart to approve the Personnel Policy Amendment for Exempt Employees Working During States of Emergency.*** Motion unanimously approved. *A copy of the Personnel Policy Amendment for Exempt Employees Working During States of Emergency is attached as Attachment #4.*

**ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

Mayor Elmore announced:

- The State of the City event hosted by the Dunn Area Chamber of Commerce is scheduled for August 21, 2025, from 11:30 AM to 1:00 PM at the Dunn Community Building.
- The next regular meeting of the Dunn City Council is scheduled for August 26, 2025, at 6:30 PM.
- The next work session is scheduled for Tuesday, September 9, 2025.

Before moving to closed session, Council Member Sills publicly thanked City staff for their diligent work, noting issues faced by neighboring municipalities that had appeared in the news.

**CLOSED SESSION:**

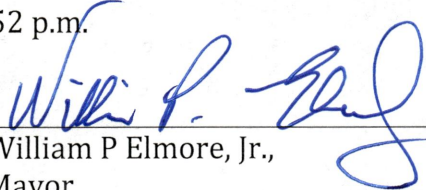
***7:24 p.m. - Motion made by Council Member Hargis and seconded by Council Member Sills to enter closed session in accordance with N.C.G.S. 143-318.11(a)(3) to meet with the City Attorney to protect attorney-client privilege.*** Motion unanimously approved.

7:50 p.m. – Closed session ended.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

***With no further business to discuss, a motion was made by Council Member Sills and seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Gaulden to adjourn the meeting at 7:52 p.m.*** Motion unanimously approved.

Mayor Elmore adjourned the meeting at 7:52 p.m.

  
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William P Elmore, Jr.,  
Mayor

ATTEST:

  
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Melissa R. Matti  
City Clerk

