

City Council
Regular Meeting
Tuesday, August 25, 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, 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, Water Plant Manager Ian Stroud, Code Enforcement Officer Cindy Rodriguez, Administrative Support Specialist Christy Sweeney, City Attorney Tilghman Pope and City Clerk Melissa Matti.

CERTIFICATION OF A QUORUM & CALL TO ORDER

Mayor William P. Elmore, Jr. called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM on Tuesday, August 26, 2026 and established that a quorum was present. He welcomed everyone in attendance and asked attendees to silence their cell phones to avoid interruptions during the meeting.

INVOCATION

The invocation was led by Pastor Grover Blackburn of North Clinton Avenue Baptist Church.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Mayor Pro Tem April Gaulden.

CONSIDERATION & APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Motion by Council Member Dr. David Bradham, second by Mayor Pro Tem April Gaulden to remove Item #3 from the Consent Agenda - Final Plat – Fairground Road near Holly Avenue as it was not ready for approval. Motion Passed unanimously.

PRESENTATIONS

Proclamation Dafford Funeral Home, Inc.

Celebrating 80 Years

Mayor Elmore recognized the Dafford family and invited Bo Dafford to join him at the podium. Mayor Elmore introduced Bo's family and staff members who were in attendance, noting the family's deep ties to the Dunn community, Bo's history as an athlete, his faithful church membership, and his years of service on the City Council and as Mayor Pro Tem.

Mayor Elmore read the proclamation on behalf of the City, which recognized Dafford Funeral Home, Incorporated for celebrating 80 years of service to the Dunn community. The proclamation noted that the business was founded in 1946 by the late Walter Dafford, a World War II veteran, and his wife Fannie Dafford, a school teacher. It further recognized their son, Dallas L. "Bo" Dafford, Sr., a United States Army Vietnam Veteran, who served ten (10) years as Mayor Pro Tempore on the Dunn City Council, and acknowledged the family's extensive service on National Mortuary Association board, Local Banking and Nonprofit Board, and countless hours of volunteer community service. The proclamation concluded with congratulations and appreciation extended on behalf of the Mayor, the City Council, and the residents of the City of Dunn.

Bo Dafford offered brief remarks, expressing gratitude to the community for its longstanding embrace of his family.

The Council recessed briefly following the presentation to allow attendees to depart before reconvening. A copy of the **Proclamation Dafford Funeral Home, Inc. - Celebrating 80 Years (P2026-15)** is incorporated into these minutes as Attachment #1.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Derek Davis

No Address was provided.

Mr. Davis addressed the Council during the Public Comment Period. Mr. Davis stated that he had been issued a Trespass Notice from the Municipal Building after visiting the City Manager's office to file a Public Records Request under G.S.132 concerning the Dunn Police Department. He indicated that he had not yet received the requested records and expressed concern that City staff had directed Police Officers to arrest him should he return to the building, which he argued placed officers in a legally compromising position. Mr. Davis contended that requesting public records and recording public officers in the course of their duties constitutes legitimate business and is a constitutionally protected activity. He urged the Council to review G.S.132 with the City Manager and cautioned that withholding public records constitutes a Class 1 misdemeanor. He commented that City Manager Justin Hembree and City Attorney Tilghman Pope were not in attendance [*they were both sitting in their usual places on either side of the Mayor with their name plaques in front of them*]. He also noted his intention to pursue litigation in District Court if the matter was not resolved. Mayor Elmore thanked Mr. Davis the way he conducted himself and acknowledged his comments.

CONSENT AGENDA

Mayor Elmore presented the Consent Agenda Item, which consisted of:

- Approval of August 11, 2026 Work Session Minutes

Motion by Council Member J. Wesley Sills, second by Mayor Pro Tem April Gaulden to approve the standalone Consent Agenda Item. All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION & POSSIBLE ACTION

Ordinance Text Amendment

OA-26-01

Public Hearing

Mayor Elmore opened the Public Hearing at 6:53 p.m. and invited City Manager Justin Hembree to provide an overview. City Manager Hembree noted that the amendments were primarily technical or administrative in nature and had been discussed at the previous work session. The outstanding issue carried over from that session concerned the approval authority for Final Plats.

Senior Planner Stephanie Goodrich presented the proposed Text Amendments to the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO). The proposed changes included the following:

Technical and Administrative Changes:

A note to be added to the top of the Public Notice Table, with a corresponding footnote removed and its language relocated to the neighborhood meeting section for clarity; a correction to the use table removing a duplicate listing of "research and development" to eliminate conflicting zoning classifications; a language update in the Use Table to reflect a newly added definition in Article 11; the deletion of a section regulating parking placement for residential duplexes in order to conform with State regulations under G.S. 160D-72; and a correction of a typographical error in the home occupation section changing a reference from "accessory structure" to "primary structure" for regulating the allowable floor area percentage (maximum 25 percent of gross floor area).

Definition Addition:

A definition for "correctional, probation, or parole facility" was proposed to be added to Article 11, to define that proposed use placed in the amended Use Table.

Process Change:

Major Subdivision and Final Plat Approval Authority: The most substantive proposed change would shift approval authority for major subdivisions and final plats from the Planning Board and City Council, respectively, to the Administrative level (the Director or staff), with the Technical Review Committee continuing to vet both. Currently, major subdivisions are reviewed by the Technical Review Committee and then approved by the Planning Board, and

Final Plats proceed to City Council for approval. The proposed change would route both through the Technical Review Committee with final approval resting with the Administrator or Director.

Reasonableness and Consistency Statement:

Staff recommended adoption of a Reasonableness and Consistency Statement as set forth on the final page of the amendment document.

A substantive discussion followed among Council members. Council Member Alan Hargis expressed concern and opposition to the proposed change in approval authority, arguing that the Council has historically and meaningfully weighed in on land use decisions and should retain oversight. City Manager Hembree and Ms. Goodrich clarified the distinction between the Final Plat process and the broader subdivision approval process, explaining that by the time a Final Plat reaches the Council under the current framework, all substantive decisions have already been made by the Planning Board and the Technical Review Committee, and the Council has no discretionary basis for denial if all requirements have been met. Council Member Hembree acknowledged that if the Council wished to revisit the broader question of subdivision approval authority at an earlier stage of the process, that would require a more in-depth, separate text amendment. Mr. Hembree noted that the types of decisions where the Council has meaningfully disagreed with staff recommendations—Rezoning and Special Use Permits—would not be affected by this amendment, as those items would continue to come before the Council. No members of the public spoke for or against the amendment, and the Public Hearing was closed at 7:05 p.m.

Decision

Motion by Mayor Pro Tem April Gaulden, second by Council Member J. Wesley Sills to approve Ordinance Text Amendment OA-26-01 as presented. All in favor. Motion carried unanimously. *A copy of Ordinance Text Amendment – OA-26-01 (O2026-17) is incorporated into these minutes as Attachment #2.*

Advisory Board Appointments

Community Appearance Advisory Board

Mayor Elmore reported that he and Mayor Pro Tem April Gaulden had reviewed applicants for vacancies on the Community Appearance Advisory Board (formerly referenced as the Beautification Committee). He presented the following slate of three (3) new appointees, each with terms ending June 30, 2028: Evelyn Munns, Laura Beth Knox, and Terry K. Price. He further noted that Vicky Spears, Renee Ellmers, Joy Henderson, and Stuart Paget are currently serving members with approximately one year remaining on their respective terms. Mayor Elmore encouraged applicants not appointed in this cycle to reapply when additional vacancies arise.

Motion by Mayor Pro Tem April Gaulden, second by Council Member J. Wesley Sills. to approve all appointments to the Community Appearance Advisory Board. All in favor. Motion carried unanimously. *A copy of the Recommended Slate of Appointees is incorporated into these minutes as Attachment #3.*

Harnett County Library Board of Trustees

Mayor Elmore noted a vacant seat on the Harnett County Library Board of Trustees and presented Jennifer Grillo for appointment to that position.

Motion by Council Member J. Wesley Sills, second by Mayor Pro Tem April Gaulden to appoint Jennifer Grillo to the Harnett County Library Board of Trustees. All in favor. Motion carried unanimously. *A copy of the Recommended Slate of Appointees is incorporated into these minutes as Attachment #3.*

REPORTS & UPDATES

City Manager's Report

City Manager Hembree provided two (2) updates.

West Broad Street Stormwater and Repaving Project:

City Manager Hembree reported that the City has entered into an agreement with the engineering firm Freeze & Nichols Inc. to conduct a Stormwater Study and Prepare Streetscape Design Work for West Broad Street, particularly the segment between Ashe Avenue and General Lee Avenue. A Community and Stakeholders Meeting has been scheduled for September 1st at 9:00 a. m. at Kim's Barbecue, located adjacent to the project site. Property owners and business owners along the corridor were invited by City staff. Representatives from Freeze & Nichols Inc. will be in attendance to address technical questions. The City's stated goals for the design include resolving long-standing stormwater and drainage deficiencies beneath the roadway and addressing the ongoing problem of commercial delivery trucks blocking the road, particularly at loading areas behind the Wayne Avenue Shopping Center. City Manager Hembree noted that a loading lane configuration parallel to the rear of the buildings is under consideration, though Sherwin Williams presents a particular design challenge that requires further study. City Manager Hembree committed to exploring a potential partnership with the property owner, citing the model of the successful collaboration with the Wellons on Friendly Road, once a design is available to present.

The engagement of engineering firm Freeze & Nichols Inc. represents a one-time expenditure, with the precise contract amount not stated on the record. The project is being funded through City capital resources. The rationale for proceeding now reflects the dual urgency of a deteriorating roadway surface on West Broad Street and unresolved stormwater infrastructure vulnerabilities beneath it. The concrete benefit to residents and businesses includes safer road conditions, reduced flooding risk, and resolution of chronic traffic disruption caused by delivery trucks blocking access along the commercial corridor. The Stakeholder Meeting process provides a structured mechanism for community input prior to finalization of the design.

Capital Projects Tour for Council Members:

City Manager Hembree proposed organizing a tour for Council members to observe recently completed and ongoing Capital Infrastructure Projects, including the East Side Pump Station, the Wastewater Treatment Plant, and City-owned property near the Water Plant. Staff will reach out to identify available dates. The City Manager noted that the East Side Pump Station houses a 2,500,000-gallon holding tank and that significant rehabilitation work has been completed at the Wastewater Plant, emphasizing the value of direct observation beyond photographs or social media updates.

Financial Report

In the absence of Finance Director McNallan, Deputy Finance Director Alexa Abling presented the Financial Report for June and July, which had been prepared by Finance Director McNallan prior to his departure.

Cash balances across all funds as of July 31, 2026, totaled \$10,800,000, compared to \$8,700,000 at the same point the prior year. The increase was attributed primarily to State grant reimbursements for Water and Sewer Projects. The City also holds a balance of \$1,900,000 in the East Side Pump Station Construction Account.

The Budget Benchmark for the period ending June 30 was 99.99 percent. General Fund property taxes collected by the county for the month of June totaled \$66,000, compared to \$126,000 for June 2025. A Council member inquired about the significant decrease, and staff noted that delays in Harnett County's property tax billing process may be a contributing factor. Fiscal year 2026 year-to-date property tax revenues received total approximately \$6,000,000, against a total estimated tax levy of \$5,900,000, inclusive of property taxes, motor vehicle taxes, and downtown district assessments.

Sales tax receipts for May totaled \$331,000, approximately \$9,000 less than the same period the prior year. Year-to-date Sales Tax Revenue of \$3,650,000 represents 106 percent of the \$3,450,000 annual budget. Staff noted that Department of Revenue Sales Tax reports are

provided on at least a two(2)-month delay, with the next deposit expected on September 15th.

Building permit and Development fees for July totaled \$35,000, representing 17 percent of the \$200,000 annual budget for fiscal year 2027. This compares favorably to \$21,000 collected at the same point last year. A Capital Projects Financial Information Chart was included in the written report.

Financial Impact & Community Benefit

The Financial Report reflects a strong fiscal position heading into the new fiscal year, with Cash Balances up \$2,100,000 year-over-year and Sales Tax Revenues exceeding the annual budget at 106 percent. The Growth in Cash Balances is a direct result of recurring State Grant reimbursements for Water and Sewer Capital Infrastructure—Revenue-generating and reimbursement-based funding streams that benefit residents through sustained investment in utility reliability without proportionate increases in operating expenditures. Building Permit revenue trending ahead of the prior year reflects continued development activity and community investment. Oversight is maintained through monthly financial reporting to the full Council.

Departmental Reports & Project Updates

Code Enforcement

Code Enforcement Officer Cindy Rodriguez presented a brief update with before-and-after photographs of two (2) recently resolved cases: a property at 119 Holly Street with high grass and overgrowth that was cleared by the owner, and a mechanic shop on Clinton Avenue with exterior disorder that the owner voluntarily remediated following staff outreach.

Ms. Rodriguez reported that since July 1, 2026, two hundred (200) cases have been opened and addressed, compared to forty-five (45) cases during the same period in the prior year—a significant increase in activity reflecting a more proactive enforcement posture. City Manager Hembree recognized Code Enforcement Officer Rodriguez for her willingness to temporarily assist in the Finance Department's Utility Billing Operations during a period of unexpected staffing challenges, in addition to her regular Code Enforcement duties.

Regarding the persistent issue of residential trash receptacles left on roadways beyond collection day, staff reported that door hangers, tape, and informational flyers are being distributed to residents as a compliance and education tool, and that general resident cooperation has been cooperative when staff engages directly.

Announcements

Mayor Elmore conveyed the following announcements:

- The Dunn Area Chamber of Commerce will host the State of the City Business Impact Luncheon on August 27, 2026, at the Dunn Community Building from 11:30 AM to 1:00 PM. Tickets are available through the Chamber of Commerce.
- The Dunn Police Department is sponsoring a National Night Out event on Tuesday, September 1, 2026, from 6:00 to 8:00 PM at Tart Park.
- The City Council Work Session is scheduled for September 8, 2026, in the Council Chambers.
- A book launch party for local author Bill McNallan will be held at the Howard House on September 12, 2026. Mr. McNallan, who grew up in the Dunn area and currently resides in Georgia, has written works drawing on the history and people of the Dunn community.
- The next City Council Regular Meeting is scheduled for September 22, 2026.

Council member J. Wesley Sills offered public remarks commending the vitality observed in downtown Dunn on a recent Friday and Saturday, noting a level of pedestrian traffic and commercial activity not seen in 44 years outside of festival events. Mr. Sills congratulated downtown merchants and expressed hope that the City would continue to support downtown commerce.

CLOSED SESSION

Motion by Council Member J. Wesley Sills, second by Council Member Raquel McNeil to enter closed session pursuant to G.S. 143-318.11(a)(3), to consult with the City Attorney in order to preserve the attorney-client privilege, and pursuant to G.S. 143-318.11(a)(5), to instruct City staff on the position to be taken in negotiating the price of real property. All in favor. Motion Passed unanimously.

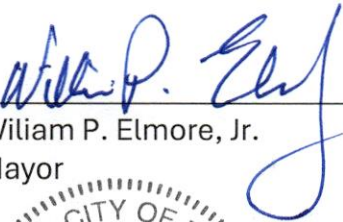
Members of the public were dismissed prior to the Closed Session at 7:25 p.m.

At 8:15 p.m., Council ended Closed Session and returned to Open Session.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Council Member Dr. David Bradham, seconded by Council Member J. Wesley Sills to adjourn the meeting. All in favor. Motion carried unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:20 p.m.



William P. Elmore, Jr.
Mayor



Melissa R. Matti
City Clerk

