

Dunn City Council
Regular Meeting
Tuesday, July 22, 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, Alan Hargis, and Dr. David L. Bradham.

Also present: City Manager Justin Hembree, Assistant City Manager Billy R. Godwin, Finance Director Cary McNallan, Chief of Police Cary Jackson, Parks and Recreation Director Brian McNeill, Public Works Director Dwayne Williams, Collections and Distribution Manager Billy Cottle, Water Plant Manager Ian Stroud, Wastewater Plant Manager Donrie Dukes, Building Inspector Slater Johnson, Code Enforcement Officer Stephen Hodges, Administrative Support Specialist Amber Groves, City Attorney Tilghman Pope and City Clerk Melissa Matti

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor William P. Elmore, Jr. called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM on Tuesday, July 22, 2025, in the Dunn Municipal Council Chambers. He welcomed those in attendance and those watching online. He asked attendees to silence their cell phones to avoid interruptions during the meeting.

INVOCATION & PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Council Member Sills delivered the invocation and the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mayor Elmore thanked everyone for attending. He mentioned there was a large group of staff present who would be providing updates throughout the meeting. Mayor Elmore announced that a former Law Enforcement Officer and former Chief of Police of Dunn, Kenny Seals, had passed away that afternoon.

ADJUSTMENT AND APPROVAL OF THE JULY 22, 2025 MEETING AGENDA

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

Introduction of New Employee

City Manager Justin Hembree introduced three new staff members:

- **Will Deaton**, the new Local Government Services Director with Mid Carolina Regional Council, who will be serving as the interim Planning Director for Dunn and assisting with recruitment of a new permanent Planning Director.
- **Christy Sweeney**, new Administrative Assistant in the Administration office, who was on her second day on the job.
- Brian McNeil introduced **Amanda Baker**, the new Senior Center Manager. Ms. Baker previously worked with Scotland County Parks and Recreation as a Recreation Center Supervisor and Senior Programs Coordinator.

Mayor Elmore welcomed all the new staff members and expressed looking forward to working with them.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Mayor Elmore stated that no one had signed up to speak during the Public Comment Period.

CONSENT ITEMS

Items presented for consent approval included:

- Approval of Minutes - June 24th Regular Meeting
- Approval of Minutes - June 27th Emergency Meeting
- Destruction of Public Records - Finance, Parks & Recreation, and Administration

Motion by Council Member J. Wesley Sills, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem April Gaulden to approve the Consent Items. The motion carried unanimously.

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION AND/OR DECISION

Temporary Blocking of Street

Kristen's Run against Domestic Violence

City Manager Hembree presented a request to hold Kristen's Run against Domestic Violence on Saturday, October 4th from 8:00 AM to 10:00 AM on Harnett Street between Wayne Avenue and General Lee Avenue. The event aims to raise awareness about domestic violence and raise money for SAFE of Harnett County. This would be the second year the event is held. Mr. Hembree noted that the Police Department is supporting the event along with county law enforcement colleagues. No alcohol would be served at the event.

Motion by Council Member Hargis, seconded by Council Member Bradham to approve the Special Event Permit for Kristen's Run against Domestic Violence, including the closing of the streets from 8:00 AM to 10:00 AM. The motion carried unanimously.

**Special Event Permit
on City Property**

Outdoor Zumba Class

City Manager Hembree explained this would be the second year for this Outdoor Zumba Class. Unlike last year when the event was held on Broad Street, this year's request is to hold the event on city-owned property located next to 406 Broad Street. The event is scheduled for August 16th from 9:00 AM until 1:00 PM.

Staff recommended approval with the condition that the applicant provide proof of insurance and comply with all the City's risk management requirements.

Motion by Council Member Bradham, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Gaulden to approve the Special Event Permit for the Outdoor Zumba Class with the condition that the applicant provides proof of insurance and complies with the City's Risk Management requirements. The motion carried unanimously.

Consideration of Request from Harnett County Habitat for Humanity Land Donation – 402 E Cole Street PIN# 1516-88-8955.000

Assistant City Manager Billy Godwin presented a request from Habitat for Humanity of Harnett County for the City to donate its one-half interest in the property at 402 East Cole Street. He explained that in the 1990s, the City and county acquired this property together in a tax foreclosure. The county had previously donated its half-interest to Habitat, while the City retained its half.

Mr. Godwin explained the legal process for such a donation, noting that cities can donate property to nonprofit organizations engaged in public purposes. The procedure would require Council to adopt a resolution, followed by a notice published in the newspaper, and after 10 days from publication, the City could convey the property.

Council Member Hargis asked about the required waiting period, which Mr. Godwin explained was a statutory requirement. Mr. Hargis also noted that Habitat had sent a subsequent letter requesting \$2,000 for cutting grass on the property. Mr. Godwin clarified that staff's recommendation was to donate only the property without remitting additional funds, and that the motion before Council addressed only the property donation.

Motion by Council Member Hargis, seconded by Council Member J. Wesley Sills to adopt the Resolution Authorizing Conveyance of Real Property to Habitat for Humanity of Harnett County, Inc. a Nonprofit Corporation engaged in a Public Purpose and to direct the Clerk to publish the Notice of Resolution. A copy of the Resolution Authorizing Conveyance of Real Property to Habitat for Humanity of Harnett County, Inc., a Nonprofit Corporation engaged in a Public Purpose (R2025-42) is incorporated into these minutes as Attachment #1.

Industrial District(s) Land Use Regulations/ Possible UDO Amendments

City Manager Hembree explained that the City had received an inquiry from Samet about the maximum building height requirement and impermeable surface requirements for an industrial building planned for a site on Hwy 301 South. The current maximum building height allowed is 35 feet, which Samet indicated would not be adequate for their project.

Mr. Hembree noted that staff would be researching what requirements are in place in other counties that successfully attract economic development projects, particularly Lee and Chatham counties. He indicated that staff would likely initiate a text amendment to the UDO through the planning board process, with a recommendation eventually coming to Council, probably at the October regular meeting.

Council Member Bradham commented that when the UDO was initially adopted, Council understood it would be a "living, breathing document" that could be changed as needed. He suggested the Planning Department should regularly review the document to identify areas that need modification.

Council Member Hargis questioned why the 35-foot height limit was implemented in the first place, noting that taller industrial buildings would be beneficial for economic development. Mr. Hembree explained that height restrictions sometimes relate to concerns about emissions stacks or other issues, and that some ordinances increase setback requirements as building height increases.

Mr. Hembree emphasized that staying competitive with other areas for economic development projects is important, and that businesses often won't wait for text amendments or variance processes when selecting sites.

No formal action was requested or taken on this item.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

City Manager's Report

City Manager Justin Hembree reported that he had been on board for just over a month and things were going well as he gets to know the staff. He mentioned the high level of activity lately, particularly with preparation for the upcoming baseball tournament.

Financial Report/Assessment Update

Finance Director, Cary McNallan presented the Financial Report for June 30, 2025, noting that the numbers were not yet final as some invoices and revenue for FY25 were still being processed. Cash balances as of July 7 were just over \$10 million compared to \$11.6 million last year. Additionally, there was a cash balance of \$7.8 million in the construction account for the East Side Pump Station.

General property taxes collected for May were \$70,000, with a total of \$5.8 million collected to date, which was about \$100,000 over the estimated budget of \$5.7 million. Sales tax for March receipts was \$321,000, which was \$5,400 more than the same month last year. April sales tax receipts were \$313,000, \$19,000 more than the same month last year.

Building permits for June were \$12,279, with a total of \$124,000 collected to date, which was 78% of the budgeted amount. Mr. McNallan noted that the city had paid off a loan for the Harnett Training School last month, which would likely result in a decrease in the general fund balance.

Council Member Sills asked when the sales tax revenue from the upcoming baseball tournament would be reflected in the financial reports. Mr. McNallan indicated that July sales tax wouldn't be received until the October 15th payment.

Planning

Mr. Hembree introduced Will Deaton, who is serving as the interim Planning Director through the City's contract with the COG. He explained that Mr. Deaton would help recruit a permanent Planning Director, evaluate staffing levels and processes, and assist with plan reviews and other planning matters.

Parks & Recreation / Diamond Youth Baseball Series

Parks & Recreation Director, Brian McNeil provided an update on preparations for the upcoming baseball tournament. He described it as a community effort involving parks and recreation, booster clubs, tourism, first responders, the county, and schools. Mr. McNeil detailed improvements made to the parks in preparation for the tournament, including updating parking lots, adding sod to ball fields to meet DYB regulations, adding fence gates and temporary fencing, completing playground updates at Tart Park, and replacing netting at Tyler Park.

Mr. McNeil announced that the tournament opening ceremony would be held Thursday at Campbell University's Barker Lane Stadium, with gates opening at 4:00 PM, teams being fed at 5:00 PM, and the ceremony starting at 6:30 PM. The ceremony would be free to the public and feature several speakers, concluding with a performance by the Golden Knights. Games would begin on Friday with full play, followed by double elimination starting Saturday. The 6U Tournament at Tyler Park would conclude on Monday, while the 8U Tournament at Tart Park would wrap up Tuesday morning.

Council Member Sills showed one of the goodie bags being given to players, filled with items donated by local businesses. He emphasized that thousands of people would be coming to town for the tournament and acknowledged the partnerships that made it possible, particularly crediting Carolyn Elmore for her relationship with Dixie Youth.

Paving

Public Works Director Dwayne Williams reported that on Monday, July 28th, TransitSystems would mark different site locations for paving. After that, the bidding process would begin, with contractors coming to look at the sites. Bids would likely be submitted by the third or fourth week of August, with paving expected to begin by the end of August. Mr. Williams explained that the projects would include a variety of paving types including crack seal, mill and fill, and patching.

When asked about the timeline for the project, Mr. Williams noted it would depend on how quickly contractors could move forward and whether they received three bids initially. He also explained that asphalt work typically slows down when temperatures reach around 35-40 degrees, and that they had to consider whether there were any planned water and sewer projects that might tear up newly paved roads.

City Manager Hembree mentioned that the total cost estimate for Phase 1 paving projects was around \$1.3 million, while the city had about \$1.1 million set aside. He indicated they would try to coordinate with DOT to see if any contractors working on DOT projects in the region could also bid on the city's project.

Utilities / SOC Update

Assistant City Manager Godwin provided an update on the Special Order of Consent (SOC) projects, noting that most projects had been completed. The Machine and Welding Outfall project was nearly finished, with only punch list items remaining. The Eastside Pump Station project was just getting underway with an estimated completion date of November 2026. The Black River Effluent Conveyance Improvements were also underway with an estimated completion date of 2026. The CDBG project was completed, and the SRF Collection System Rehab was underway with an estimated completion date of June 2026.

Assistant City Manager Godwin and City Manager Hembree emphasized the significant achievement of completing or making substantial progress on these major infrastructure projects, noting that for a municipality of Dunn's size, even one of these projects would be substantial, yet the City had tackled seven or eight simultaneously.

Assistant City Manager Godwin reported that the Pope Street/Spring Branch Road bridge was expected to open in September 2025, though the overall I-95 widening project was still estimated for completion in 2027.

Council Member Bradham asked if these projects would satisfy the SOC requirements with the State. Mr. Godwin confirmed that the City has a legally binding agreement with DEQ that these projects would fulfill the requirements.

Wayfinding Project Update

Assistant City Manager Godwin reported that approximately 29 wayfinding signs had been installed around the City, with one sign needing to be turned around as it was pointing in the wrong direction. Another sign had not yet been installed but would be in the next couple of weeks. Additional directional signs would be ordered to complete Phase 1 of the project. Phase 2 would involve gateway signage at the entrances to the City.

Council Member Hargis mentioned that he had received many compliments about the new signs, noting their clarity and readability compared to wayfinding signs in other towns.

Code Enforcement

Code Enforcement Officer, Stephen Hodges presented updates on three properties:

- 309 South Orange: This property had high grass, overgrowth, and junk cars. After multiple unanswered letters, the city had a contractor clean up the property, cutting all overgrowth and removing debris and car parts.
- A property between Interstate Trailers and a tactical gear store: Mr. Hodges had been trying to address this property for two years, with neighbors complaining about rats and snakes. The property owner had passed away, and his son was unresponsive to contractor referrals. The City had the approximately 4-acre property cut, which revealed rats, snakes, and hornets' nests.
- 305 West Greenwood: This property had been approved by Council for demolition, and a contractor had completed the demolition after utilities were disconnected.

Mr. Hodges mentioned he was working on another property at 125 Spring Branch that would soon be demolished. He reported having 28 active code violations, primarily for high grass, which were being addressed either by property owners or city contractors.

Assistant City Manager Godwin noted that while the City places liens on properties when it has to take abatement actions, they needed to develop a better process for enforcing these liens to recoup costs and provide a deterrent.

Council Member Hargis questioned the City's regulations regarding inoperable vehicles, suggesting that requirements for current registration should be stricter. Mr. Hodges explained that under current ordinances, a vehicle is considered operable if it can start and move forward and backward, regardless of whether it has current tags.

City Manager Hembree mentioned that a new code enforcement position had been budgeted for the year and was currently being advertised.

Announcements

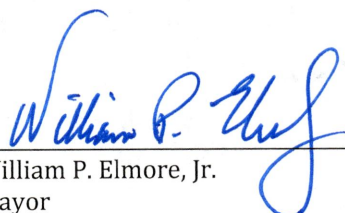
Mayor Elmore announced the following upcoming events:

- Baseball Tournament from July 24th through 29th, with opening ceremonies at Campbell University on July 24th at 6:30 PM
- Next City Council work session on Tuesday, August 12th at 6:30 PM
- State of the City sponsored by the Dunn Area Chamber of Commerce on August 21st
- Next regular City Council meeting on Tuesday, August 26th at 6:30 PM

Closed Session

Motion by Council Member Bradham, seconded by Council Member McNeil to go into closed session to instruct the public body's staff concerning the position to be taken by the public body in negotiating the price and terms of a contract for the acquisition of real property by purchase, option, exchange or lease. The motion carried unanimously.

The Council entered closed session at 7:55 PM.



William P. Elmore, Jr.
Mayor

Attest:


Melissa R. Matti
City Clerk

