

CITY OF MOUNT HOLLY
CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, JANUARY 13, 2025
COUNCIL CHAMBERS
7:00 PM

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Moore called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm. The following were present:

Mayor David Moore	Jonathan Blanton, City Manager
Mayor Pro Tem Lauren Shoemaker	Brian DuPont, Assistant City Manager
Councilman Ivory Craig	Alexis Hines, Human Resources Director
Councilman Jeff Meadows	Brian Reagan, Police Chief
Councilman Bryan Hough	Greg Beal, Planning Director
Councilwoman Phyllis Harris	Ryan Baker, Fire Chief
Councilman Kenneth Reeves	Robert Stewart, Deputy Utilities Director
Marie M. Anders, City Attorney	Eric Smallwood, Parks and Recreation Director
Tara Douglas, City Clerk	Michelle Wood, Finance Director
	Matt Black, Economic Development Director
	Jason Green, Public Works Director

INVOCATION- Reverend Leonard Ford from Morningside Missionary Church led the Council, Staff, and attendees in prayer.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Boy Scout Troop 59 led the Council, staff, and attendees in the Pledge of Allegiance.

SET THE AGENDA

Mayor Moore amended the agenda to provide for a discussion regarding 131 S. Main Street and the Historical Society's offer to purchase the property to the agenda under New Business.

Motion: With no other changes to the agenda, Councilwoman Harris made a motion to approve the agenda as presented. Councilman Reeves seconded the motion.

All Council members present voted in favor. (Motion Carried)

CONSENT AGENDA

1. Budget Amendment: Powell Bill Funds Transfer
2. Approval of a Capital Project Ordinance for Riverfront Sewer Aerial Removal and Lift Station Upgrade
3. Approval of Minutes from the December 9, 2024 Council Meeting

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4. Approval of Minutes from the December 9, 2024 Closed Session

Mayor Moore entertained a motion to approve the Consent Agenda as presented.

Motion: Councilman Hough made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. Mayor Pro Tem Shoemaker seconded the motion.

All Council members present voted in favor. (Motion Carried)

PRESENTATIONS

1. Consideration and approval of the final design for the Bee Art Expansion Project
(Murals) **Paul Lowe**

Mr. Lowe presented the proposed designs associated with the Bee Art Expansion Project. Mr. Lowe stated that this project, funded by the Tourism Development Authority (TDA), will see six mini bee themed murals installed between S. Alexander Street and S. Main Street along Catawba Avenue. Mr. Lowe stated that the PAAC considered this item at their December 18, 2024 meeting and voted to recommend approving the proposed designs that were developed by artists Maria Campagna and Johari Huggins, who will produce three of the mini murals each. Mr. Lowe stated that if the designs are approved by the Council, staff is looking to have this project completed by the end of February 2025.

Motion: Councilman Meadows made a motion to approve the final designs for the Bee Art Expansion Project (Murals). Mayor Pro Tem Shoemaker seconded the motion.

All Council members present voted in favor. (Motion Carried)

PUBLIC HEARING

1. Public Hearing to consider rezoning a portion of a 1.44-acre tract of land (GIS), located at 501 Belmont-Mount Holly Road, Tax Parcel ID# 183899, from B-3 General Business to R-12 Singel Family, as submitted by Billy Rick. **Greg Beal**

Councilman Craig recused himself for the vote due to a conflict of interest.

Mr. Beal reviewed some history of this site and stated that staff have received calls about this parcel and general area for potential development of a gas station, which is an approved use. Mr. Beal stated that Mr. Rick reached out to the City and expressed interest in a possible rezoning of the area. Mr. Beal stated that the lot-of-record is 1.44 acres in size according to GIS, but the survey reveals that it totals 2.13 acres of land with four proposed parcels. Mr. Beal stated that

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Mr. Billy Rick's intent is to apply for a rezoning to have the back portion of this rezoned to R-12 Single Family for three conforming lots, keep the frontage lot as B-3 General Business, and renovate the current nonconforming single-family home to an approved office/commercial use. Mr. Beal explained that if approved, Mr. Rick would build three residential single-family homes of \$500,000 or more each, in this area, which would add to the overall tax value. Mr. Beal stated that Mr. Rick would also convert the frontage of the existing home into an office/commercial use, which could increase the overall value of this parcel and the current renovated and converted home. Mr. Beal stated that, while not required, Mr. Rick says he will put a sidewalk in because he does not want someone else to add one later and tear up the driveways. Mr. Beal stated that this accomplishes mobility from goal number three in the Land Use Plan and is consistent with Housing Policy goal one to promote a range of housing options and Housing Policy goal four to maintain safe and adequate supply of housing that varies in age and style. Mr. Beal referred to the Statement of Consistency included in the agenda packet to show conformance with the Land Use Plan, which served as a basis for the Planning Commission's recommendation to approve the rezoning unanimously at their January 6, 2025 meeting.

Councilman Craig reminded the Council that at the December Council meeting he recused himself from this item and would like to do so again before any voting takes place due to a conflict of interest.

Mayor Moore entertained a motion to go out of the regular meeting and into the public hearing.

Motion: Mayor Pro Tem Shoemaker made a motion to go out of the regular meeting and into the public hearing. Councilman Hough seconded the motion.

All Council members present voted in favor. (Motion Carried)

Mayor Moore stated that Mr. Billy Rick is signed up to speak at the public hearing.

Mr. Billy Rick, who lives at 324 Riverside Drive in Mount Holly, signed up to speak at this public hearing. Mr. Rick stated that he already has potential interest in the frontage of the existing home and could likely have someone in it by the summer.

Mayor Moore entertained a motion to go out of the public hearing and back into the regular meeting.

Motion: Mayor Pro Tem Shoemaker made a motion to go out of the public hearing and back into the regular meeting. Councilwoman Harris seconded the motion.

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All Council members present voted in favor. (Motion Carried)

Motion: Councilman Hough made a motion to approve the rezoning a portion of a 1.44-acre tract of land (GIS), located at 501 Belmont-Mount Holly Road, Tax Parcel ID# 183899, from B-3 General Business to R-12 Singel Family, as submitted by Billy Rick. Councilman Reeves seconded the motion.

All Council members present voted in favor. (Motion Carried)

PUBLIC COMMENT-Three (3) Minute Limit

1. Nancy Rhen- 107 Alexis Forest Drive: Ms. Rhen is in favor of the City accepting the offer to purchase the building on 131 S. Main Street. Ms. Rhen would like the opportunity to keep the Historical Society at the downtown location.
2. Camille Jessen-109 Brook Lane: Ms. Jessen stated that the museum is more than a museum. Ms. Jessen expressed her desire for the museum to purchase the building and to stay at its current location. Ms. Jessen is concerned that volunteers will not stay if the museum is relocated.
3. Janice McRorie- 176 Tom Sawyer Lane: Ms. McRorie asked that the City Council honor the request to purchase the building that they are currently in. Ms. McRorie stated that this would help the Historical Society be able to apply for grants.
4. Garrie Brinkley-176 Tom Sawyer Lane: Mr. Brinkley supports the sale of the museum building to the Historical Society. Mr. Brinkley stated that the Historical Society would get control over their destiny.
5. Theresa Neely- 147 Patrick Lane: Ms. Neely stated that she would like for the Historical Society to stay in the building on Main Street. Ms. Neely explained that the Council should let the Historical Society stand on its own as a nonprofit.
6. John Jacob-1213 West Catawba: Mr. Jacob supports the sale of the 131 S. Main Street Building to the Historical Society. Mr. Jacob stated that the City has gone on record saying that they would sell the building without an upset bid to a 501c3 organization which makes a legitimate offer to the City. Mr. Jacob stated that the Historical Society is a 501c3 nonprofit and that their offer is the appraised value with no strings attached. Mr. Jacob stated that museums should be in locations with significant foot traffic. Mr. Jacob stated that the City has asked questions regarding environmental concerns, the last 3 years of audits, fund raising records, plans to protect the artifacts, and business plans. Mr. Jacob stated that the seller would not normally ask the buyer questions like these. Mr. Jacob stated that the purchase contract includes all of the requirements for buying the building.
7. Carolyn Breyare-307 Eastwood Drive: Mrs. Breyare responded to the questions that have been asked by the City. Mrs. Breyare stated that they can provide a letter of good

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standing along with the 501c3. Mrs. Breyare stated that audits are not required, and this is an expensive and time-consuming request. Mrs. Breyare stated that the City has been a great partner and that their past fundraising would be minimal and irrelevant to their future fundraising. Mrs. Breyare stated that regarding the request for their business plan to operate, they have investors and donors who are committed to our success. Mrs. Breyare stated that regarding an environmental cleanup plan, we cannot get estimates for cleanup unless we are the property owners. Mrs. Breyare stated that the question around an artifact protection plan is offensive. Mrs. Breyare stated that there have been many years and hours spent dedicated to protecting the artifacts.

8. Kimberly Clark-802 N. Main Street: Ms. Clark stated that she is in favor of the purchase of the 131 S. Main Street building by the Historical Society. Ms. Clark stated that the Historical Society is meeting the City's appraised value requirements.
9. Randy Phillips- 970 Old Hwy 27: Mr. Phillips stated that he is here to discuss sidewalks. Mr. Phillips stated that Community to Nature is the first sign that he saw when he moved to Mount Holly. Mr. Phillips stated that he feels as though there is now no connection to the nature, and he would like to see a bit more nature when the housing developments are being built.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Discussion regarding 131 S. Main Street

Mayor Moore

Mayor Moore stated that the Historical Society recently received a large donation to purchase the former City Hall building located at 131 S. Main Street. Mayor Moore stated that the Historical Society has presented the City with an offer to purchase this property for \$355,000. Mayor Moore stated that North Carolina General Statute 160a-279 provides a way for the City to sell the former City Hall to the Historical Society as a nonprofit organization without going through a competitive bid process. Mayor Moore stated that the Historical Society has been a tremendous community partner with the City of Mount Holly since 2011 and has faithfully managed the artifacts owned by the City through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). Mayor Moore stated that he is in support of selling 131 S. Main Street to the Historical Society and accepting this offer. Mayor Moore stated that he would like to see the Council move forward with accepting this offer contingent on all requirements of North Carolina General Statute 160a-279 being satisfied and to direct the staff to make the necessary arrangement to bring this back to the City Council to finalize.

Motion: Councilwoman Harris made a motion to move forward and accept the Historical Society's offer to purchase 131 S. Main Street contingent on all requirements of North Carolina

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General Statute 160a-279 being satisfied and to direct the staff to make the necessary arrangements to bring this back to the City Council to finalize. Councilman Reeves seconded the motion.

Councilwoman Harris and Councilman Reeves voted **Aye**. Mayor Pro Tem Shoemaker, Councilman Meadows, Councilman Craig, and Councilman Hough vote **Nay**. **Mayor Moore announces that the motion fails with 2 votes in the affirmative and 4 votes in the negative.**

Mr. Blanton provided next steps and gave a recap of the Council's actions so far regarding the matter. Mr. Blanton stated that around approximately the year 2022, there were concerns raised by the Historical Society regarding environmental issues and that the City conducted an in-depth environmental study costing \$85,000. Mr. Blanton stated that a committee was put together to evaluate the best use of that building. Mr. Blanton stated that in October of 2023 the Old City Hall Committee and the Historical Society presented to the Council and that the Council at the time determined that it would be in the best interest of the City to move forward with selling this under the upset bid process. Mr. Blanton stated that on October 23, 2023 that the Historical Society requested 30 days to raise the funds to purchase the building. Mr. Blanton stated that then Mayor Hough at the time noted that for the minutes and the vote that was taken was to move forward with the upset bid process to have the property listed no earlier than December 1, 2023 which would have given the Historical Society approximately 50 days to make a proposal. Mr. Blanton stated that at this time the vote was 4-2 with Councilwoman Harris and then Councilman Moore voting against that particular measure. Mr. Blanton stated that since then, the City has continued to move forward based on that direction of the Council working with Creech and Associates on the upfitting of the space here at the Municipal Complex. Mr. Blanton stated that the City has expended approximately \$118,000 coming out of the March Council Retreat to work towards putting that upfitting proposal together and have budgeted \$680,000 to date in this current fiscal year's budget. Mr. Blanton stated that the City will continue to look at the direction that was given by the Council for the upset bid process and will be back at the January 27, 2025 work session with an agenda item to talk about a resolution for the Council's consideration. Mr. Blanton stated that the Historical Society is encouraged to submit in the upset bid process if that is the process that the City continues with. Mr. Blanton assured everyone that the City will keep everyone updated on where we are in this process.

Councilman Meadows asked for the record what had been spent so far. Mr. Blanton stated that at the March 2024 Council Retreat, the Council moved forward with a budget amendment for approximately \$118,000 with Creech and Associates. Mr. Blanton stated that the Council moved forward in the budget process where \$680,000 was put into the budget and we have continued to

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pay Creech and Associates each month on that and this fiscal year alone, we have spent between \$12,000 and \$20,000 since July. Mr. Blanton stated that we met with Creech and Associates last week, and we are looking at a demolition bid that will go likely within the next couple of weeks to work towards the upfitting of space here at City Hall in order to facilitate that move based on the action that Council took.

Councilman Meadows reminded the Council that this was a citizen advisory board that met for over a year and voted unanimously to follow this.

2. Manager Report

Jonathan Blanton

Mayor Moore stated that Mr. Blanton has been with the City of Mount Holly for one year and has done an outstanding job. Mr. Blanton stated that he sent out twenty-four accomplishments for the 2024-year and that this is a testament to the dedication of our Council. Mr. Blanton listed the accomplishments to include the opening of Muddy River, which was a \$4 million investment that breathed life into a former mill here. Mr. Blanton stated that the Council facilitated the developmental amendment to the agreement that will bring Olde Mecklenburg Brewery to Mount Holly this year. Mr. Blanton also highlighted that the City was able to provide additional security cameras on the Greenway. Mr. Blanton was excited to announce that the City is moving forward very quickly with the Ransom Hunter Park project and reminded everyone that the Council voted unanimously to approve the naming of that park after Mr. Ransom Hunter who was the first free black man to own land here in Gaston County. Mr. Blanton stated that the City is looking towards building this park at the end the summer. Mr. Blanton congratulated the City staff for doing a great job. Mr. Blanton highlighted the Finance Department who won the Distinguished Government Finance Officers Award. Mr. Blanton stated that the Police Department also received a zero-deficiency letter for our 911 center. Mr. Blanton stated that we received the areawide Optimization Program Awards for our Water Department and we are proud of them. Mr. Blanton stated that the City had a wonderful Special Event season. Mr. Blanton stated that the City is moving forward with the new Catawba Heights Fire Station which will be a testament to how dedicated this Council has been with funding these Capital Projects. Mr. Blanton stated that the City unveiled its new sound system and that this Council is dedicated to transparent and open communication to our residents. Mr. Blanton stated that the City Council Retreat will be on February 28, 2025. Mr. Blanton recognized the new Parks and Recreation Director, Mr. Eric Smallwood. Mr. Blanton stated that he is looking forward to the upcoming year.

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CLOSED SESSION

1. Closed Session Pursuant to N.C.G.S 143-318.11 (a) (3 and 5)

Mayor Moore entertained a motion to go out of the regular meeting and into closed session pursuant to N.C.G.S 143-318.11 (a) (3 and 5).

Motion: Councilman Hough made a motion to go out of the regular meeting and into closed session at 7:47 pm. Mayor Pro Tem Shoemaker seconded the motion.

All Council members present voted in favor. (Motion Carried)

Motion: Councilman Hough made a motion to come out of closed session and back into the regular meeting at 8:57 pm. Councilman Craig seconded the motion.

All Council members present voted in favor. (Motion Carried)

ADJOURN

With no additional items for discussion, Mayor Moore entertained a motion to adjourn the January 13, 2025 City Council meeting.

Motion: Councilman Hough made a motion to adjourn the January 13, 2025 City Council meeting at 8:57 pm. Mayor Pro Tem Shoemaker seconded the motion.

All Council Members present voted in favor. (Motion Carried)

The meeting adjourned at 8:57 pm.