

CITY OF MOUNT HOLLY
CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, JUNE 23, 2025
COUNCIL CHAMBERS
6:30 PM

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Moore called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm. The following were present:

Mayor David Moore	Jonathan Blanton, City Manager
Mayor Pro Tem Lauren Shoemaker-ABSENT	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 - Absent
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

Councilman Reeves led the Council, Staff, and attendees in prayer.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Councilman Craig led the Council, Staff, and attendees in the Pledge of Allegiance.

SET THE AGENDA

Mayor Moore entertained a motion to approve the agenda as presented.

Motion: Councilman Hough made a motion to approve the agenda as presented.
Councilwoman Harris seconded the motion.

All Council members present and voting, voted in favor 5-0. (Motion Carried)

CONSENT AGENDA

1. Approval of End of Year Budget Amendment 2024-2025
2. Fee Schedule and Position Allotment Approval

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3. Call for a Public Hearing to Consider a Text Amendment to Update Chapter 153.049 of the Subdivision Ordinance to Provide Standards for Access and Fire Safety for Construction Sites. Case # TA-25-6.
4. Call for a Public Hearing to Update Section 7.1 Note 28 of the City's Zoning Ordinance to Update the standards for Solar Energy Systems. Case # TA-25-5
5. Permission for the Fire Department to apply for 2024 SAFER Grant (Staffing)
6. Approval of Minutes – City Council Meeting June 9, 2025
7. Approval of Minutes-Closed Session from June 9, 2025

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

Motion: Councilman Meadows made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. Councilman Craig seconded the motion.

All Council members present and voting, voted in favor 5 -0. (Motion Carried)

PRESENTATIONS

1. Presentation from the Mount Holly Community Development Foundation

Julie Benfield

Ms. Benfield from the Mount Holly Community Development Foundation presented several checks to the City of Mount Holly alongside the Vice Chair Jeff Lee and the Treasurer Christie Reeves. Ms. Benfield stated that the Mount Holly Community Development Foundation is proud to partner with various organizations within the City. Ms. Benfield stated that the total for the various checks presented tonight is \$10,832.50. Mrs. Reeves presented the checks to the Mayor and City Council.

2. Update on the 2018 Strategic Vision Plan

Greg Beal

Mr. Beal gave an overview of the Strategic Vision Plan and how it was developed. Mr. Beal discussed the goals and accomplishments to date. Mr. Beal stated that as mentioned at the Council Retreat on February 28, 2025 and subsequent Planning Updates, staff has created a public interface that can be found on our ArcGIS hub site at mtholly.us. Mr. Beal stated that this interface will give factual, up-to-date information on the 111 recommended goals of this 2019-adopted plan. Mr. Beal stated that the Strategic Vision Plan Experience Builder can be found at the link in the attached presentation. Mr. Beal recounted that the Strategic Vision Plan Update project began with the consultant's due diligence and research in the summer of 2017. Mr. Beal stated that in October 2017, the consultants held one-on-one input meetings with any business owner who requested to meet , as well as nearly all the nonprofits and community

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organizations in town. Mr. Beal stated that this was in addition to the survey and public meetings held in association with the creation of the updated plan. Mr. Beal stated that the process took nearly 18 months to complete, with the January 2019 adoption, at a cost of \$130,000. Mr. Beal stated that the plan is recommended to take 10-12 years, which does not consider COVID impacts, and out of 111 specific goals mentioned in the Plan, 46 goals have been completed (41%), 18 goals are in process (16%) and 47 goals have not been started (most are long-range or dependent on the private sector for completion). Mr. Beal stated that in terms of updating the plan, in 2023, staff held presentations to educate many of our partner-organizations, which are represented through the City Summit and at its quarterly meetings two presentations were made by staff, as well as subsequent individual presentations to some of our local nonprofits, at their request. Mr. Beal stated that the City's hope was that some partners listed in the Strategic Vision Plan Update would help take on some of the incomplete goals, the 47 mentioned above, which were probably more in 2023. Mr. Beal stated that staff received no interest from these groups, and it is a common belief that they are doing everything they can to meet their group's own commitments. Mr. Beal stated that volunteer burnout is a real thing, but the City will continue to look for opportunities to partner with groups such as the TDA and others. Mr. Beal stated that there are other project milestones, policy decisions, and important decisions that City Council has made over 20 plus years and capturing these in the attached document has taken a great deal of staff time, but they are important to note. Mr. Beal stated that staff will be presenting the update, similar to the Council Retreat Discussion, highlighting the hub site, as well as other undertakings over the last 20 plus years and how best to capture those important decisions.

Councilman Meadows thanked the City staff for this work. Councilman Meadows asked how many years the City lost during the Covid pandemic to work on these goals. Mr. Beal stated that approximately 2 years was lost during the Covid pandemic. Councilman Meadows asked at what point do you think the current plan should be updated. Mr. Beal stated that the current plan has the update in 2028, but it should be 2030 due to the time lost during the Covid pandemic. Councilman Meadows asked Mr. Blanton to share his experience as a City Manager at various municipalities with the Strategic Vision Plan. Mr. Blanton stated that during his interview in November 2023, he commended the City Council past and present on this Strategic Vision Plan. Mr. Blanton stated that this Strategic Vision Plan is a roadmap for any City Manager. Mr. Blanton stated that he is proud of the progress that has been done. Mr. Beal stated that there will be a document created for public consumption that will highlight these accomplishments.

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3. Consideration of 131 S. Main Street Request for Proposals

Jonathan Blanton

Mr. Blanton updated the Council on 131 South Main Street and the recent Request For Proposals (RFP) that the City issued a few months ago. Mr. Blanton reviewed the Old City Hall Committee goals and the timeline of the upset bid process. Mr. Blanton stated that on January 13, 2025 the Council declined to sell 131 South Main Street to the Mount Holly Historical Society under NCGS 160A-279. Mr. Blanton stated that this general statute would have been a statutory mechanism that the Council could have utilized to sell 131 South Main Street to the Mount Holly Historical Society for the appraised value at the time of \$355,000.00. Mr. Blanton stated that the Council voted on January 27, 2025 to list 131 South Main Street with MECA Reality. Mr. Blanton stated that the City received several offers for the property that included Mr. Vargas for \$500,00.00, RTR Management for \$500,000.00 and one from Abram Scott for \$762,500.00 received on February 28, 2025. Mr. Blanton stated that the Council accepted this offer subject to the upset bid process. Mr. Blanton stated that the City initiated the upset bid process on March 10, 2025 and on March 24, 2025, the Mount Holly Historical Society was the only upset bid received in the amount of \$815,000.00. Mr. Blanton stated that there were no other qualified bids that were brought at the conclusion of the upset bid process

Mr. Blanton stated that at the April 28, 2025 meeting, the Council rejected all of the offers that had been previously received and designated 131 South Main Street under N.C.G.S. 158.7-1 releasing the Request for Proposals (RFP) and giving the Council options to look at other than price. Mr. Blanton stated that from April 29- May 29, 2025, the City advertised that RFP and the City accepted proposals. Mr. Blanton stated that the RFP closed on May 29, 2025 and the City received three proposals from The Muni, J&M Holdings, and RTR Property Management. Mr. Blanton stated that staff reviewed these proposals and on June 9, 2025, the Council gave direction to present these proposals at the June work session which is what we are doing tonight. Mr. Blanton discussed the goals of this proposal which were derived from the goals of the Old City Hall Committee. Mr. Blanton stated that the goals of the Old City Hall Committee were communication, to activate the top and bottom floor of 131 South Main Street, keep the Historical Society intact to the extent possible, and accessing and repairing what needed to be done to make 131 South Main Street habitable.

Mr. Blanton discussed N.C.G.S. 158.7-1 and explained that it is a commonly used mechanism for the surplus of real property and that it is an economic development tool that allows a public entity to dispose of publicly owned property through negotiation. Mr. Blanton stated that utilizing this tool gives the City flexibility to look at things other than price. Mr. Blanton recounted that the Council desired more control and say about what actually goes into the

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building instead of just looking at the price. Mr. Blanton stated that N.C.G.S. 158.7-1 gives the City that freedom. Mr. Blanton stated that under this statute the City must create jobs, must grow existing tax base, must be assigned performance measures, and can relate to the City's long-term plans and goals.

Mr. Blanton stated that the City is here tonight to review and negotiate these proposals and then a call for a public hearing is needed. Mr. Blanton reviewed the three proposals received which were from The Muni in the amount of \$762,500.00, J&M Holding in the amount of \$500,000.00, and RTR Property Management in the amount of \$600,000.00. Mr. Blanton stated that all of these proposals were received during the designated window of time for the RFP. Mr. Blanton stated that a review committee comprised of internal staff independently evaluated each proposal on the following criteria: Relevant Experience (30 Points), Proposed Use and Downtown Vision Alignment (10 Points), Proposed Approach (25 Points), Developer Qualifications (20 Points), and Financial Capacity (15 Points). Mr. Blanton stated that the goal that he emphasized for the committee was to be neutral and fair. Mr. Blanton stated that price should not be the only indicator taken into consideration given the fact that the Council ended the upset bid process because they wanted to look at things other than the price. Mr. Blanton stated that the committee did an excellent job thoroughly vetting these proposals with the criteria previously mentioned. Mr. Blanton stated that this is a weighted system that was adopted by the Council in the RFP that was released with this being similar to other approaches that the City has done in the past. Mr. Blanton discussed the individual proposals highlighting each Main Use Vision and each Basement Use Plan. Mr. Blanton stated that The Muni proposed co-working and creative studios comprised of offices, studios, podcast space, and event space. Mr. Blanton stated that their proposal for the basement was for artist space, monthly art showcases upstairs with rear access maintained. Mr. Blanton stated that RTR Property Management proposed a mixed use project with and anchor restaurant, residential units for the upper floor, office or tenant mix, office suites and a possible restaurant kitchen expansion, new egress via adjacent property at 129 South Main Street, and possible staircase to the main floor. Mr. Blanton stated that J&M Holding were also proposing a mixed-use project which would have retail on the main floor, professional offices above, and flex and light commercial space below. Mr. Blanton stated that they proposed having a flex space for wellness, e-commerce, distribution and trades. Mr. Blanton stated that their architect would address egress and code compliance with building codes, fire codes and an asbestos remediation plan in place. Mr. Blanton stated that all of these proposals were very competitive and RTR Management was the leading scorer in the evaluation process. Mr. Blanton discussed the rationale for the highest score noting components of local expertise, proven track

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record, thoughtful mixed-use plan, historic preservation and building integration, and financial and development readiness. Mr. Blanton noted that the proposal from RTR Management estimates to create \$1.8 million in job creation. Mr. Blanton stated that the conclusion from the committee was that the RTR Property Management's proposal best aligns with the City's priorities of local reinvestment, economic vitality, and downtown cohesion.

Mr. Blanton reminded the Mayor and Council that with the relocation of the museum, the City Council voted on March 1, 2024 to move forward with the design from Creech and Associates in the amount of \$68,000.00 to relocate the museum from 131 S. Main Street to here in the Municipal Complex. Mr. Blanton stated that upon the approval of the well thought out designs from Creech and Associates, the Council moved forward with approving MC Moore for the initial demolition that was done earlier this year in the amount of \$94,449.00. Mr. Blanton stated that upon the conclusion of the initial demolition, we put out another RFP in order to solicit services for the final construction and Council awarded the full construction contract to Pennix in the amount of approximately \$684,000.00 and are under contract to have the upfitting completed by September 30, 2025. Mr. Blanton stated that he is happy to answer questions regarding these proposals.

Motion: Councilman Meadows made a motion to start the negotiation process with RTR Property Management for their proposal for 131 S. Main Street. Councilman Hough seconded the motion.

Councilman Reeves discussed his concerns regarding what has been spent to date. Councilman Reeves stated that he has a concern around taxpayer dollars and the fact that the City turned down the upset bid from the Mount Holly Historical Society in the amount of \$815,000.00. Councilman Reeves is concerned that we have to generate tax revenue from this building, Councilwoman Harris discussed her concerns regarding the money that was turned down from the Mount Holly Historical Society bid and that the vetting and scoring process should be revisited.

Councilman Meadows thanked the staff for their thorough and independent review. Councilman Meadows stated that the staff and their expertise is valued and appreciated. Councilman Meadows addressed the proposer's track record and the benefits of this proposal stating that RTR Property Management has been a pioneer in our central business district having bought when no one else would. Councilman Meadows stated that the recommended proposal brings the greatest value having a mix of uses that will be open to the public about 70 hours per week as opposed to the 3 hours per week that the building is currently open per week. Councilman Meadows stated

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that this proposal brings jobs, property tax value, sales tax, and potential ABC revenue. Councilman Meadows stated that this proposal has demonstrated a high level of citizen support having approximately 40 citizens speak in favor of this process. Councilman Meadows stated that the onetime capital from the sale will offset the cost of designing and upfitting the move to the new museum. Councilman Meadows stated that this approach represents what he calls compound interest, not simple interest with the collective impact being a solid community investment. Councilman Craig thanked the staff for the process, and he would like to go with staff's recommendation.

Councilman Meadows asked the representative for RTR Management, Mr. Rick, to address the remnants of the old jail. Mr. Rick stated that most items are still in the old jail and not disposed of. Mr. Rick confirmed that none of the remnants from the old jail were disposed of.

Councilman Meadows asked Mr. Blanton about the next steps should the negotiations with Mr. Rick fail. Mr. Blanton stated that the next step would be to begin the process to direct the City Attorney to move forward with starting this negotiation process, but that the Council would have the ultimate say as to whether or not a developmental agreement or a contract is put into place. Mr. Blanton stated that if this motion passes tonight, we will work through the City Attorney with RTR Property Management. Mr. Blanton stated that if the negotiations failed, we would come back to the Council for direction on if the Council would like to pursue either of the other two proposals that were given this evening or to seek direction.

All Council members present and voting, voted in favor 3-2. (Motion Carried)

Yays: Councilman Meadows, Councilman Craig, and Councilman Hough.
Nays: Councilman Reeves and Councilwoman Harris.

NEW BUSINESS

1. City Manager Report

Jonathan Blanton

Mr. Blanton thanked the Mount Holly Community Development Foundation for their generous support and for the checks that were presented. Mr. Blanton highlighted the event at Muddy River. Mr. Blanton stated that the Firework celebration will be this Thursday, June 26, 2025. Mr. Blanton reminded everyone that the City offices will be closed Friday, July 4, 2025 but that there will be no interruptions in the residential services. Mr. Blanton stated that the Streets and Public Works Department have been working diligently to complete the paving project downtown. Mr. Blanton stated that our next meeting will be on Monday, July 14, 2025 and that there will be no City Council Work Session Meeting in July. Mr. Blanton stated that the Mount Holly Sports Hall

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of Fame will be held on July 19, 2025 here at the Municipal Complex. Mr. Blanton thanked Mr. Beal for the excellent work that he has done over his 20 plus years of service. Mr. Blanton congratulated Assistant Public Works Director Robert Stewart for being recognized by the North Carolina Rural Water Association with an Administrative Excellence Award.

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.

Motion: Councilman Hough made a motion to go out of the regular meeting and into the Closed Session at 7:22 PM. Councilman Craig seconded the motion.

All Council members present and voting, voted in favor 5-0. (Motion Carried)

Motion: Councilman Hough made a motion to come out of Closed Session and back into the regular meeting at 8:24 PM. Councilman Meadows seconded the motion.

All Council members present and voting, voted in favor 5-0. (Motion Carried)

Motion: Councilman Hough made a motion to adjourn the June 23, 2025 City Council Meeting at 8:24 PM. Councilwoman Harris seconded the motion.

All Council members present and voting, voted in favor 5-0. (Motion Carried)

The meeting adjourned at 8:24 PM