

CITY OF MOUNT HOLLY
CITY COUNCIL RETREAT MEETING MINUTES
FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 2026
COUNCIL CHAMBERS
9:30 AM

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Moore called the meeting to order at 9:30 am. The following were present:

Mayor David Moore	Jonathan Blanton, City Manager
Mayor Pro Tem Phyllis Harris	Brian DuPont, Assistant City Manager
Councilman Ivory Craig	Alexis Hines, Human Resources Director
Councilman Jeff Meadows	Brian Reagan, Police Chief
Councilman William T. Brooks	Greg Beal, Planning Director
Councilwoman Lauren Shoemaker	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	Becky Conder, Interim Finance Director
Shelly Stewart, Deputy City Clerk	Matt Black, Economic Development Director
	Jason Green, Public Works Director
	Ken Kennedy, IT Director

INVOCATION

Charles McCorkle, former Council member, led the Council, Staff, and attendees in prayer.

SET THE AGENDA

Mr. Blanton requested that a Memorandum of Understanding between Kay Jackson Living Legacy Award (KJLLA) and the City of Mount Holly be added to the Consent Agenda.

Mayor Moore entertained a motion to set the agenda as amended.

Motion: Mayor Pro Tem Harris made a motion to approve the agenda with the proposed addition. Councilman Craig seconded the motion.

All Council members present and voting, voted in favor 6-0. (Motion Carried)

CONSENT AGENDA

1. Assistance to Firefighters Grant Application.

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2. Memorandum of Understanding between the City of Mount Holly and Kay Jackson Living Legacy Award (KJLLA).

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

Motion: Councilman Reeves made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda with the proposed changes. Councilman Brooks seconded the motion.

All Council members present and voting, voted in favor 6-0. (Motion Carried)

Mayor Moore introduced Reeves McGlohon as the facilitator for this retreat. Mr. McGlohon requested that the Council create the ground rules for today's retreat.

Ground Rules:

1. Respect others when talking
2. Full Participation
3. Respect Time Schedule
4. Respectful to Staff

Mr. McGlohon reviewed how the Parking Lot item list works and stated that anything outside of what is listed on the agenda would be placed on the Parking Lot item list.

PRESENTATIONS

9:40 AM – 10:00 AM: Overview and Recap of 2025 Retreat, Successes, Progress, and Updates.
Presented by: Jonathan Blanton

Mr. Blanton introduced the staff and reviewed the progress/highlights from the previous year.

10:00 AM - 10:30 AM: Recreation Discussion Regarding New Facilities and Programming Options
Presented by: Eric Smallwood

Mr. Smallwood recapped the previous year and provided an update of the Parks and Recreations Department's new programs and plans for the coming year. Mr. Smallwood stated his department is divided into three sections: facilities, programs, and events. Mr. Smallwood listed the new facilities that came online in 2025. Mr. Smallwood stated Dutchman's Creek was designated as a Blueway. Mr. Smallwood stated Ransom Hunter Park has had a big impact on the community

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and has been highlighted in publications. Mr. Smallwood stated the Dutchman's Creek Bridge and Greenway Extension will move forward on March 8, 2026 after some weather-related delays and will be finished this year. Mr. Smallwood stated the department has partnered with Catawba Heights Elementary and Pinewood Elementary to take over the maintenance and use of their ballfields. Mr. Smallwood stated the department has taken on mowing at Catawba, Woodlawn and Veterans Parks. Mr. Smallwood stated there were improvements to the parking, fencing, and basketball goals in Woodlawn Park with more updates planned for this year. Mr. Smallwood stated two professional gravity trails were built at Mountain Island Park and will be open soon.

Councilman Meadows asked Mr. Smallwood to clarify what a gravity trail is. Mr. Smallwood stated these are trails where gravity does a lot of the work for you. Mr. Smallwood stated these trails are downhill with easy way back up to the top of the trail. Mr. Smallwood stated Bruce with the Tarheel Trailblazers built these trails.

Mr. Smallwood stated there is a new maintenance lot at Tuckaseegee Park due to the Waste Water Treatment Plant decommissioning. Mr. Smallwood stated Tuckaseegee Park received ball field updates, which Stuart Cramer High School uses while their fields are under construction. Mr. Smallwood stated that A&E has helped with various park projects. Mr. Smallwood stated the Mount Holly Athletics Association donated athletic equipment. Mr. Smallwood stated that Boy and Girl Scouts groups have helped with park projects as well. Mr. Smallwood stated there will be new facilities coming in the 2026-2027 year. Mr. Smallwood stated the Sandy Ford River Access and Dutchman's Creek Greenway Northern Terminus will be coming on this year to have connecting river access points. Mr. Smallwood stated there will be more trails coming to Mountain Island Park. Mr. Smallwood stated there have been disc golf course discussions for the east side of Mountain Island Park. Mr. Smallwood stated there will be opportunities at the old Waste Water Treatment Plant site.

Mr. Smallwood highlighted a few of the new programs from this past year. Mr. Smallwood stated the Summer Soccer Camp has been divided into two camps due to popularity. Mr. Smallwood stated the Homeschool Free Play program is at capacity and has recently started its second semester. Mr. Smallwood stated the school break camps are popular, too. Mr. Smallwood stated the staff has created new policies as the programs evolve. Mr. Smallwood stated the Cultural Programs were added for people who need activities in the middle of the day.

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Mayor Moore asked Mr. Smallwood to discuss after-school activities at the old gym. Mr. Smallwood stated that there is free play from 2-6 pm every weekday with approximately 100 kids in attendance. Mr. Smallwood stated that staff is needed to cover the free play activities. Mr. Smallwood stated that staff is adding clubs to the afterschool program to help kids do more than just basketball or homework. Councilwoman Shoemaker asked if this is free? Mr. Smallwood stated yes, it is free just like free play at the Tuckaseegee gym. Mayor Moore asked if the students have to do their homework while they are there? Mr. Smallwood stated yes. Mayor Pro-Tem Harris asked if they have to read? Mr. Smallwood stated no, but there are incentives for the students to read. Mr. Smallwood stated they have made spaces for different activities for the kids to enjoy. Councilman Reeves stated he will often ride by and see the kids playing outside and having fun with the program.

Mr. Smallwood stated they have enhanced the Senior Citizen programming with monthly and weekly programs and will be doing field trips in the warmer months. Mr. Smallwood stated there are about 60-80 seniors in attendance some days. Mr. Smallwood stated staff wants to lean into fitness programs this year. Mr. Smallwood listed new special events this past year and stated that Chloe Clary will be going into detail in a later presentation.

Councilman Reeves asked if the City received any grant funds for the new Blueway? Mr. Smallwood stated that the Blueway is just a designation, but it opens the City up to grant opportunities.

Councilman Brooks asked if there is an update on the A&E road for an additional access point to Tuckaseegee Park. Mr. Blanton stated that there have been ongoing conversations for the past 2 years with A&E about this, and the answer was that they are not interested in a permanent designation of the road. Mr. Blanton stated that there is a meeting scheduled for next week to get an update.

Councilwoman Shoemaker asked if Mr. Smallwood could give examples of fitness programs they are interested in doing. Mr. Smallwood stated the programs would be bootcamp, silver bootcamp, introduction to pickleball, group walks and hikes.

Councilwoman Shoemaker asked if he could elaborate on the Sandy Ford terminus location and when will it be open. Mr. Smallwood stated it is where Sandy Ford Creek and Dutchman's Creek intersects. Councilwoman Shoemaker asked if there is parking at that location. Mr. Smallwood

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stated there is enough space for parking, and staff is looking at what is feasible for parking. Mr. Smallwood stated the anticipated opening should be next summer.

Councilman Meadows inquired if staff has explored another site to access Tuckaseegee Park since A&E is not interested in giving the City the 2nd access point. Mr. Blanton stated that he and Mr. DuPont have had discussions on this and will be including Mr. Smallwood.

Councilman Brooks asked if the Woodlawn Park improvements included cameras. Mr. Smallwood confirmed that there were cameras included in the Woodlawn Park improvements. Councilman Brooks asked about cameras in Ransom Hunter Park. Mr. Smallwood stated that he is in discussion with staff to have cameras installed in Ransom Hunter Park.

Councilman Reeves requested continued discussion regarding the kids in the sports programs. Mr. Smallwood stated they have over 900 kids signed up, which is the most they have ever had. Mr. Smallwood stated the 15 and older age group has 5 teams. Mr. Smallwood stated they are partnering with Belmont because they only have one team. Mr. Smallwood stated this is a testament to our staff, the City's growth, advertising and communication, and our facilities.

Mayor Moore requested an update on the old gym. Mr. Smallwood stated he is looking at a few projects: painting, new floors, and a possible new roof. Mr. Smallwood stated that projects are being priced to include into the upcoming draft budget. Councilman Brooks asked about a timeline for these projects. Mr. Smallwood stated that these projects are subject to Council's approval. Councilman Craig asked when the two buildings between the gym and auditorium are set to be demolished. Mayor Moore stated that there needs to be asbestos removal, and then they can be demolished. Mayor Moore stated there is no timeline for this. Mr. Blanton stated that for over 2 years the City has had contact with Gaston County Schools about plans for those buildings. Mr. Blanton stated that members of the General Assembly met at the old gym. Mr. Blanton stated that he was told this project will be discussed at a future Gaston County School Board meeting. Mr. Blanton stated the most recent update is that the Gaston County School Board is still discussing the matter and noted that there are issues with financing. Mr. Blanton stated that it will be on a future Gaston County School Board retreat agenda.

10:30 AM-11:00AM: Compensation and Pay Philosophy Progress and Employee Benefits

Presented by: Jonathan Blanton

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Mr. Blanton stated that staff initiated a pay study completed by Baker Tilley. Mr. Blanton stated the draft study was accepted by Council to go into the 2026 budget. Mr. Blanton stated there were several initiatives implanted from the study. Mr. Blanton stated all positions are at or above the pay in neighboring markets, the City's starting pay was brought up to \$18.33 per hour, a revised pay plan was created to align with the market, addressed compression in some departments, and retirees were moved to a cost-saving health plan.

Councilman Reeves stated he has concerns about losing staff and the cost to redevelopment staff when someone new comes in and has to catch up with everyone. Councilman Brooks inquired about where the City rated amongst other local cities. Mr. Blanton stated that the City of Mount Holly rated at or above all 10 neighboring markets used in the Baker Tilley study at the time of adopting the new pay plan. Mr. Blanton stated that at the time of the study the City of Mount Holly was the market leader. Councilman Meadows inquired about retention programs, benefits education, and any additional trainings or bonuses to secure a higher employee retention. Mr. Blanton stated that in regard to retention, the Police Department utilizes signing bonuses, and staff is looking into this for the Fire Department as well. Mr. Blanton stated that a Human Resources Coordinator position was added to increase the opportunities for employee questions and benefit education during orientation and throughout their employment.

Councilman Meadows noted retention challenges in the Streets and Solid Waste Department and would like staff to explore opportunities for retention. Councilman Meadows inquired about giving the Utility Director additional retention tools similar to the Police Department and Fire Department. Mr. Blanton stated the Police Department and the Fire Department do not have special tools to retain employees. Mr. Blanton stated that we review all offers brought to employees from another agency the same. Councilman Meadows requested that staff create a Human Resources policy for ongoing education regarding benefits programming for employees. Mayor Moore stated that all departments are important, but Streets and Solid Waste needs more additional focus regarding retention challenges. Councilman Craig stated that, unfortunately, people leave, and the Council should continue having the conversation of retention at least every year to review what is being done.

Mr. Blanton stated that staff is looking at the City's insurance program. Mr. Blanton stated it is expensive to operate an insurance system. Mr. Blanton stated he has met with professionals in the insurance field for insight as insurance is one of the City's biggest expenses. Mr. Blanton

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stated the plan cost has gone up, so he is looking at other options and meeting with other industry experts as the City's plan is coming up for renewal. Mr. Blanton stated that they are evaluating total claims and costs, and he is optimistic about the options that he will bring during the budget season. Mr. Blanton stated he is looking for direction from the Council for him to continue looking into this.

Councilman Meadows inquired about the City's access to the given data we have being self-insured as if we were under a fully insured plan. Mr. Blanton confirmed that the City would have access to the data. Councilman Meadows inquired about the City's level of control being fully insured versus being self-insured. Mr. Blanton stated he has received mixed information from brokers regarding the level of control, but that the City will not lose data that we already have to use for evaluations.

Councilwoman Shoemaker stated that it is not clear which is truly best because we do not know what would have happened if we went the other way. Councilwoman Shoemaker stated that it is really expensive and complex. Councilwoman Shoemaker stated it is hard to know if it was a good idea after only 2 years into it, so she would like to see the City continue.

Mr. Blanton stated he will continue to work with different brokers and experts to bring more information back to Council.

ACTION: The Council gave consensus for Mr. Blanton to continue evaluating and bring back recommendations.

11:00 AM - 11:15 AM: 2025 Year in Review and Updates from Public Works Department

Presented by: Jason Green

Mr. Green stated the Public Works Department did not previously have a lot of data, but this past year he has worked with our GIS Department to bring back some numbers for this update. Mr. Green highlighted the goals obtained by the Buildings and Grounds division. Mr. Green stated the Streets and Solid Waste team has 6,800 customers they take care of each week. Mr. Green stated that every day the garbage trucks are taken to the dump to be emptied, refueled, and cleaned. Mr. Green stated the same employees are then going out and mowing around 140 spaces on City properties. Mr. Green stated keeping sanitation in-house allowed him to use these employees for mowing, leaf collection, and other City needs.

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Mr. Green stated they currently have 2 mechanic technicians and will soon have a full-time mechanic. Mr. Green stated large diesel trucks, like the garbage trucks, need specific mechanical work so he is adding the price of 5 years of maintenance service to the purchase price of new trucks to pay for the service up front so the full-time mechanic can focus on other fleet cars. Mr. Green stated that the department had paid over \$100,000 in maintenance costs previously.

Mr. Green stated the utilities department is now in several divisions. Mr. Green stated he has been working with Beth Ann Winebarger to identify continuous problem areas to be able to come back with real data for Council to approve new water lines or other repairs. Mr. Green stated that over 3,000-meter issues were identified last year. Mr. Green provided the Water Treatment Plant data from last year. Mr. Green stated the Waste Water Treatment Plant decommissioning is still ongoing. Mr. Green stated the stormwater specialist received 81 complaints total, with 38 of those eligible for repair. Mr. Green stated our MS4 permitting evaluations and inspections are ongoing. Mr. Green stated he is working on getting the stormwater system mapped. Mr. Green stated the Project Management team is now two people. Mr. Green listed some of the projects that were handled last year. Mr. Green stated the total was over \$29 million worth of projects last year.

Mr. Green discussed the growth in the City and the Public Works Department capacity. Mr. Green stated he has a model formula to plug in proposed development data to see if we are going to have the capacity to keep adding on new residents.

Mayor Moore stated that even though the wetland project is finished, there are residents concerned about the fencing and children playing around there. Councilman Craig agreed that the area around Ida Rankin School is a concern. Mr. Green stated he can look into adding fencing there

Councilman Reeves thanked Mr. Green for helping with keeping costs down for residents.

Mayor Pro-Tem Harris thanked Mr. Green for his work and availability for questions.

Councilwoman Shoemaker stated she appreciates the change in management style and the increased quality of the updates. Mr. Green stated the department has been implementing an app created by GIS Technician II Beth Ann Winebarger allowing workers to take photos before, during, and after jobs to increase data.

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Mayor Moore stated that landscaping around the City is important and suggested a dedicated landscaping team for the future.

11:15 AM - 11:30 AM: Overview and Update on Public Arts Initiatives

Presented by: Paul Lowe

Mr. Lowe described the background on the PAAC and membership. Mr. Lowe discussed the goals that have been achieved from the strategic plan. Mr. Lowe listed the PAAC's completed projects since 2021 and the projects that were funded for Fiscal Year 2025-2026. Mr. Lowe showed photos of completed projects around the City. Mr. Lowe listed the current projects that are ongoing this year with their projected completion dates. Mr. Lowe stated that future projects will be discussed at the upcoming PAAC retreat, but they have discussed the Summey building installation, the development of a public art plan for future direction of art plans, and they are researching a Danish artist who creates popular giant Troll Art entirely out of wood.

Councilman Brooks asked if the Troll Art would be purchased by the City. Mr. Lowe stated they would seek additional funding. Councilwoman Shoemaker stated this would be a big tourist attraction. Councilman Meadows stated the TDA could be a funding source for the Troll Art. Councilman Reeves stated there is a study that states for every \$1 spent on art about \$3 goes back into the economy. Councilman Reeves stated this could be justification for spending money on the Troll Art.

Councilman Meadows inquired about the current and future budget for the arts programs. Mr. Blanton stated that last year around \$70-75,000 was spent on art so staff is using that range to continue planning. Councilwoman Shoemaker asked if the PAAC is targeting exact projects for the City to fund or just using a range and finding projects that fit into the budget. Mr. Lowe stated that in the past it would be staff driven to price out each project to go into a budget request. Mr. Lowe stated that now PAAC wants to be more involved in the budget process. Mr. Lowe stated that moving forward it will be a shared effort between PAAC and staff. Mr. Beal stated the budget has gone up each year and now they are not just trying to find projects to do but have future ideas.

11:45 AM - 12:00 PM: 2025 Year in Review and Updates from the Police Department

Presented by: Chief Brian Reagan

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Chief Reagan showed some photos from their community events and of their new equipment this year. Chief Reagan stated the Police Department is currently fully staffed and leading the way in pay for the local market. Chief Reagan stated crimes have gone down about 30% over the past two years. Chief Reagan stated our department is over the national closing rate. Chief Reagan stated the department averages about 1 arrest per day with 350 arrests through the year. Chief Reagan stated their Community Outreach projects are growing every year. Chief Reagan stated the Senior Check program has grown and they were able to give participants a gift over the holidays with plans to expand their efforts to the Sole Patrol. Chief Reagan stated that some of the new projects include 9 new FLOCK cameras which brings the City to 14 total.

Councilman Brooks asked Chief Reagan to discuss the FLOCK camera that assisted in the apprehension of a criminal in Riverfront neighborhood. Chief Reagan stated that a week after a FLOCK camera was placed at the Riverfront neighborhood entrance it flagged a criminal charged with violent crimes, warrants and drugs in the car. Chief Reagan stated they were arrested before anything could happen. Chief Reagan stated the residents of Riverfront had concerns at first about the FLOCK cameras, but he and Deputy Sisk met with them and explained it helps with the more major crimes.

Councilman Meadows asked Chief Reagan to explain how cell data and the tag readers work together. Chief Reagan stated as soon as a tag with warrants is read by the camera, an app on officers' phones notifies them of the location of the reader so officers can locate the vehicle as it is moving through the City. Chief Reagan stated that these cameras are looking for people with major or violent crimes, not dead tags or minor issues. Chief Reagan confirmed that the FLOCK cameras are common in municipalities everywhere and we are able to work together with other agencies with FLOCK cameras to catch criminals.

Chief Reagan stated the drone program has led to 8 arrests. Chief Reagan stated there are 2 officers on every shift who are certified drone pilots. Chief Reagan stated that Lieutenant Kale can train others for drone piloting. Chief Reagan discussed the new upcoming projects. Chief Reagan stated the gun range should be ready in the Spring. Chief Reagan handed out drawings of designs for the new communications center to the Council. Chief Reagan stated that the center will go from 2 consoles to 4 consoles. Chief Reagan stated we are the only agency besides the County that has a communications center, which has a direct correlation to officer response times. Chief Reagan stated the new FTO program is a more standardized way to observe field

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officers. Chief Reagan stated that officers receive 2 questions on current policies when they log into their computers every shift to keep them up to date.

Councilman Brooks stated as a lifelong resident of Mount Holly, he has seen crime decrease and thanked the Police Department. Councilman Craig stated that he wanted to emphasize our staffing noting at his recent ethics training the City of Mount Holly Police Department was the only fully staffed representation. Chief Reagan stated the last several hires have an 11.4-year service average.

Mr. McGlohon stated he is involved with the Police Foundation, and they make it easy to raise money for them. Mayor Moore asked if the shooting range will be exclusive to Mount Holly or will other agencies have access? Chief Reagan stated it will start with just Mount Holly officers but will slowly allow other agencies access while trying to be mindful of noise for residents nearby. Chief Reagan stated this will be better for training and practicing since there are only 2 facilities available in the County now.

12:00 break for lunch

12:00 PM - 12:15 PM: 2025 Year in Review and Updates from the Fire Department

Presented by: Ryan Baker

Chief Baker discussed the Fire Department's vision statement, mission statement, and employee promotions and additions. Chief Baker discussed their Community Outreach programs and how many residents they are able to reach. Chief Baker stated there is a new program for the Fire Marshal where he can make updates on plans electronically which can speed up inspection and permitting times. Chief Baker stated the total calls from 2025 was 2,358 with a wide range of actions needed. Chief Baker listed the types of fires and rescues in 2025, highlighting that the number of water rescue calls is continuing to go up as more people are on the water. Chief Baker stated that last year they had increased training hours and many certifications completed by staff. Chief Baker described and showed photos of the new apparatus and equipment for last year including 2 new engines, a tiller ladder truck, and a drone. Chief Baker stated that from July to December of 2025 there were 68 hours of flight, 326 flights, and 198 miles on the drone. Chief Baker highlighted outstanding staff: one person from each shift won Fire Fighter of the year and the person with the top training hours from each shift. Chief Baker stated the City was awarded

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the prestigious ISO 1 rating that will go in effect on March 6, 2026. Chief Baker stated this was earned by emergency communications, fire department coverages, and the water supply system. Chief Baker stated this rating can lower resident and business insurance premiums, supports economic development growth as companies could chose our sites because of lower insurance, and shows the City's investment in fire services. Chief Baker stated he has ordered a new engine to replace a 2014 truck, but it will not arrive for 3 years. Chief Baker stated that to improve or maintain the ISO 1 rating the Fire Department could use a training facility, staffing an engine company out of the main station, and the Police Department dispatching Fire Department calls to improve response time. Councilman Brooks suggested looking at implementing these improvements as soon as possible.

12:15 PM - 12:30 PM: Finance Update and Upcoming Budget Priorities

Presented by: Jonathan Blanton

Mr. Blanton thanked interim Finance Director Becky Condor and General Ledger Accountant Katie Holland for their work in the absence of a Finance Director. Mr. Blanton announced that Ashley Whestine has been hired as the new Finance Director and will be joining the City on March 23, 2026 from Cleveland County. Mr. Blanton stated that a formal announcement will be made next week. Mr. Blanton stated that the Finance Department received the GFOA Distinguished Budget Award 2 years in a row. Mr. Blanton stated that last year the City implemented banking remote deposit, the audit was submitted and approved, grants were closed out and received, and progress was made on capital improvement projects. Mr. Blanton discussed the statistics of what the Finance Department takes care of and the number of transactions last year. Mr. Blanton highlighted budget priorities and noted that the City is in a strong financial position. Mr. Blanton stated the next year's budget will be conservative as well to finish up more capital improvement projects. Mr. Blanton stated the budget schedule will be released in a few days.

Councilman Meadows requested that the new finance director do an analysis of the City's debt and refinancing opportunities.

12:30 PM - 12:45 PM: Economic Development Update

Presented by: Matt Black

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Mr. Black states that economic development is about strengthening place and resistance, creating and keeping quality jobs, and growing the tax bases sustainably. Mr. Black discussed the City's demographic data as Mount Holly by the numbers. Mr. Black stated there is an average of 1% growth per year with 310 brick and mortar businesses in the City. Mr. Black stated his initiatives over the year included a new website, property availability tracking, promotional videos, and quarterly business outreach events. Mr. Black stated the last outreach event had about 50 people, and the next event will be at Muddy River Distillery. Mr. Black showed an example of how he tracks Requests For Information and stated there were about 95 total requests from the last year. Mr. Black provided numbers on the overall commercial investment through 2025. Mr. Black showcased DiscoverMountHolly.com and the business directory. Mr. Black discussed the social media statistics for the economic development videos. Mr. Black stated that other initiatives include brick and mortar business promotions, especially during downtown events, enticing infill development, and creating a list of local regional developers.

Councilman Reeves thanked Mr. Black for the business outreach meetings noting that he has heard a lot of positive feedback on these events. Mr. Black stated that the people coming to these events also include businesses from Charlotte looking to invest in Mount Holly.

12:45 PM - 1:00 PM: Mount Holly History Museum Update

Presented by: Brian DuPont

Mr. DuPont shared photos of the November 2025 ribbon cutting of the new Mount Holly Museum location. Mr. DuPont stated that since opening this new location the Mount Holly Museum has been open 77 days out of 110. Mr. DuPont noted that there were 694 visitors during this time with an average of 15.6 people visiting per week. Mr. DuPont highlighted the Mount Holly Museum Virtual Tour project initiated by the Office of the Clerk. Mr. DuPont stated that the Office of the Clerk has collaborated with our friends at the Mount Holly Historical Society to complete this virtual tour of the new Mount Holly Museum. Mr. DuPont stated that this virtual tour will be posted on the City's website. Mr. DuPont stated that the upcoming projects for the museum include QR code tours, IT upgrades next fiscal year, marketing the museum with Garland and Burke, expanding hours, and tours for groups or schools. Mr. DuPont stated staff will get feedback from the Mount Holly Historical Society prior to their scheduled presentation at the upcoming March 9, 2026 City Council meeting.

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Councilman Brooks suggested that the QR codes be on signage downtown to show more of the City's history. Councilwoman Shoemaker stated that is a great parking lot item.

Mayor Pro-Tem Harris reported that she has additional information as the liaison for the Mount Holly Historical Society. Mayor Pro-Tem Harris stated that the museum is now closing on Saturday due to lack of visitors. Mayor Pro-Tem Harris suggested hiring a full or part-time staff member for the museum to help coordinate tours and has a knowledge of the items.

Councilman Meadows stated he would like to have permanent historical displays in the Grand Hall, QR codes and staffing considered during the budget season for the Mount Holly Museum.

Mayor Moore stated that the Historical Society has some momentum with some upcoming events and that will hopefully help promote the space. Councilman Craig stated that he likes the proposed new hire and asked Mayor Pro-Tem Harris about suggested hours for a potential employee. Mayor Pro-Tem Harris stated that no suggested hours have been discussed, only the need to have someone there who will work with the Mount Holly Historical Society board.

Mayor Moore asked staff to continue the conversation of need with the Mount Holly Historical Society. Councilman Meadows suggested that the City consider options that would cover both art and history. Mayor Pro-Tem Harris stated this is a parking lot item to discuss during the budget season.

Mr. Blanton stated that he will compile this direction along with any needs presented to the Council for a presentation during the upcoming budget season.

North Carolina State Senator Brad Overcash was introduced and gave a quick word of thanks to the City Council for their work.

1:00 PM - 1:15 PM: Planning Update and Review of the City's Cost Benefit Analysis

Presented by: Greg Beal

Mr. Beal stated that the Planning Department worked to improve processes and training employees up so that their knowledge is passed along to others. Mr. Beal stated that Planner II Brandon Livingston has taken over the TRC, Planner I Josh Blackwell is the Watershed Administrator, and GIS Technician II Beth Ann Winebarger has been expanding the GIS program to other departments within the City. Mr. Beal stated that his goal is to improve efficiency and

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update the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance this year. Mr. Beal stated that he is looking to get a mapping cabinet to house hard copies of their maps. Mr. Beal provided a project overview for the coming year. Mr. Beal gave an annexations overview showing the 7 ongoing annexations with the current status of each. Mr. Beal stated it takes about 14-15 months to go through the whole process and TRC review to get annexed. Mr. Beal stated the Holly Heights annexation will be coming to Council on March 9, 2026 as it has been to the Planning Commission.

Mr. Beal stated the purpose of the cost benefit analysis is to try to capture the revenue coming in from the developments. Mr. Beal stated the plan works to analyze tax values of comparable homes for the purposed development and then send the plans to other departments to see what their cost is to serve that development. Mr. Beal stated this is so we can know what the City's cost will be since developers do not pay for these services, and if the City will be in a deficit from the development in order to maintain the same level of service to this development.

Councilman Meadows asked if the formulas that they run are static or include escalators. Mr. Beal stated that it can do both. Councilman Meadows stated staff should look at long term debt service to keep bad developments out that may not be seen with a static formula. Mr. Beal stated that Raftelis helped with a new version of the model that was used on Holly Heights to keep estimates conservative.

Mayor Pro-Tem Harris requested an update on the Springs Property. Mr. Beal stated in 2015 a plan was submitted, in 2017 it came to Council, but the developer had added more lots and roads. Mr. Beal stated the City Attorney said the developer had to withdraw and redo the plans. Mr. Beal stated in 2021, they brought a plan and went through many more reviews than average for a development. Mr. Beal stated the developer was not meeting the requirements and withdrew plans in fall 2025.

2:05 Congressman Tim Moore was introduced and briefly spoke to the Council and staff.

1:45 PM - 2:00 PM: ABC Fund Balance Update / Update on the Tourism Development Authority
Presented by: Eric Smallwood

Mr. Smallwood stated he will be presenting the ABC Fund and the TDA updates together. Mr. Smallwood stated that he spent last year learning about the ABC Fund, why the policy was made,

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and how to move forward with the funds. Mr. Smallwood stated that the current balance of ABC fund as of the end of January 2026 is over \$2.8 million. Mr. Smallwood stated that staff has talked about what to do with this fund and would like to put together a Capital Improvement Project to show how they plan to spend the money. Mr. Smallwood stated the spirit of the fund is to improve and develop parks. Mr. Smallwood stated that there is enough data to put together a Capital Improvement Project. Mr. Smallwood stated some projects that could fall into this are the Sandy Ford River Access/Dutchman's Creek Terminus, or Mountain Island Park mountain bike trail build out which would make Mount Holly a trail-based destination. Mr. Smallwood stated the funds could be used for feasibility studies, or design and engineering for new facility planning. Mr. Smallwood stated that it could also be used to rehabilitate existing facilities.

Mr. Smallwood provided a TDA update. Mr. Smallwood stated that he has been working with the TDA for a few months to understand how we can work together. Mr. Smallwood stated that he would like to understand where we are duplicating services and how best to project an aligned message. Mr. Smallwood stated staff is working on a guiding document plan to see where staff and the TDA can work together. Mr. Smallwood stated City staff is leading the effort with TDA buy in. Mr. Smallwood stated an RFP will be coming soon to have a third party create a guiding document plan.

Councilman Meadows suggested getting sponsorship partners for projects like the disc golf course or bike trails. Mr. Smallwood stated this could be included with planning.

Councilman Brooks inquired about a plan for bars and restaurants to buy from our ABC store to assist with the fund balance. Mayor Moore stated this is a parking lot item. Mayor Pro-Tem Harris stated that she plans to survey the local restaurants on the topic. Councilman Craig stated that the law changed within last year, and businesses can go outside of their municipality to purchase alcohol. Councilman Craig stated that the ABC store management should bring in more of a variety to get more business.

Councilman Meadows inquired about the Rowing Club needs and the Waste Water Treatment Plant decommissioning site plan. Mr. Smallwood stated that the City cannot facilitate what the Rowing Club is needing at this time as they are wanting a larger scale facility than what the City can provide.

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Councilman Meadows requested that staff look into a site planner and feasibility options for the use of the Waste Water Treatment Plant decommissioning site.

Councilman Meadows stated that he would like to know where the funds for the Municipal Complex will go once the debt service is complete in a few payments.

2:15 PM - 2:30 PM: Special Events Preview and Upcoming 2026 Events

Presented by: Chloe Clary

Ms. Clary gave an update on the upcoming events that are planned noting that the toddler egg will be in a few weeks. Ms. Clary recognized the great outreach every year from the Police and Fire Departments. Ms. Clary stated the Chalk the Walk event is coming in April and was a new event last year. Ms. Clary stated Garland and Burks are doing a great job promoting the events. Ms. Clary stated the Springfest series will be starting earlier this year with the RiverHawk Races and the addition of Community Play Day – a revitalization of KidsFest. Ms. Clary stated then the Senior Dinner, with Caromont as a sponsor, and the Community Awards dinner will be held in the Grand Hall. Ms. Clary stated that awards nominations are open online. Ms. Clary stated that she is pulling a Mount Holly Nights concert up to be part of SpringFest series this year before the PACE festival. Ms. Clary stated the vision has been revamped to be more of an experience rather than just a festival. Ms. Clary went over the Mount Holly Nights performers line up. Ms. Clary stated that the successful Christmas in July will be returning. Ms. Clary stated that the Pumpkin Piddle Paddle has increased in participation since last year and will be starting and ending earlier this year. Ms. Clary gave an overview of the Yule Love Mount Holly events later in the year with a similar schedule as last year. The Mayor and Council thanked Ms. Clary for her dedicated work.

2:30 PM - 3:00 PM: Legislative Goals and Lobbying Priorities for 2026

Presented by: Brian DuPont

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Mr. DuPont stated the NC Legislative short session is starting in 2026. Mr. DuPont stated the City's policy goals are lobbying against the down-zoning legislation. Mr. DuPont stated the City's budget goals include project specific funding, grant opportunities and support. Mr. DuPont stated staff is planning to have Legislative Day in the spring or summer.

ADJOURN

Motion: Mayor Pro-Tem Harris made a motion to adjourn the February 27th, 2026 City Council Retreat at 2:45 PM. Councilman Brooks seconded the motion.

All Councilmembers present and voting, voted in favor (6-0).

The meeting was adjourned at 2:45 PM.

PARKING LOT

1. Create a policy for ongoing education about benefits programming with Human Resources to keep employees educated so that we can retain employees.
2. Bring recommendations for moving forward with self-insurance.
3. Add fencing around the wetlands project area near Ida Rankin School.
4. Creation of a landscaping specific team in Public Works department.
5. Additional funding for the Arts
6. Completing Fire Department updates needed to increase/maintain the ISO scoring.
7. Analysis of Debt and Refinancing Opportunities
8. Adding Grand Hall art or history displays per MHHS or arts organizations' needs.
9. Create a QR code tour for museum and/or downtown.
10. Mount Holly Museum full or part-time employee.
11. Analysis of bars and restaurants not purchasing from MH ABC.
12. Find sponsors for parks projects.
13. Look into the cost of a site planner to help with feasible options for the WWTP site (ancillary uses beyond a park)
14. Assign Municipal Complex funds once debt is paid off.