

CITY OF MOUNT HOLLY
CITY COUNCIL RETREAT MEETING MINUTES
FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 2025
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 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
Shelly Stewart, Deputy City Clerk	Matt Black, Economic Development Director
	Jason Green, Public Works Director

INVOCATION

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

SET THE AGENDA

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

**Motion: Councilman Craig made a motion to approve the agenda as presented.
Councilman Reeves seconded the motion.**

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

CONSENT AGENDA

Mr. Blanton introduced the City staff present. Mr. Blanton gave an overview of the consent agenda items.

- a. Approval to award the South Gateway bid to Red Clay

Mr. Blanton stated that the lowest bidder for phase one of the South Gateway Connector Road-Kemp A. Michael Way, is Red Clay.

- b. Approval to award the Dutchman’s Creek Bridge bid to JD Goodrum Company

Mr. Blanton stated that staff recommends the approval of both items.

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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. Councilman Craig seconded the motion.

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

Mr. Reeves McGlohan, who is the facilitator for this retreat, gave opening remarks and stated that he is thankful to be participating in another City Council Retreat. Mr. McGlohan shared an inspirational quote for the Council and staff which read as follows: “Public service is a calling that involves the public good and making a difference in people’s lives. It can be a challenging but also honorable pursuit that involves sacrifice.”

Mr. McGlohan stated that the “Parking Lot” is for off topic items that are not on today’s agenda but can be acknowledged as a topic for discussion at a later time. Mr. McGlohan asked for ground rules for conducting today’s meeting: Mayor Moore– everyone involved in discussions; Councilman Craig – be respectful, listen, agree to disagree; Councilman Meadows – debate ideas not people, only staff and council are to speak; Mayor Pro-Tem Shoemaker – follow Roberts Rules of Order, end on time, and stay on task.

Consideration of Kinetix Lease Renewal

Mr. Blanton noted that before Council is the 5-year lease with Kinetix with a few changes. Mr. Blanton stated that since there have been a few changes, the City will need to do a 30-day advertising period with the final lease to go before Council at a later meeting for approval.

Action: The consensus of the Council is to advertise the intent to lease with Kinetix starting on March 14, 2025 with the consideration of the lease at the April 14, 2025 City Council meeting under New Business.

PRESENTATIONS

9:40 AM – 10:00 AM: Overview and Recap of 2024 Retreat, Successes, Progress, and Updates
Presented by: Jonathan Blanton

Mr. Blanton thanked the Council for their directions from the March 2024 Council Retreat and thanked the City staff for setting the goals into action. Mr. Blanton highlighted the adoption of the code of conduct on March 25, 2024. Mr. Blanton reviewed the progress of the Ransom Hunter Park and stated that this has been many years in the making and is set to open spring or summer of 2025. Mr. Blanton reviewed the progress in the Public Works department highlighting that in the summer of 2024, the Council voted to keep solid waste collection in-

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house. Mr. Blanton stated that the decommissioning of the Wastewater Treatment Plant was awarded last year to HDR Engineering. Mr. Blanton highlighted that in September 2024, Council adopted the Raftelis 5-year rate study. Mr. Blanton stated that the Council unanimously voted to install cameras last year on the greenway leading to Tuckaseege Park in March 2024, and the cameras were installed in July 2024. Mr. Blanton stated that the cameras enhance the quality of life for residents and visitors to Tuckaseege Park. Mr. Blanton reminded the Council that in 2024, the Sole Patrol & YMCA formed a partnership allowing the seniors of both groups to go on field trips, have fellowships, and have joint events. Mr. Blanton stated that the City continues to partner with the Community Development Foundation and that they hosted the Mount Holly Matters event. Mr. Blanton stated that key positions were hired in 2024 to include the Economic Development Director, Public Works Director, Parks and Recreation Director, and the City Engineer. Mr. Blanton is proud of the team and staff and thanked the Council for approving these items and projects and for providing clear forward directions.

Councilman Hough commended Mr. Blanton for his leadership in his first year and stated that it is impressive to see these accomplishments and key positions hired since some of these positions mentioned sat vacant for an extended period of time.

Mayor Moore thanked Mr. Blanton and the staff and stated that he is appreciative for the work that has been accomplished.

10:00 AM – 10:30 AM: Presentation of Accomplishments from the Strategic Vision Plan

Presented by: Greg Beal

Mr. Beal reviewed the 2003 Strategic Vision Plan and its background. Mr. Beal stated that in 2003, 250 citizens came together because there was little going on downtown, and in 6 weeks they came up with 5 goals. Mr. Beal stated that among those first goals were Linear Park, an event space, and a water-front dining restaurant. Mr. Beal reviewed that with the goals moving forward, in 2008, the City hired a firm to create 61 goals, and over 50 have been accomplished. Mr. Beal stated that the Strategic Vision Plan update in 2018 was broken down into the following components: Market Analysis Synopsis, Connectivity and Transportation, Downtown area plan, Gateway District at Exit 27 of I-85, Woods and Water District, an art program, and updating policies. Mr. Beal stated that transparency was important in the update, so the City staff made it accessible by creating a public-facing interface to show the public what has been accomplished. Mr. Beal stated that there are currently 44 accomplished goals, and 16 in progress.

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Mr. Beal stated that the City is over halfway complete on a 10–12-year plan. Mr. Beal explained that the City passed along information to the public with workshops, meetings about the Plan to coincide with budget plans, and giving presentations to City Summit members. Mr. Beal gave a presentation of the Strategic Vision Plan website and noted that this site was made by our GIS Technician II, Beth Ann Winebarger. Mr. Beal highlighted the catalog tab on the site which features the accomplishments made by the City and stated that if you were to click on a goal, it would open a mapping tool to show where progress is on that goal. Mr. Beal opened the gallery tab to look at past accomplished goals. Mr. Beal stated that the overall goal was to create a community-based vision plan, and that City staff added all comments and surveys from citizens involved in the creation process. Mr. Beal stated that every year staff looks at each department and reviews any goals that can be worked on.

Councilman Hough thanked Mr. Beal and the staff and stated that since Mr. Beal has been with the City, he has helped set the City on a course that Council could not do alone.

Councilman Meadows asked Mr. Beal to expound on the Exit 27 off of I-85 investments. Mr. Beal stated that prior to 2003 the area was zoned improperly as residential, but in 2003 the area was rezoned to general business. Mr. Beal stated that in 2006 the South Gateway general overlay district was created. Mr. Beal stated that in 2008, higher design standards were set in place to protect the area. Mr. Beal stated that when the recession hit in 2008, the City sought partnerships for the utility investment. Mr. Beal stated that the City’s \$8 million sewer and South Gateway Connector Road/ Kemp A. Michael Way investment has created approximately \$150 million dollars in private investment in this area. Councilman Meadows confirmed with Mr. Beal that an \$8 million dollar investment by the City has realized approximately \$150 million dollars. Councilman Meadows stated that he wanted to point out that public investments are being paid off by private investments.

Councilman Craig asked Mr. Beal to discuss the new message board sign. Mr. Beal stated that this sign is part of the Wayfinding and Signage Plan. Mr. Beal stated that there are 3 more signs planned. Mr. Beal shared that the first sign’s cost is shared with the Tourism Development Authority (TDA) and sits in a Department of Transportation (DOT) easement, which helped with the cost of utilities. Mr. Beal stated that the downtown kiosk is in the capital improvement budget for next year and that Blowing Rock has an example of a kiosk that has videos showing places to eat, maps, and more.

Councilman Meadows asked how much citizen participation has there been over time and what have nonprofits helped accomplish? Mr. Beal stated that the original group that participated in

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2008 was over 250 citizens. Mr. Beal stated that the nonprofits in the community participated in numerous collaborative meetings and have been instrumental in completing projects by helping to facilitate the conversations. Mr. Beal stated that the creation of the Community Development Foundation came out of this first Plan in 2003. Councilman Meadows inquired about the Community Development Foundation’s accomplishments. Mr. Beal stated that they have done a tremendous amount around the arts program and updating policies in Chapter 7. Councilman Meadows wanted to highlight how vital the Community Development Foundation is to implementing the Plan. Councilman Meadows inquired as to how many of our policies have come out of the Strategic Vision Plan from 2004 to present day. Mr. Beal stated that there had been no way to score developers, so a cost benefit analysis was created as part of the Annexation Policy.

Parking Lot Item #1: Councilman Meadows requested that a catalog of policy accomplishments and timeline from the Strategic Vision Plans for the City’s website be added to the “Parking Lot” for a later discussion.

Councilman Hough discussed the past moratorium that Council put in place to protect the downtown buildings and stated that the Community Development Foundation assisted in getting historic designation for the historic downtown buildings.

10:30 AM – 11:00 AM: Presentation from OneDigital Regarding Update on Self-Insurance

Presented by: Brian Flynn

Mr. Flynn recapped the Council’s decision to move from the North Carolina League of Municipalities (NCLM) insurance program and chose the self-funded option that kept the City’s insurance with MedCost. Mr. Flynn reminded the Council that the NCLM was leaving MedCost and moving to coverage through Aetna last year. Mr. Flynn stated that the data being presented is 7 months old, and in the first few months there were no claims made. Mr. Flynn showed a screenshot of the dashboard in his presentation to show where the City is currently and stated that this dashboard tracks the number of people eligible, payments, reimbursements, net claim number, and more. Mr. Flynn stated that the City will be approximately \$10,000 over budget when it begins planning for the next fiscal year budget and that this amount does not include high-cost claimants that the City will be getting reimbursed for later. Mr. Flynn stated that another reason for the move to self-funded insurance is to ensure transparency in pharmacy costs and with that, the City will get rebates each quarter of about \$120,000-140,000 on a 6-month delay.

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Councilman Hough stated that he would like Mr. Flynn to make a point of clarification on what is allowing the City to get rebates, and where that money was going before. Mr. Flynn stated that any claimant that goes above \$75,000, the City will get reimbursed for whereas previously, the rebates would go back to the North Carolina League of Municipalities to subsidize other municipalities, but that now the rebates come back to the City on a 6-month delay.

Mr. Flynn noted that claims are tracked by division and if a claimant is high cost. Mr. Flynn stated that pharmacy costs were the biggest reason that the City decided to participate in self-funding. Mr. Flynn stated that One Digital goes out and finds their own contracts. Mr. Flynn stated that the State eliminated weight loss drugs in their plan, so we did too to save \$37,000. Mr. Flynn noted that a program called PaydHealth can get high-cost drugs at no cost or is income driven for users and PaydHealth uses grants and benevolent programs to save money. Mr. Flynn stated that the annual savings are about \$150,000 with this program. Mr. Flynn stated that for the upcoming renewal, the City will need to renew its Stop Loss and that there will be a 1% increase on that part of the insurance, but they will need to look at February and March claims to be sure of the increase amount. Mr. Flynn reviewed the trends with retirees and said that they are looking to shift retirees to individual plans. Mr. Flynn noted that this would save the City approximately \$100,000, but that continued discussions regarding these details would be had. Mr. Flynn stated that they are looking at a program for direct contracting providers like orthopedics, spinal, and OB/GYN to save costs to the employees and the City. Mr. Flynn discussed a voluntary program for prescription drugs called International Rx and that implementing this program will provide assistance with diseases like diabetes.

Councilman Hough asked Mr. Flynn to speak to the Municipal Insurance Trust. Mr. Flynn stated that it was announced this week that they are disbanding the Municipal Insurance Trust and that all of the municipalities participating in it will have to find another plan. Councilman Hough reiterated that those participating including the City were subsidizing other cities not being as efficient as we were. Councilman Hough encouraged One Digital to look into retirees shifting to another plan to help with costs and asked if the City pays for retirees? Mr. Blanton answered, stating yes, the City pays for retirees. Councilman Hough asked if there are no subsidies? Mr. Flynn said BlueCross BlueShield's Gold plan would cost \$140,000 to the City but the cost now is \$250,000 plus to the City. Mr. Flynn stated that the retiree class is usually pretty consistent with claims, so the City has the option to cap what their risk is and provide more room for other claimants. Councilman Hough stated that the City choosing to move to self-funded, the City has taken control of the spending, the strategies, and providing for the employees.

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Councilman Meadows stated there had been discussions on saving and building reserves and asked if that has happened yet? Mr. Flynn stated that there has been some going towards reserve, but the amounts may be below the budget line due to high claims. Mr. Flynn stated that if the City puts in the recommended measures, it will build that budget line. Councilman Meadows asked if the City is spending more or less than before? Mr. Flynn stated that the City is spending about \$10,000 over budget currently, but the amount could be under once the rebates come in. Mr. Flynn stated that claims were higher this year, but they could be lower next year.

Mr. Blanton reiterated that on June 30, 2025 they are closing the Municipal Insurance Trust because of \$1,000,000 in losses and that if the Council had not voted to switch, the City would have been scrambling to keep our employees' coverage.

Mr. Flynn said that the switch that the North Carolina League of Municipalities experienced was clumsy and our pharmacy costs would have been 30% higher than they are now. Mr. Flynn stated that he will keep bringing updates to the Council as they prepare for the new budget year.

Action: The Council's consensus is to consider/discuss moving retirees to another plan as part of the renewal process.

Councilman Hough asked for break at 10:48 AM.

11:00 AM – 11:30 AM: Policy Discussion on Funding to Non-Profit Organizations

Presented by: Staff

Mr. Blanton said that \$18,500 is the total allocated to the Mount Holly Police Foundation and Community Development Foundation on a reimbursement basis. Mr. Blanton stated that both of these Foundations are governed by a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) written by the City Attorney. Mr. Blanton stated that there is a policy example from the Town of Holly Springs provided by the City Clerk for Council's review. Mr. Blanton stated that other requirements such as providing proof of 501(c)(3) status and providing an audit report could also be added at the Council's direction.

Councilman Hough said it is important to show where the City funds allocated to the non-profits are spent and that the non-profits should provide an audit for transparency. Mayor Moore stated that he agrees with Councilman Hough.

Councilman Meadows stated that it is common practice for municipalities to have a pool of funds for non-profits to utilize through an application process. Councilman Meadows stated that the City needs to ensure that the non-profits are in good standing and should be required to

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submit audit information, bank statements, and 501(c)(3) documentation showing they are in good standing.

Mayor Pro Tem Shoemaker stated that applying for grants require this type of accounting practice and having audits ensures investments are going back into the community. Mayor Pro Tem Shoemaker stated that the Community Development Foundation could be a Quasi-Review committee for other non-profit committees in the future.

Councilman Hough stated that the City provides a lot of in-kind services that add value that should be taken into consideration as part of the benefit. Councilman Hough stated that the Police, Fire, and Street Department services used by non-profits are costs to taxpayers as well though not actual “costs.”

Councilman Meadows said that an audit does more than look at numbers, it proves that money was spent, and they did what they said they were going to do with it.

Action: The consensus of the Council is for Mr. Blanton and City staff to draft a formal policy to provide for a competitive application process, stipulations, and requirements for providing funding to other non-profit entities outside of the Mount Holly Police Foundation and the Community Development Foundation, both of which are currently governed by MOU’s.

11:45 AM – 12:00 PM: Overview and Update on Public Arts Initiatives

Presented by: Paul Lowe

Mr. Lowe reviewed the completed art projects from this year as well as future plans. Mr. Lowe stated that the Strategic Vision Plan has four goals for arts and that this year, the City completed the outdoor gallery, two crosswalks, four murals, six sculptures, and sixteen box wraps. Mr. Lowe showed Council and staff photos of each completed work and stated that the box wraps were a partnership with the school system to have K-12 students that live around Mount Holly to design the artwork. Mr. Lowe stated that there are currently six projects for this year: the outdoor gallery will get new art, bee murals will be complete by March 6, the Truist Mosaic Mural, Creative Spaces Initiative location, Ransom Hunter Park may have a sculpture, an additional unknow mural to be determined, and the Public Arts Advisory Commission (PAAC) is working on more for next year as well.

Councilman Meadows asked Mr. Lowe to explain who the PAAC is and what they do. Mr. Lowe stated the Public Arts Advisory Commission is an eight-member appointed board advising on

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arts projects, made up of veteran or current artists or art enthusiasts to give designs and feedback. Mr. Lowe stated that the current members are Julia Benfield-Chair, Leigh Brinkley-Vice Chair, Stephanie McLaughlin, Wanda Campbell, Teresa Rench, Paige Sisk, Katie Lank, and Ruth Neely. Councilman Meadows inquired about the amount of next year's budget for the PAAC? Mr. Blanton stated that next year's PAAC budget is approximately \$80,000.

Mayor Pro-Tem Shoemaker asked if the City could collaborate with other departments to get some of the smaller pieces, like the bee art, to be more visible to the public. Mayor Pro Tem Shoemaker suggested a scavenger hunt to encourage people to find the pieces. Mayor Moore stated that Special Events Coordinator Choe Clary could facilitate a scavenger hunt event. Mr. Lowe stated that all the projects are on website right now.

Councilman Reeves thanked Mr. Lowe for implementing the art program and bring an enlightenment to the community.

Action: Councilman Meadows asked for a report on how many years we have completed art projects with the Public Arts Advisory Commission (PAAC) and the amount of money spent to date.

Councilwoman Harris said that a scavenger hunt is already in progress.

Councilman Craig asked Mr. Lowe if there the bees are actually in the mural in front of the farmers market? Mr. Lowe said no, but they have an artist working on getting them added onto it.

Councilman Hough requested that no crosswalk painting projects be scheduled at the same time as paving projects in future. Councilman Hough stated that Beth Ann is a good resource to set up a scavenger hunt and could possibly get it on an application. Councilman Hough stated that the arts are coordinated and thoughtful and mentioned that the Council allotted \$50,000 for the first and second years to jump start more creativity and interaction in the arts. Councilman Hough stated that every vibrant town has a thriving arts community, and it is vital for us to grow.

Mayor Moore stated that the Mount Holly arts are exploding, has grown over the last 5 years and is only getting better.

Councilman Meadows stated that what started with Arts on the Greenway has helped tremendously with continuing to grow other arts groups and is moving the City towards creating a strategic sense of space.

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Parking Lot #2: Councilman Meadows asked that staff add to the “parking lot” a revitalization program and funds to refresh art as it eventually fades or if we ever see any graffiti.

Mr. Blanton thanked Mr. Lowe for taking on these projects and said that he is thankful for our community groups and staff for getting these initiatives done as they are part of our core values. Mr. Blanton stated that it has been very well received by the community.

12:00 PM – 12:15 PM: 2024 Year in Review and Updates from the Police Department

Presented by: Brian Reagan

Police Chief Brian Reagan reviewed and updated the Council on 2024 stating that it had been a busy year with two 2 homicides at end of 2023 that carried over into 2024. Chief Reagan showed the Council pictures of Kids Camp which he and his department are very passionate about. Chief Reagan discussed the 911 upgrade project, and that Mount Holly is the only other 911 facility in Gaston County. Chief Reagan stated that staffing issues that are occurring locally and across the nation are not happening in Mount Holly. Chief Reagan stated that others are pulling help from other places, but thanks to the Council, Mount Holly is not having to do that. Chief Reagan thanked the Council and stated that because of them, the Police Department has competitive salaries and benefits to put us in the good position we are currently in. Chief Reagan stated the Police Department has hired five officers with ten years of experience and Advanced Law Enforcement Certificates. Chief Reagan stated that our Patrol Officers have a cumulative 220 years of experience – that’s an average of 8 years per officer. Chief Reagan reported that violent crimes are down 13% from 2023, their case closure rate is 77% with the average rate at only 41.1%. Chief Reagan reported that Officers average a total of 104 calls a day per shift.

Councilman Hough asked about the 104 calls per shift. Chief Reagan clarified that number is per day, so about 52 per shift spread along all officers that are on duty.

Chief Reagan stated that the department receives tremendous community support and as Chief, he wants to do more community outreach. Chief Reagan stated that the department was able to do Kids Camp, Cops and Bobbers, Shop with a Cop, SAC graduation, and this year they provided for their Christmas initiative. Chief Reagan stated that the Mount Holly Police Foundation is a great help with promotion of information, programs, and education. Chief Reagan stated that Cops and Bobbers was a new event this year that had some bad weather but still had 56 attendees. Chief Reagan reported that the Police Department has new projects for

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2024 including a \$380,000 renovation of the Communications Center. Chief Reagan stated that they competed with other agencies for a grant, which we won, and now the Center is up and running at 100%. Chief Reagan stated that Mount Holly is the only other 911 center in Gaston County. Chief Reagan stated that having our own center cuts down on response time. Chief Reagan reported that on February 17, 2024 there was a call about a girl being attacked by a dog, and an officer was at her door in one minute 17 seconds. Chief Reagan reported that if it had been much longer, she may not have made it. Chief Reagan explained that in 1991, former Chief Bishop was forward thinking and started the request for the Center. Chief Reagan stated that the second project for the year is the exploration of a fleet lease program. Chief Reagan explained that years ago, the vendor wanted you to do all City vehicles or none at all, but now you can lease vehicles by department which will save money, and they will have more vehicles than they would have had outside of this program. Chief Reagan mentioned that the 10 FLOCK cameras are fully installed, which helps with criminal and missing persons cases. Chief Reagan stated that they have access to any FLOCK cameras anywhere. Chief Reagan reported that the firing range is under construction, and they are waiting on grass currently. Chief Reagan stated that the range will be a tremendous asset to them, allowing them to not have to share range time with other agencies for yearly required trainings. Chief Reagan thanked the Council and the Management for their support.

Councilman Hough asked Chief Reagan how many more FLOCK cameras are needed? Chief Reagan said that 4 more would get them where they need to be. Councilman Hough said that he would like to see that in budget next year. Mayor Moore asked Chief Reagan how much are the cameras? Chief Reagan said they are \$3,000 each.

Mayor Pro-Tem Shoemaker encouraged Chief Reagan to take credit for his own management, his staff's work, and the work culture that he has created.

Motion: Councilman Meadows made a motion to amend the budget for \$12,000 for the purchase of four additional FLOCK cameras for the Police Department. Mayor Pro-Tem Shoemaker seconded the motion.

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

Councilman Craig asked Chief Reagan what is the process of the FLOCK cameras? Chief Reagan explained that it is a license plate reader with solar power, so they are fully charged at all times. Chief Reagan stated that Officers and Dispatchers have an app that will provide them a picture of the car, the plate, and what the flag is for so they can see what offense the person has and get back up if needed. Chief Reagan stated that the FLOCK cameras have been responsible

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for identifying violent criminals that have come into Mount Holly and that this has been the most resourceful tool that the City has had. Councilman Reeves commended Chief Reagan for the job he does. Councilman Craig said that when he was investigator in 2017, these FLOCK cameras would have saved them many hours.

Councilman Meadows asked Chief Reagan if there are other tools or instruments that the Police Department is in need of? Chief Reagan said there was nothing at this time.

12:15 PM – 12:30 PM: 2024 Year in Review and Updates from the Fire Department

Presented by: Ryan Baker

Chief Baker thanked Chief Reagan and his staff for their support. Chief Baker stated that this year was a good year and thanked the staff, Management, and the Council for helping the department become what it is. Chief Baker stated that other agencies have passed along their complements. Chief Baker stated that the Fire Department has had 85 applications come in, so there are lots of good candidates who want to be here in Mount Holly. Chief Baker went over the mission and vision statements, which are visible in all fire stations. Chief Baker stated that this past year the Fire Department has promoted 3 Battalion Chiefs which means there is now a Chief on call 24/7, giving him and Deputy Chief Spry the chance to focus on other department goals. Chief Baker listed the new promotions and new hires for 2024. Chief Baker stated that community outreach was a great addition this year listing that they had 14 fire prevention programs at schools, 26 public events, 1500 activity packs passed out. Chief Baker stated that the department had 570 hours towards outreach. Chief Baker stated that the Fire Marshal completed 149 inspections and 123 plans for new developments and new constructions and there were 418 pre-fire plans completed by firefighters to check on buildings' safety and learn about the buildings in case of future fires. Chief Baker reported that last year, they had 2358 calls, which is an increase of approximately 7% from 1916 in 2021. Chief Baker reported that from dispatch to arrival on scene, they average 5 minutes and 1 sec average from day or night. Chief Baker stated that the level of training sets us apart from other departments and highlighted the specialty trainings, beyond the normal basic certifications that are held by Mount Holly firefighters. Chief Baker described the new apparatus received this year. Chief Baker discussed the Sea Ark Boat which can get them on the water and its sonar can help recover drowning cases without sending divers. Chief Baker reported that the Division truck is now in service, and the Tiller ladder truck

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gives them the ability to reach 103 feet high, so they can now reach all apartments and taller buildings in Mount Holly. Chief Baker stated that this truck can make the turn from Main Street to the alley behind Boltons and that it also has multiple ground ladders for fire escapes. Chief Baker reported that new fire trucks are coming in 2025, including a new Tiller ladder truck expected around June that is even taller at 107 ft. Chief Baker stated that they are getting rid of several older trucks that needed to be replaced.

Councilman Hough asked Chief Baker to address the truck going to Western North Carolina. Chief Baker said the department was mobilized during Hurricane Helene to Hot Springs, NC and that the small town was ravaged. Chief Baker explained that their Fire Department was moved out of their station to use it as a supply spot, so to help that town, the City of Mount Holly is donating a truck and other apparatus to help them out.

Chief Baker said they are also looking forward to the new Catawba Heights Fire Station that will replace the old station that was originally a Volunteer Fire Department. Chief Baker stated that the planning and acquisition are done, and they are now designing the new station. Councilman Hough asked if we have gone to the state for funding for the station? Mr. Blanton confirmed that the City is seeking \$12 to \$15 million from the State of North Carolina.

Councilman Meadows asked if NFPA standards are being met? Chief Baker said there needs to be 15 firefighters on the scene to meet the standard and they are currently working with mutual aid from other agencies to meet the standard. Chief Baker reported having 12 people on call 24 hours a day.

The Council gave many thanks to Chief Baker and his staff for all of their hard work and how they carry themselves in the community.

Councilman Meadows asked Chief Baker if the City is competitive? Chief Baker said that our pay is the highest in Gaston County and that the recruitment is good due to the culture and the benefits. Councilman Meadows asked about the insurance rating. Chief Baker stated that the City is currently in ISO class 2 with class 1 being the best class for insurance rates. Chief Baker stated that in June 2025, the City will be rated again for a class update. Chief Baker stated that the last time they were rated, they didn't have the same staff level. Chief Baker explained that ISO class ratings can affect home insurance premiums and being ISO class 1 will positively affect commercial and industrial insurance rates.

12:30 PM – 12:45 PM: Update and Upcoming Budget Priorities from the Finance Department

Presented by: Michelle Wood

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Mrs. Wood stated that last July they implemented a new software system, which really started back in August 2023. Mrs. Wood stated that this was the second system update in her career, and this was a flawless transition. Mrs. Wood stated that the Finance Department received the Budget Award Recognition. Mrs. Wood stated that the online payment portal was upgraded with pay by phone and by text as available options. Mrs. Wood reminded the Council that ACH payments were available in November 2024. Mrs. Wood reviewed the upcoming budget priorities for debt and capital.

Councilman Craig thanked Finance Director Wood and Congratulated her and her team for all of their success. Mrs. Wood commended the staff for their help to the Finance staff.

12:45 – 1:15 PM: Recreation Update and Discussion Regarding Capital Projects

Presented by: Eric Smallwood

Parks and Recreation Director, Eric Smallwood said that those who are long term Mount Holly residents know Zip Stowe, and he is retiring today from 40 years of public service. Mr. Smallwood reviewed updates on the department’s capital projects. Mr. Smallwood stated that the Tuckaseege Center parking lot will be worked on during spring break in a few weeks. Mr. Smallwood reported that the Ransom Hunter Park is well underway, with fine grading happening and seed and straw being put down. Mr. Smallwood also reported that they have finalized the historical signage with the Hunter family, as well as the playground equipment. Mr. Smallwood stated that the mountain bike trail master plan kick off meeting was Wednesday, with the Tarheel Trailblazers and Nature Trails and Design team attending. Mr. Smallwood reported that work should start soon on this, and that mountain bike trails, and nature trails will be part of this plan diversifying the uses to get more people out there and encourage people to ride and stay in the area. Mr. Smallwood stated that the Mountain Island Road barricade is out to bid. Mr. Smallwood stated that the Drywall Drive Design is a larger project with multiple stakeholders involved, so this may go into next fiscal year. Mr. Smallwood stated that the last 2 projects on the slide are only parks and recreation adjacent.

Mr. Smallwood stated that Dutchman’s Creek Greenway arch has a location selected and it is going up soon. Mr. Smallwood stated that the Blueway signage plan is underway, and that Mr. Beal is working with the group. Mr. Smallwood stated that he will go along with the Catawba Riverkeeper Foundation representatives down Dutchman’s Creek to do a stream assessment and see what issues there are on the water after Hurricane Helene and the flooding. Mr. Smallwood

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stated that the Dutchman’s Creek Bridge contract was awarded today as part of the Consent Agenda, so we are right on schedule. Mr. Smallwood reported that there will be interim closings for the River Street project over the summer to keep as much open during construction as possible and there will eventually be 3+ miles of continuous greenway.

Mr. Smallwood stated that he has been asked to look into a possible location of a North Gym, and he has looked at what the Strategic Vision Plan stated and that there should be a gym, but did not give a location. Mr. Smallwood state that Horseshoe Bend Road is the northernmost place recommended for gym. Mr. Smallwood stated that this site has a multi-use field, playground and adult fitness.

Parking Lot #3: Councilman Meadows asked about looking into the land the City owns around the Water Treatment Plant since the needs are pushing further North? Councilman Meadows asked if the City could deviate from the plan and use metal buildings to achieve the gym at less cost?

Councilman Hough stated that there have been different neighborhood leaders in the past that gave the input that they did not want a park/gym on those 5 acres, but later they said they did want it. Councilman Hough stated that these developments have matured into more established communities with different needs and the City must invest in a facility up North now.

Councilman Meadows asked if there are deed restrictions on the land near the water treatment plant? Councilman Hough said that Mr. Beal could speak to it better, but when they annexed the steam plant, the restriction was that it has to be for governmental use. Mr. Beal stated that he is not sure but stated that some of the restrictions have been relaxed. Councilman Hough stated that the City has recreation needs, but what we’re trying to do is unattainable and that the City needs to be more utilitarian so that we are not waiting on millions to come along. Mayor Moore stated that the recreation programs are so large right now they need more space. Mrs. Anders stated that the Horseshoe Bend property is restricted to governmental purposes only and a park would fit within that.

Mr. Smallwood gave an update on the Belmont Rowing Club and stated that he has met with them since creating the presentation and knows more of what they are wanting. Mr. Smallwood stated that the Belmont Rowing Club would ideally want to set up in Tuckaseege Park with a boathouse, storage, water access, and a training space, but they would be okay with being in other locations. Mr. Smallwood mentioned that they would rename their group to Mount Holly Rowing Club if they relocate.

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Councilman Meadows asked if they talked about partnering with universities. Mr. Smallwood said they talked broadly about partnering with Belmont Abbey and other higher education programs. Mayor Moore said he met with them a year ago and they want to be in Mount Holly.

Councilman Hough said that we need to be careful with conservation easements, there are restrictions. Mayor Moore said we should be looking at using current buildings as a temporary place for them to be. Mrs. Anders stated that we need to be careful because we don't want to overburden the easement on Drywall Drive since that easement is not meant for public use. Mr. Beal said that from the dam to Highway 27 Duke says there cannot be any new structures.

Mr. Smallwood said he has learned a lot about the ABC fund in his first few months here. Mr. Smallwood stated that once the debt is paid off from the building they are in, the funds are supposed to be set aside for parks and recreation. Councilman Hough said that there was a motion and set policy at a meeting around 2009 because he had the idea for this policy from Gatlinburg, TN. Councilwoman Harris confirmed Councilman Hough's statement. Mr. Smallwood stated that he, along with the current City Clerk, through their due diligence, found that there had been no recorded motion in the past minutes during the time period mentioned to establish this policy.

Motion: Councilman Hough made a motion to take ABC funds and set them aside for parks and recreation use. Councilwoman Harris seconded the motion.

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

Parking Lot #4: Councilman Meadows said that he knows of a group that is passionate about Disc Golf and would like for this topic to be added to the "Parking Lot" for further discussion and for staff to explore ways to provide options for disc golf throughout Mount Holly. Mr. Smallwood has talked with Disc Golf enthusiasts about potential locations in Mount Holly.

Mayor Pro-Tem Shoemaker said for those not familiar with Disc Golf, it doesn't need a huge lawn that needs maintenance, so it can be less invasive than a normal golf course.

Councilman Craig told Mr. Smallwood he has done a great job for his short time being here.

Councilman Meadows said he has received several good calls from community about Mr. Smallwood.

1:15 PM – 1:45 PM: Veterans Park Discussion and Financing Options

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Presented by: Jonathan Blanton

Mr. Blanton updated the Council as to where we are with Veterans Park. Mr. Blanton stated that on February 10, 2025, a public hearing was held on financing options. Mr. Blanton reported that Phase 1 of the environmental study came back this week. Mr. Blanton stated that because there were findings of a former laundry mat and an auto repair shop on the properties, further investigation is needed at this time. Mr. Blanton showed a map of the properties in question outlined in blue and stated that March 2, 2025 is when the examination period ends, and March 28, 2025 is the closing date. Mr. Blanton stated that he has initiated talks for a 10-day extension, with no cost to the City with both the Stroupe and Sisk parties agreeing to the extension. Mr. Blanton stated that the well-monitored results should come back today. Mr. Blanton presented three possible scenarios that could come to fruition. Mr. Blanton stated that the first scenario is that the City purchases the Stroupe and Sisk properties, develops it, and additional revenue could come from retail and commercial developments with the City having control. The second scenario is that the City purchases the properties with no development, the City rezones and sells the property. The third scenario the Mr. Blanton presented is that the City can cancel the contracts, no more money is spent by the City, they dispose of the excess property and redefine the project. Mr. Blanton explained that the City is in a good place financially and the Municipal Complex will be paid off soon. Mr. Blanton stated that each option has its advantages and disadvantages.

Councilman Meadows stated that there is actually a fourth option which is to terminate the current contracts and sell off all the property purchased. Mr. Blanton asked for clarification from Councilman Meadows asking is he saying that this option would be to sell all property we own? Councilman Meadows said yes and stop discussions on the park.

Mr. Cheatwood stated that Mr. Blanton reached out to First Tryon for assistance in helping realize options for development of the properties. Mr. Cheatwood stated that the purpose of his presentation is to describe this model they created, not to give answers because there are a lot of unknowns. Mr. Cheatwood stated that the model is very customizable so the City could use it as you continue discussing options. Mr. Cheatwood stated that the inputs that have been put into the model were the development itself, when it would occur, the cost, the revenues (tax and other), the existing debt services, and what ongoing capital is going into it. Mr. Cheatwood stated that the output from the model include does it have cash flow and does it cover the cost of purchase and debt. Mr. Cheatwood stated that they focused on the biggest variables and unknowns, mostly around the future development that would happen and stated that the model works by putting in a new estimated taxable value from the new development, when it will be placed into service, the

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assumed tax rate, the assumed development values to result in tax revenues later on. Mr. Cheatwood explained that you are looking at how you can pay yourself back after purchasing the land and when you will get the money back. Mr. Cheatwood explained that the City has the ability to see what the different scenarios will produce with different information that is received.

Councilman Hough asked if the last scenario he presented does not include any help from the County? Mr. Cheatwood said yes, but the model can change with different information received.

Mr. Blanton stated that this tool is invaluable to access multiple projects.

Councilman Meadows asked what data is loaded behind the model? Mr. Cheatwood stated that the data loaded is all of the City's outstanding debts and are updated as payments are made and the City's revenues.

Councilman Meadows asked if there are any residential projects or just commercial added into the model? Mr. Dupont answered just commercial. Mr. Cheatwood stated that this could be added.

Councilman Meadows stated that the citizens said no to higher taxes, so this model can show that we are not using taxes or rate increases for this project. Councilman Meadows pointed out that when the City goes through the process of the Strategic Vision Plan, the public investment goes to private investments that then comes back to the community. Councilman Meadows stated that in this case, we can narrow this down to specific revenues that are going into this project and that this tool proves that the City is not increasing tax rates, even though tax money is going into it. Councilman Meadows stated that this tool allows the City to analyze the ABC Fund, the Powell Bill Fund, Unassigned Fund Balances, the TDA Fund, and debt capacity.

Mr. Cheatwood said the purpose of this model is to review the different scenarios that can happen and see when the City will get its money back.

Mayor Moore stated that we have 10-day extension but still don't have the well monitoring results.

Motion #1: Councilman Reeves made a motion to terminate the contracts with the Stroupe and Sisk properties. Councilwoman Harris seconded the motion.

Ayes: Councilwoman Harris, Councilman Reeves

Nays: Councilman Hough, Mayor Pro Tem Shoemaker, Councilman Meadows, Councilman Craig

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Motion #2: Councilman Meadows made a motion to terminate the current contracts for the Stroupe and Sisk properties and sell all the other properties we own. There was no second to the motion The motion fails.

Councilman Hough asked about the 10-day extension, due diligence and the closing process around the March 12, 2025 deadline. Mr. Blanton stated that if the 10-day extension is accepted, that would get us to the March 10, 2025 meeting with well monitoring results ready to be discussed at that meeting. Councilwoman Harris confirmed that there will be no more money involved for the extension. Mr. Blanton confirmed that there will be no additional money required for the extension.

Councilman Meadows said that we have now eliminated options # 4 and 1 from Mr. Blanton's presentation. Councilman Meadows stated that we just had an entire presentation on option #2 and that the Council needs to move forward with a decision. Mayor Moore said the reason we haven't done anything with the park yet is because we have been waiting on property purchases. Councilman Meadows said there is a developer on board waiting on us to say we are ready to move forward. Councilman Meadows stated that we are investing in things that are not revenue building. Councilman Reeves asked if the developer has walked away? Mr. Blanton stated that North State Development is waiting on the City to decide about the properties. Councilwoman Harris asked if the developer is worried about environmental study? Mr. Blanton stated that he shared the information with North State Development and there could be areas of concern.

Councilman Craig said that we have waited 3 years, why not wait 11 more days to decide at the next meeting when we have environmental study back.

Motion #3: Councilman Craig made a motion to except the 10-day extension for both the Stroupe and Sisk contracts. Councilman Meadows seconded the motion.

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

2:00 PM – 2:45 PM: Potential New Committee Discussion

Presented by: Matt Black

Mr. Black stated that he is bringing forward a discussion about a potential new economic development committee and that economic development is broad in nature, so there could be

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many purposes. Mr. Black stated that there has been a committee in the past and reviving it may be on the table. Mr. Blanton stated that he asked Mr. Black to bring this presentation to the Council because there was a desire to have committees for three areas listed on the agenda (Former Mount Holly Middle School Auditorium Revitalization Committee, Economic Advisory Committee, and a Downtown Revitalization Committee). Mr. Black said that he is looking for direction on what Council wants and if we want to move forward with creating the committees. Councilman Craig said that having different perspectives from different backgrounds is important to him to have for a committee. Mr. Black expressed the importance of identifying who the Council would want to be on each committee, taking into consideration citizens and stakeholders.

Councilman Hough asked when has Council considered revitalizing the auditorium and when did it become a priority? Mayor Moore stated that the school system came to us initially and that currently, Mount Holly Middle School and Ida Rankin Elementary School have no place for their concerts or events. Mayor Moore stated that they asked for a partnership to make it into a performing arts center. Mayor Moore stated that revitalizing the auditorium is not a priority and that that this is just the beginning discussions.

Mayor Pro-Tem Shoemaker stated that she doesn't dislike the idea, but that it leaves a bad taste to her to spend millions on something that the City does not own and control. Mayor Pro Tem Shoemaker stated that she would love to see it fixed it up, but if we don't own it there should be some groundwork done to figure out the City's legal responsibility. Mayor Moore said that they are trying to get state funding, and there is no current investment from the City. Mayor Pro-Tem Shoemaker stated that she does not have a problem looking into it but would like to know where the school district is on who runs it, who would operate it, and other details that she feels should be discussed. Councilwoman Harris said maybe that is why we should have committee. Councilwoman stated that we spend money on things we don't own, like Mountain Island park, so what is the difference?

Councilman Hough said that the Council came together to direct our lobbyists for specific requests from the state and that he is concerned that if there are various requests are coming from the City, it makes it look like the City is not unified on our requests for funds. Councilman Hough stated that this can send a confusing message to our officials, and we want to have a unified voice towards our delegation.

Mayor Moore stated that they there have only been preliminary discussions to look into this topic.

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Mayor Pro-Tem Shoemaker stated that she does not feel that a committee is necessary at this time and would like more information. Mayor Pro Tem Shoemaker stated that she would like to support the school and agrees it would be used in the community but wants to know the school's details on how they want to run it.

Councilman Meadows said that we just talked about not wanting to spend money on property we own, but now we are talking about spending money on a building we don't own. Mayor Moore said the City has committed nothing so far, it's just in the initial talks.

Councilman Craig asked what is happening with the other buildings near the auditorium? Mayor Moore said that it is on a future agenda.

Councilman Meadows stated that this sounds like a school board issue, not a City issue. Councilman Hough asked who came to us? Mr. Blanton stated that Bessie with the school system approached the City. Mr. Blanton stated that the school board asked what the City wants from the project and that they have met with an engineer to see preliminary drawings of a performing arts facility.

Councilman Meadows restated the three committees discussed and inquired about the process to create a committee. Councilman Meadows inquired if the Council would want to follow specific industries to try to bring those here to Mount Holly and mentioned Disc Golf and medical services. Mayor Moore advised that the topic of a Disc Golf committee should be placed in the "Parking Lot". Councilwoman Harris suggested the possibility of utilizing the Recreation Commission to discuss this as an agenda item.

Parking Lot Item #5 : Councilman Meadows would like to look into a possible Disc Golf Committee and explore industry specific committees such as medical services.

Councilman Hough asked if we are accomplishing the direction needed for the committee discussion? Mr. Blanton stated that he and staff would bring back draft options for a possible blanket code of conduct for all committees and that the creation of future committees could be discussed individually at an upcoming work session.

Mayor Pro-Tem Shoemaker said that as we introduce new committees, we need to have a policy detailing specifics of how it will run, term limits, when it will dissolve, and clearly stated tasks and objectives.

Councilman Meadows stated that he would like to see uniformity on committee structures.

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Action: The consensus of the Council is for Mr. Blanton to bring back a draft blanket code of conduct possibly based on the Planning Commission and discuss options and details for individual committees at an upcoming work session.

2:45 PM – 3:15 PM: Policy Discussion Regarding Food Trucks in Mount Holly

Presented by: Planning Department

Mr. Beal reviewed the history of Food Trucks, and the policies established. Mr. Beal stated that in the early 2000s there was a BBQ food truck set up in a parking lot that was doing well, but that the Police and Fire Departments saw more accidents in the area because of increased traffic. Mr. Beal stated that there were other concerns identified with various vendors and created an ordinance called the coexisting, mobile, and temporary uses ordinance, and it has served the City well for the last 20 years. Mr. Beal explained that the ordinance now makes them apply for a permit and it is a 2-month process. Mr. Beal stated that this is for a truck that will be set up for a long time, not just for a one-time event and that the only city outside Mount Holly that requires a Special Use Permit is Harrisburg. Mr. Beal explained that there have been concerns and complaints about food trucks blocking parking spots downtown and that trucks do not pay power and/or utility bills. Mr. Beal stated that the advantages to food trucks are that they create foot traffic, more diversity in choices, and relieves restaurants' wait time. Mr. Beal explained that food truck parking in right of ways is a big concern. Mr. Beal stated that the goal is to talk about the process and make it less cumbersome to bring more food trucks in.

Mayor Pro-Tem Shoemaker stated that she is glad that there are more food trucks around and appreciates the process that is in place for them because she has seen random trucks in other cities.

Councilman Reeves stated that he has had conversations with business owners that want to know why food trucks can just pop up and be wherever. Councilman Reeves would like guidance to be able to say that a truck should or should not be somewhere and would like something in writing that speaks to that.

Councilwoman Harris is looking for clarification for when people call and ask her questions, and how could you regulate someone dropping off a truck and blocking spaces? Mr. Beal said there is no regulation right now.

Mayor Pro-Tem Shoemaker inquired if this for long term food truck placements or for a pop-up food truck that come for a one-time event? Mr. Beal stated that the City does not want to

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regulate short-term events with food trucks but would like to create structure around the parking issues that come up.

Mr. Beal stated that staff is looking for direction from the Council regarding switching the food truck process from special use permits to an administrative process.

Councilman Hough explained that it is difficult to get food trucks scheduled, and if a business is doing it, it's cumbersome for them, but they do it for a reason. Councilman Hough stated that businesses that are scheduling food trucks are doing this mainly because they serve alcohol, and need to have food available for safety, or they are trying to bring in more people. Councilman Hough explained that businesses will not go through the effort if the food truck is not right in front of their business and has to be put in some parking lot further away because they are trying to attract customers and to advertise it.

Councilwoman Harris stated that she likes to have the truck tied to a business because right now anyone can just set up downtown, but if it has to be tied to a downtown business, she can tell others that they are set up with that business. Mayor Moore stated that he wants them to not be able to set up cones hours before they show up. Councilman Meadows stated that we should not make it cumbersome for them and that there should be hours of operations to clarify if a special use permit is needed or if it would just fall into the short term.

Councilman Craig stated that we have more parking expectations than we have actual parking, and he is for being able to block spaces for trucks, but only for a reasonable amount of time. Mayor Moore said they could put up a sign that this spot has to be empty by certain time. Councilman Hough stated that this should be incumbent upon businesses tied to the food truck to figure out the parking blocks. Mayor Pro Tem Shoemaker stated that she appreciates everyone's ideas, but that she would like to understand how the City handles City events pertaining to blockings and closures to look for guidance. Mayor Pro Tem Shoemaker asked if a truck is there every day but only for a certain time period, is that allowed? Mr. Dupont said there is a 72-hour limit for parking. Councilman Craig said that signs with the times on it is a good start.

Mr. Beal stated that he has an understanding of what Council would like for him to draft and bring back for Council's consideration.

Action: The consensus of the Council is for staff to bring back an administrative approval process, giving staff the authority to grant permits for long-term food trucks, that temporary food trucks that occupy public parking should be requested by the owner of the business where the food truck is located, and that general guidelines should be drafted.

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3:15 PM – 3:45 pm: Update on the Relocation of the History Museum to the Municipal Complex

Presented by: Jonathan Blanton

Mr. Blanton discussed the current offers of \$500,000 from TR Property and the second offer from Logan Abrams and Tricia Scott for \$762,500. Councilman Hough stated that he is inclined to accept the Abrams/Scott offer for \$762,500. Mayor Pro Tem Shoemaker stated that she is happy that the offer is enough to pay for and move the history museum and that she supports accepting the Abrams/Scott offer of \$762,500. Councilman Craig stated that he is in favor of moving forward with the Abrams/Scott offer of \$762,500. Councilman Meadows stated that the sooner we get started with the process, the better.

Mrs. Anders explained that the upset bid procedure N.C.G.S 160A-269 may receive an offer and advertise for an upset bid.

Action: The consensus of the Council is that they would like to move forward with a resolution to accept the offer of \$762,500 from Logan Abrams and Tricia Scott and initiate the upset bid process at the March 10, 2025 City Council meeting.

3:45 PM – 4:15 PM: Discussion of Pinewood Cemetery *Presented by: Marie Anders*

Mrs. Anders gave a short overview of the history of the Pinewood Cemetery. Mrs. Anders stated that the original deed is from 1936, and there has been multiple plats over the years. Mrs. Anders stated that all the plats/walkways that are recorded but may not actually be there. Mrs. Anders stated that the first lots found to be sold were in 1939, and the final lots sold were in 1985. Mrs. Anders explained that when it comes to state law on cemeteries, municipal cemeteries are governed by a GS 160A-341 and the NC Cemetery Act. Mrs. Anders stated that the City can create a trust fund for the proceeds and to accept gifts. Mrs. Anders explained that in terms of regulation, the City can adopt its own rules and regulations for pricing, hours, etc. Mrs. Anders explained that Chapter 91 of the City's ordinance is where we currently govern cemeteries. Mrs. Anders explained that the manager can sell lots today and that the Mayor and Manger can execute the deeds. Mrs. Anders stated that pricing was set at \$30 per grave for a resident and \$60 for a non-resident and that the Director of Public Works is the supervisor of the cemeteries. Mrs. Anders stated that lot owners are currently charged for the price of upkeep, unless other arrangements are made. Mrs. Anders explained that in 2020, Pineview Consultants LLC offered to purchase the cemetery through the upset bid process and the City accepted. The City is specifically required to convey a cemetery to a church or business that will continue it as a cemetery. Mrs. Anders stated that Pineview LLC terminated in the due diligence period. Mrs. Anders explained that they contacted the cemetery board and were told there is a minimum

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requirement of 30 contiguous acres needed to get the license to purchase a cemetery, and a separate license is needed per location. Mrs. Anders stated that they terminated because there are only 21 acres. Mrs. Anders reported that there is a lack of internal records because no perpetual trust fund was created to keep records internally. Mrs. Anders explained that the buyers of the lots were supposed to record the deeds with the Register of Deeds, but many did not. Mrs. Anders explained that the cost of maintenance is a concern and that the next steps are to amend the price, set a fee for maintenance and set up a fund for that, stake and survey existing sites even though it has been in the past, and determine if more survey plats are necessary. Mrs. Anders explained that the City may need to have underground surveying done to determine where people are placed.

Councilman Hough asked what is the purpose of this conversation?

Mayor Moore stated that we are spending money to maintain it, and people have asked if they can purchase lots. Mayor Moore stated that if we could sell 15-20 plots a year it could pay for itself.

Councilman Meadows asked if we could explore third party contracting for this so that staff does is not burdened?

Councilman Hough said to get issue of who owns what, can we put out a public notice for people to come forward and bring their deeds to the City and protect their purchase? Is there a process for that?

Mrs. Anders stated that there is a process, but whoever gets to the courthouse first has valid ownership.

Councilman Hough asked if is this something staff wants to get into? Councilman Hough stated that he understands the reasoning behind it but is unsure if staff has the time and resources to take this on and would look to staff for the logistics.

Action: The consensus of the Council is for Mr. Blanton and staff to evaluate the possibility of selling plots and to revise the regulations based on the City Attorney's recommendations.

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4:15 PM – 4:45 PM: Update on the Decommissioning of the Wastewater Treatment Plant

Presented by: Barry Shearin and/or Staff

Mr. Shearin stated that he was here a year ago to kick off the decommissioning process and now is here to provide an update on where we are a year in the process. Mr. Shearing presented a map showing what the City owns in blue and what the City of Charlotte owns in yellow and stated that we are working with the blue area. Mr. Shearin stated that the grant was secured last year and that the pieces to pump water across the river are almost complete. Mr. Shearin stated that in August 2025, Charlotte Water will be able to accept the water from here and will accept the water before they start to treat it. Mr. Shearin reported that HDR Engineering of the Carolinas was selected to do the decommissioning, and he has started that design. Mr. Shearin reported that the bid documents are complete, and the permits are almost done. Mr. Shearin stated that there is a State process to follow as it shuts down to make sure it is cleaned up correctly in order to develop in the future. Mr. Shearin reported that the initial cost estimate is under \$15 million, with some things that are variable. Mr. Shearin stated that DEQ required environmental testing of the soil under the basins so depending on these results, which they think is low risk, could affect the costs. Mr. Shearin stated that they will level the site to what it is now, so it won't be completely flat. Mr. Shearin reported that for the next steps, the flood plain use permit, erosion permit, and demolition permits are all submitted and just need to be finalized. Mr. Shearin reported that Charlotte Water will take all the leftover water from the basins. Mr. Shearin stated that Charlotte Water asked us to test the water from the sludge that is leftover in the basins, they will take the water based on the test results, and then the sludge is going to be hauled to the landfill. Mr. Shearin stated that the construction bids are going out in March due to odor issues if the plant sits too long. Mr. Shearin reported that they expect it will take 6-9 months to complete once the contractor is selected.

Councilman Meadows asked if it is possible to design the bid documents so that if a bid comes in under \$15 million to have plans to utilize all the funds? Mr. Shearin said if there was anything left over it would likely go towards raising the floodplain. Councilman Meadows asked if repaving the entrance can be part of the decommissioning? Mr. Shearin said that if damage was done due to the decommissioning process, then yes, grant funds can be used to fix and repave it.

Parking Lot Item #6: Councilman Meadows stated that he would like to discuss what the next development for the site will be.

Mayor Moore thanked everyone for being here and for their hard work and preparation.

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Motion: Councilman Hough made a motion to adjourn the February 2, 2025 City Council Retreat. Mayor Pro-Tem Shoemaker seconded the motion.

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

The meeting adjourned at 4:01 PM.

PARKING LOT ITEMS:

- 1. Parking Lot Item #1: Councilman Meadows requested that a catalog of policy accomplishments and timeline from the Strategic Vision Plans for the City’s website be added to the “Parking Lot” for a later discussion.**
- 2. Parking Lot #2: Councilman Meadows asked that staff add to the “parking lot” a revitalization program and funds to refresh art as it eventually fades or if we ever see any graffiti.**
- 3. Parking Lot #3: Councilman Meadows asked about looking into the land the City owns around the Water Treatment Plant since the needs are pushing further North?**
- 4. Parking Lot #4: Councilman Meadows said that he knows of a group that is passionate about Disc Golf and would like for this topic to be added to the “Parking Lot” for further discussion and for staff to explore ways to provide options for disc golf throughout Mount Holly.**
- 5. Parking Lot Item #5 : Councilman Meadows would like to look into a possible Disc Golf Committee and explore industry specific committees such as medical services.**
- 6. Parking Lot Item #6: Councilman Meadows stated that he would like to discuss what the next development for the site will be.**