

CITY OF MOUNT HOLLY
CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, MAY 13, 2024
COUNCIL CHAMBERS
7:00 PM

CALL TO ORDER

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

Mayor David Moore	Jonathan Blanton, City Manager
Mayor Pro Tem Lauren Shoemaker	Brian DuPont, Assistant City Manager
Councilman Ivory Craig	Brian Reagan, Police Chief
Councilman Jeff Meadows *Arrived 8:05pm*	Ryan Baker, Fire Chief
Councilman Bryan Hough	Greg Beal, Planning Director
Councilwoman Phyllis Harris	Tony Walker, Streets and Solid Waste Director
Councilman Kenneth Reeves	Robert Stewart, Deputy Utilities Director
Marie M. Anders, City Attorney	Mark Jusko, Recreation Supervisor
Danny Jackson, Consultant	Michelle Wood, Finance Director
Tara Douglas, City Clerk	Alexis Hines, Human Resources Director

INVOCATION

Mr. Tony Walker led the Council, staff, and attendees in prayer.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Boy Scout Troop 59 led the Council, staff, and attendees in the pledge of allegiance.

SET THE AGENDA

Mayor Moore entertained a motion to approve the agenda as presented. Mayor Pro Tem Shoemaker made a motion to approve the agenda as presented. Councilman Craig seconded the motion.

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

CONSENT AGENDA

1. Approval of the Mooreland Oaks Phases 3-4 Final Plat
2. Call for a Public Hearing for the 2024-2025 Proposed Budget and Fee Schedule.
3. Approval of a conflict-of-interest waiver for Parker Poe regarding the Southaven annexation

CITY OF MOUNT HOLLY
CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, MAY 13, 2024
COUNCIL CHAMBERS
7:00 PM

4. Call for a public hearing on July 8, 2024 to consider a petition for annexation, submitted by Linda Plecnik/NVR Inc , for a 27.10-acre tract of land, located at 104 Ida Street, Parcel# 183600.
5. Call for a public hearing on July 8, 2024 to consider a rezoning application, submitted by Linda Plecnik/NVR Inc, for a 27.10-acre tract of land, located at 104 Ida Street, Parcel #183600, from R-1 & CU/C-3 (Gaston County) and R-12 (City) to City CD-MF (Conditional District Multifamily), which is associated with the proposed Southaven Townhome Development, Case R-23-6.
6. Call for a public hearing to amend Zoning Ordinance-Sections 5.15-F-3-f,12.6-D (New Section), 12.7-E (New Section), 12.8-D (New Section), and 12.10 to require both approved and denied special use permits, variances, and density averaging credits cases to be recorded in the Register of Deeds, Case TA-24-5.
7. Approval of a Proclamation declaring May 2024 as National Cities, Towns, and Villages Month in commemoration of the National League of Cities 100th Anniversary
8. Approval of Minutes from the April 22, 2024 Council Meeting
9. Approval of Minutes from the April 22, 2024 Closed Session

Mayor Moore entertained a motion to approve the consent agenda as presented. Councilwoman Harris made a motion to approve the consent agenda. Councilman Reeves seconded the motion.

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

PRESENTATIONS

1. Safety Awards

Debbie Rogers- Lowery, Safety Consultant

Josh Dobson, North Carolina Commissioner of Labor

Debbie Rogers Lowery introduced Josh Dobson from the North Carolina Commissioner of Labor to present the Sharp Recertification Awards. Ms. Rogers-Lowery stated that it has been over 10 years since the City has started this program. Ms. Lowery stated that management and employee commitment is a large part of this program. Ms. Rogers- Lowery introduced Commissioner Dobson. Commissioner Dobson stated that safety and health are important to the Economic Development growth of the State of North Carolina. Commissioner Dobson commended the City of Mount Holly for their commitment and dedication to safety and health. Commissioner Dobson recognized and presented awards to the Utility Department, the Streets and Solid Waste Department, Wastewater Treatment Plant, and the Public Works Department.

CITY OF MOUNT HOLLY
CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, MAY 13, 2024
COUNCIL CHAMBERS
7:00 PM

2. Resolution and Recognition of Retired Employees- Arthur 'Sonny' Rankin and Osvaldo 'Ozzy' Cordero
Mayor David Moore, Tony Walker

Mayor Moore read and presented the resolution for Arthur 'Sonny' Rankin upon his retirement. Mayor Moore presented the framed resolution and a check to Arthur 'Sonny' Rankin.

3. Swearing in of Firefighters: David Towery, Ross Stewart, Paul Carson, Michael Taylor, Dustin Arney, Trent Smith, Ethan Mitchell, and Devin Robinson
Mayor David Moore, Chief Ryan Baker

Chief Ryan Baker introduced the Firefighters to be sworn in. Mayor Moore administered the oath of office for Firefighters to David Towery, Ross Stewart, Paul Carson, Michael Taylor, Dustin Arney, Trent Smith, Ethan Mitchell, and Devin Robinson. Pinning by families. Chief Ryan Baker spoke about each firefighter as the Firefighters were pinned by their designated family member(s).

4. Recognition of the Police Department's zero deficiency letter from the North Carolina City Board 911
Jonathan Blanton

Mr. Blanton stated that he would like to formally recognize the City of Mount Holly Police Department on their zero-deficiency audit letter. Mr. Blanton stated that he would like to thank Chief Reagan and the entire Police Department for all the great work that they do day in and day out for our community.

5. Recognition of the Finance Department for the Government Finance Officers Association's Distinguished Budget Presentation Award for fiscal year 2024 budget.
Jonathan Blanton

Mr. Blanton stated that he wanted to formally recognize the Finance Department for receiving the Budget Presentation Award. Mr. Blanton stated that this is a national award and is not easy to come by. Mr. Blanton stated that he would like to thank Michelle Wood and Becky Conder for the great work that is being done in the Finance Department.

CITY OF MOUNT HOLLY
CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, MAY 13, 2024
COUNCIL CHAMBERS
7:00 PM

PUBLIC HEARING

1. Public hearing for a proposed text amendment to amend Section 6.4-Table of Permitted Uses-Business, Professional, and Personal Services to allow Contractors' facilities with open storage to be permitted in the H-I zoning district-while removing this use as an allowed use in the B-3 District. Case # TA 24-3. ***Paul Lowe***

Mr. Lowe presented the information regarding the proposed text amendment. Mr. Lowe stated the Planning Commission heard this case at their last meeting in May and there were concerns about the amount of B-3 and H-I areas and would like this to be tabled for a future meeting. Mr. Lowe stated that the staff recommends tabling this discussion until a future meeting.

Mayor Moore entertained a motion to go into the public hearing. Councilman Hough made a motion to go into the public hearing. Councilman Craig seconded the motion.

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

Mayor Moore stated that there is no one signed up to speak at the public hearing. Mayor Moore stated that this public hearing would be continued until the June 10, 2024 Council Meeting.

Mayor Moore entertained a motion to continue the public hearing until June 10, 2024. Councilwoman Harris made a motion to continue the public hearing until June 10, 2024. Councilman Reeves seconded the motion.

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

2. Public hearing for a text amendment to update the Zoning Ordinance Chapter 6 Table of Permitted and Special Uses, Section 6.4 Business, Professional and Personal Services Penalties and Chapter 7 Special Requirement Notes to the Table of Permitted and Special uses to allow Pool Businesses in the L-I zone. ***Josh Blackwell***

Mr. Blackwell discussed the information regarding the text amendment. Mr. Blackwell stated that this text amendment was initiated because the City of Mount Holly put a stop work order on this business for operating an unpermitted business in the light industrial zone. Mr. Blackwell stated that this business is a property that we have had a long history of code enforcement cases against going back prior to the purchase of the property in May of 2022. Mr. Blackwell stated that in December of 2022, the City initiated a very large code enforcement case against the

CITY OF MOUNT HOLLY
CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, MAY 13, 2024
COUNCIL CHAMBERS
7:00 PM

property where we towed five (5) vehicles off the property, and it resulted in a lien on the property for \$2950.00 for cleaning up various items across the property. Mr. Blackwell stated that the property remained clean for a short time, but that items began to accumulate again. Mr. Blackwell stated that the City had another code enforcement case that was initiated earlier this year that resulted in the City cleaning the property again. Mr. Blackwell stated that there has been an auto business on the property that owners have allowed to operate there. Mr. Blackwell stated that when he met with the owners originally in 2022 that he let them know that this auto business would not be allowed, and they have continued to allow their business to be there. Mr. Blackwell stated that up until at least January of 2024 that this business was still operating out of an auto bay on the property. Mr. Blackwell stated that we have a code enforcement issue. Mr. Blackwell stated that this property is mostly located in the flood zone and that currently there is a dumpster on the property that is being stored at the rear of the property that is not anchored and does not have a flood plain development permit to cover that dumpster which is a violation of the flood plain ordinance in Mount Holly. Mr. Blackwell stated that there have been issues where the Fire Marshall has had to come out to the property to get it inspected and get it into compliance. Mr. Blackwell stated that there is now a planning issue currently since the business is not allowed to operate in a light industrial zone. Mr. Blackwell stated that the staff's recommendation is to deny this text amendment and that the Planning Commission voted 8-0 to recommend that the Council deny this application.

Mayor Moore entertained a motion to go out of the regular meeting and into the public hearing. Councilman Hough made a motion to go out of the regular meeting and into the public hearing. Councilman Reeves seconded the motion.

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

Mr. Lino Ochoa and Javier Ochoa signed up to speak. Mr. Ochoa stated that they bought the property in 2022 and that it was a mess and had been a mechanic shop. Mr. Ochoa stated that they tried to clean up the cars that were left. Mr. Ochoa stated that the dumpster was to clean the left-over items near the river. Mr. Ochoa stated that they would like to stay in Mount Holly and that they have 40 employees and provide for their families.

Mayor Moore entertained a motion to come out of the public hearing and return to the regular meeting. Councilman Hough made a motion to come out of the public hearing and return to the regular meeting. Councilman Craig seconded the motion.

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

CITY OF MOUNT HOLLY
CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, MAY 13, 2024
COUNCIL CHAMBERS
7:00 PM

Councilman Hough stated that his concern is that this has historically been a bad property. Councilman Hough stated that the Ochoa's have purchased the property and that this is a separate issue because there have continued to be issues. Councilman Hough stated that regardless of the decision that the Council takes, what is Council going to do to help clean that property up? Councilman Hough stated that this property gets a lot of complaints. Councilman Hough stated that the Council should support the recommendation made by the Planning Commission.

Councilman Hough made a motion to deny the text amendment. Councilman Craig seconded the motion.

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

PUBLIC COMMENT-Three (3) Minute Limit

1. Janice McRorie, who lives at 176 Tom Sawyer Lane, came to remind everyone about the Mount Holly Community Development Foundation. Janice McRorie spoke about the successful 5K/10K race. Janice McRorie stated that she wanted to remind everyone about the Art and Business Crawl that will be held on June 7-8, 2024.
2. Garry Brinkley, who lives at 176 Tom Sawyer Lane, came to speak about property taxes. Mr. Brinkley reminded the Council that he recommends a 0% property tax rate for the upcoming fiscal year. Mr. Brinkley stated that the state of North Carolina is predicting a one-billion-dollar tax surplus, and they are investigating how to refund that. Mr. Brinkley stated that it is a good idea to return tax dollars to the citizens. Mr. Brinkley reminded the Council of the recent Council meeting discussion around the city's insurance carrier options and the potential for a \$500,000 excess premium balance that could be returned to the City with a consensus from the Council that this was a good idea. Mr. Brinkley stated that for 11 years in a row, the general fund balance has grown. Mr. Brinkley stated that he is recommending that this Council set a policy that would keep somewhere from \$3 to \$6 million dollars of operating expenses on hand and operate within that balance to keep the general fund balance from growing.
3. Greg Black, who lives at 117 West Central Avenue, spoke about owning his business and how he has experienced flooding at his location regarding the drainage and sidewalks. Mr. Black stated that the main issue is the volume of the debris that comes down the street and

CITY OF MOUNT HOLLY
CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, MAY 13, 2024
COUNCIL CHAMBERS
7:00 PM

sits on top of the grates. Mr. Black stated that the pipe size must be increased. Mr. Black submitted pictures regarding the matter.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Discussion of the four sculptures associated with the leased art program **Paul Lowe**

Mr. Lowe discussed the four sculptures associated with the leased art program. Mr. Lowe stated that the artwork will be in three City parks, and one will be on the Clariant property. Mr. Lowe stated that the artwork presented before the Council went before both the Parks and Recreation Board and the Public Art Advisory Commission (PAAC) and that both boards recommend approval by Council. Mr. Lowe stated that if approved, the term would be for a period of one year before the artwork is changed out.

Councilman Hough made a motion to approve the four sculptures associated with the leased art program. Mayor Pro Tem Shoemaker seconded the motion.

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

Councilman Meadows entered the meeting at 8:05 pm.

2. Fiscal Year 2025 Summary **Jonathan Blanton**

Mr. Blanton gave a summary of the Fiscal Year 2025 budget prior to the upcoming work session that will be dedicated to the Fiscal Year 2025 budget discussion. Mr. Blanton stated that he wanted to give the Council an opportunity to ask any questions, or to make any changes. Mr. Blanton stated that draft budget keeps the tax rate where it currently is at 40.5 cents. Mr. Blanton stated that there will be approximately \$4.4 million dollars of capital improvement projects in the general fund and then approximately \$5.4 million dollars of capital improvement projects in the enterprise fund. Mr. Blanton stated that the wastewater treatment plant will be funded for the upcoming fiscal year. Mr. Blanton stated that we received word from Charlotte Water that it will be late 2025 before we are able to go online so we will provide for the basic operations. Mr. Blanton stated that the Streets and Solid Waste department is increasing if we contract out with

CITY OF MOUNT HOLLY
CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, MAY 13, 2024
COUNCIL CHAMBERS
7:00 PM

Waste Pro. Mr. Blanton stated that there will be an uptick in the budget because of the contracted services that it will cost to pay Waste Pro. Mr. Blanton stated that he believes that the policy thought process behind this is that we would not have to budget for additional garbage trucks or additional personnel. Mr. Blanton stated that four full-time positions have been removed from the Streets and Solid Waste department. Mr. Blanton stated that the staff is proposing to remain with the North Carolina League of Municipalities. Mr. Blanton stated that we have reached out to numerous organizations that are self-funded and had difficulty finding any organizations that are the size of Mount Holly that are currently being self-funded. Mr. Blanton stated that if the Council would like to transition towards a self-funded plan, he recommends that we spend some more time researching and put together a transition plan on what that would look like as we have to make a decision this week regarding our renewal process.

Councilman Hough stated that when the switch goes from MedCost to Aetna, we are no longer going to have the information that you have today to make that decision. Councilman Hough stated that we are at a 61% medical loss ratio and 80 % is break even for an insurance company. Councilman Hough stated the employees will be impacted by the switch from MedCost to Aetna the North Carolina League of Municipalities is currently going through.

Councilman Meadows stated that the self-funding seems very effective and that if we do not like what we experience we can go back to the standard carrier at the League of Municipalities. Councilman Meadows stated that from his understanding the administration will remain the same so if we go self-funding who we face today will be the exact same people. Councilman Meadows stated that he is not understanding the hesitancy to make that change.

Councilwoman Harris stated that she is not sure if she understands all of it and referenced the City of Gastonia and that they have a doctor on site. Mr. Blanton stated that the City of Gastonia does have an in-house nurse. Councilman Hough stated that the City of Gastonia made an organizational decision that employees could be at work longer and better if they treated them at work for minor issues. Councilman Hough stated that this was a wellness initiative that is separate from the insurance initiative.

Councilman Reeves stated that he is concerned about what happens if an employee has large claim. Councilman Hough discussed the stop loss coverage that was explained by One Digital at the last meeting. Councilman Hough stated that the only thing that changes is that now we are paying for what we are getting rather than paying for somebody else's claims in another city who isn't doing what we have been doing as a City to keep our people healthy. Councilman Hough stated that we talked about safety tonight, that is part of the employees' health.

CITY OF MOUNT HOLLY
CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, MAY 13, 2024
COUNCIL CHAMBERS
7:00 PM

Mr. Blanton stated that the staff is prepared to move forward with the self-funded option. Mr. Blanton stated that it will be a very large transition and that he wanted to make sure that we had Council buy in. Mr. Blanton stated that he will need direction since there needs to be an answer in the next couple of days.

Councilman Meadows asked about whether there could be a consultant that could be hired for the transition if staff is hesitant. Councilman Hough stated that One Digital is a consultant and does self-funding regularly.

Mayor Pro Tem Shoemaker made a motion to move forward with the self-funded insurance program. Councilman Meadows seconded the motion.

The Council Members voted 4-2. (Motion Carried.)

Councilmembers voting Yea: Mayor Pro Tem Shoemaker, Councilman Hough, Councilman Meadows, and Councilman Craig.

Councilmembers voting Nay: Councilwoman Harris, Councilman Reeves

3. City Manager Report

Jonathan Blanton

Mr. Blanton thanked the employees for the great work that they are doing and that is reflected in the awards and accolades that are being received. Mr. Blanton thanked the public for their patience over the last week due to the weather-related issues. Mr. Blanton thanked the Police, Fire, Streets and Solid Waste, and the Utilities Departments who worked around the clock to ensure that we were able to continue providing services. Mr. Blanton thanked the Mount Holly Community Development Foundation for the 5K/10K event. Mr. Blanton stated that he is looking forward to the Summer here in Mount Holly.

Councilman Meadows apologized for coming in late but wanted to recognize the Finance Department for the Government Finance Officers Association's Distinguished Budget Award. Councilman Meadows stated that he is beyond thrilled about the work that was done and is proud of the effort that was made.

CLOSED SESSION

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

CITY OF MOUNT HOLLY
CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, MAY 13, 2024
COUNCIL CHAMBERS
7:00 PM

Mayor Moore entertained a motion to go out of the regular meeting and into closed session pursuant to N.C.G.S 143-318.11 (a) (3, and 5). Councilman Reeves made a motion to go out of the regular meeting and into closed session at 8:20 pm . Councilman Craig seconded the motion.

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

Mayor Moore entertained a motion to come out of closed session and back into the regular meeting. Councilman Hough made a motion to come out of closed session and back into the regular meeting at 8:40 pm. Councilman Meadows seconded the motion.

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

ADJOURN

With no additional items for discussion, Mayor Moore entertained a motion to adjourn the May 13, 2024 Council meeting. Councilman Hough made a motion to adjourn the May 13, 2024 Council Meeting at 8:41pm. Councilman Reeves seconded the motion.

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

The meeting adjourned at 8:41pm.