

**TOWN OF RICHLANDS**  
**NORTH CAROLINA**

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The Richlands Board of Aldermen met in Regular Session on August 12, 2025, at 6:00 pm at the Richlands Town Hall. Present for the meeting were:

Mayor McKinley Smith  
Mayor Pro-Tem Tom Brown  
Alderman Kent Painter

Alderman Marilyn Bunce  
Alderman Paul Conner  
Alderman Kandy Koonce

Also present were:

Gregg Whitehead, Town Administrator  
Erin Juhls, Town Clerk  
William A. Horne, Chief of Police

Keith Fountain, Town Attorney  
Johnathan Jarman, Public Works Director

There were 23 citizens present.

**I. MEETING CALLED TO ORDER:**

Mayor McKinley Smith called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

**II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: Alderman Marilyn Bunce**

**III. INVOCATION: Mayor McKinley Smith**

**IV. ADOPTION OF AGENDA:**

Gregg Whitehead, Town Administrator, presented the agenda to the Board.

A **motion** was made by Alderman Kandy Koonce seconded by Alderman Tom Brown to adopt the agenda as presented. The motion was unanimously carried.

**V. ADOPTION OF MINUTES (July 8, 2025):**

A **motion** was made by Alderman Paul Conner, seconded by Alderman Tom Brown to approve the meeting minutes of July 8, 2025. The motion was unanimously carried.

## **VI. PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Marcus Curry with Omega Lodge 292 requested the use of Venters Park for a back-to-school giveaway on August 23<sup>rd</sup>.

A **motion** was made by Alderman Kandy Koonce, seconded by Alderman Paul Conner to approve the use of Venters Park at no charge. The motion was unanimously carried.

Arthine Thomas spoke on behalf of the Sanders Saunders Reunion and wanted to commend the Richlands Police Department for their help with the parade on Saturday. They have been doing the event and the parade for 32 years and the Police Department has always been helpful.

Bernard McCleod spoke regarding bringing new businesses to town. He requested that the citizens and board be receptive to zoning changes and annexations which will only benefit the town. He needs to be able to show businesses that Richlands has the numbers to support them.

Deena McClanahan spoke in opposition to the zoning map amendment request by Sylvester Farm Investments.

Alice Betts requested a geese crossing sign from the Post Office down to Navy Federal due to geese being killed by motor vehicles.

Matthew Batts requested the speed limit to be changed to 25 mph on West Hargett Street to Highway 258.

## **VII. PUBLIC HEARING:**

### **1. ZONING MAP AMENDMENT (SYLVESTER FARM INVESTMENTS):**

Mayor Smith opened the public hearing in order to receive public comments regarding the Zoning Map Amendment.

Town Administrator Gregg Whitehead presented a Zoning Map Amendment request from Sylvester Farm Investments to rezone approximately 70.805 acres of Tax Parcel ID 003034,026137, 003033, and a portion of 026135 from the R-20 Residential and R-10 Residential District to the R-8 Residential District. The R-8 Residential District allows single-family homes as a permitted use.

Eli Perry with Perry Management and representing Sylvester Farm Investments addressed the board regarding the zoning map amendment request, stating that although they initially proposed rezoning a section to R-6, they have decided to leave it unchanged in response to public input.

Ward Sylvester addressed the board, stating he is a long-time resident of Richlands and one of five owners of Sylvester Farm Investments. After withdrawing the previous rezoning request, they revised their plans and are now requesting R-8 zoning. He noted that not all woodlands or the stream will be removed.

Eddie Horne, manager at WRH Farms which adjoins the property, is in favor of a great place to grow. He agrees with and supports the zoning map amendment request.

Elizabeth Bertuch spoke in opposition to the zoning amendment request, expressing concern over making a decision without full details. She opposed the R-8 zoning due to its potential impact on infrastructure. She is in favor of growth but not explosion.

With no further comments, Mayor Smith declared the public hearing closed.

2. **ZONING MAP AMENDMENT (PRIMARY LAND DEVELOPMENT):**

Mayor Smith opened the public hearing in order to receive public comments regarding the Zoning Map Amendment.

Town Administrator Gregg Whitehead presented a Zoning Map Amendment request from Primary Land Development to rezone approximately 68 acres of Tax Parcel ID 017914 from R-20 Residential District and C-3 Commercial District to R-6 Residential District. The parcel in question is located along Gum Branch Road in the extra-territorial jurisdiction of the town. The R-6 Residential District allows for single-family and multi-family housing as a permitted use.

With no comments, Mayor Smith declared the public hearing closed.

VIII. **OLD BUSINESS:** None

IX. **NEW BUSINESS:**

1. **ORDINANCE 2025-07 (ZONING MAP AMENDMENT):**

Now that the public hearing has been held, Town Administrator Gregg Whitehead presented to the Board, Ordinance 2025-07 which would change all of approximately 70.805 acres of Tax Parcel ID 003034, 026137,003033, and a portion of 026135 from the R-20 Residential and R-10 Residential District to the R-8 Residential District.

After some discussion, a motion was made by Alderman Marilyn Bunce, seconded by Alderman Kandy Koonce to approve Ordinance 2025-07. The motion was unanimously carried.

2. **ORDINANCE 2025-08 (ZONING MAP AMENDMENT):**

Now that the public hearing has been held, Town Administrator Gregg Whitehead presented to the Board, Ordinance 2025-06 which would change the zoning designation of Onslow County Tax Parcel ID 01794 from the C-3 Commercial District and the R-20 Residential District to the R-6 Residential District located along Gum Branch Road and in the town's Extra Territorial Jurisdiction.

A **motion** was made by Alderman Kandy Koonce, seconded by Alderman Kent Painter to approve Ordinance 2025-08.

Alderman Bunce requested some discussion on the matter regarding the property being in the Extra-Territorial Jurisdiction.

Junior Santiago with DR Horton Homes addressed the Board and expressed interest in annexing the property, requesting information on how to begin the process.

Town Administrator Gregg Whitehead will provide more information on the annexation process. He stated the Ordinance can be on the agenda for the next meeting along with the annexation application.

After some discussion, Alderman Kandy Koonce withdrew her motion followed by Alderman Kent Painter withdrawing his second.

3. **SALE OF THE HELP BUILDING UPDATE:**

The deadline to submit upset bids for the purchase of the HELP Building and grounds was at noon on Friday, August 8<sup>th</sup>. The town did not receive any new bids, and the board can now approve the sale of the property for \$300,000.00 to NBI Financial LLC if they desire to.

A **motion** was made by Alderman Paul Conner, seconded by Alderman Marilyn Bunce to approve the sale. The motion was unanimously carried.

Mayor Smith then directed the town attorney to draw up the offer to purchase and contract for the sale.

4. **BUDGET AMENDMENTS #2 & #3:**

Town Administrator Gregg Whitehead presented Budget Amendment #2 which will move funds from the Maintenance and Repair Vehicles line item to the Capital Outlay line item in the Public Safety budget in order to cover the costs of the upfitting on the new patrol vehicle. Budget Amendment #3 will allocate \$12,983.00 in additional funds to cover the cost of the Richlands Voluntary Fire Department building roof repair. A good majority of the roofing plywood needed to be replaced due to moisture damage.

A **motion** was then made by Alderman Kent Painter, seconded by Alderman Tom Brown to approve Budget Amendment #2 and #3. The motion was unanimously carried.

5. **NCDOT SPEED LIMIT RESOLUTION:**

NCDOT, per the town's request, reviewed the proposed speed limit reductions on the streets that intersect with downtown and have agreed to reducing a majority of the secondary road in Richlands to 25 mph.

Town Administrator Gregg Whitehead presented Resolution 2025-02 which would formally request that NCDOT reduce the speed limit on the following streets:

- Wilmington Street from US 258 to New Street.
- W Hargett Street from US 258 to Wilmington Street.
- E Hargett Street from Wilmington Street to Winstead Place.
- Franck Street from US 258 to East Point/Norwood Baysden Street.

A **motion** was made by Alderman Paul Conner, seconded by Alderman Marilyn Bunce, to approve Resolution 2025-02. The motion unanimously carried.

Mr. Whitehead also stated he has been informed by NCDOT of their intent to lower the speed limit on Ervintown Road from 55 mph to 45 mph.

**6. INSTALLMENT PURCHASE RESOLUTION:**

Town Administrator Gregg Whitehead presented Resolution 2025-03 which will authorize the Town Administrator to sign the necessary documents to enter into an installment purchase contract with First Citizens for the purpose of financing the purchase of a new police patrol vehicle and a pickup truck for the Public Works Department. Both are accounted for in the general fund budget.

A **motion** was made by Alderman Kent Painter, seconded by Alderman Tom Brown to approve Resolution 2025-03. The motion was unanimously carried.

**7. DEPUTY FINANCE OFFICER RESOLUTION:**

Town Administrator Gregg Whitehead presented Resolution 2025-04 which will formally appoint Patricia Allen as Deputy Finance Officer and give her the authority to sign checks and create purchase orders in the event that Finance Officer Erin Juhls is absent and /or unavailable.

A **motion** was made by Alderman Kent Painter, seconded by Alderman Tom Brown to approve Resolution 2025-04. The motion was unanimously carried.

Town Clerk Erin Juhls then administered the oath of office of Deputy Finance Officer to Ms. Patricia Allen.

**8. VEHICLE MOTOR PURCHASE FOR CHEVROLET 3500:**

The 2012 Chevrolet 3500 flatbed truck, which is the spare work truck for the Public Works Department, recently broke down and is in need of a new motor. The cost to replace the motor is \$7,286.65 and comes with a one-year, unlimited mile warranty.

The Board agreed on purchasing the new motor.

Town Administrator Gregg Whitehead then presented Budget Amendment # 4 which would cover the cost for the new motor.

A **motion** was made by Alderman Marilyn Bunce, seconded by Alderman Kandy Koonce to approve Budget Amendment #4. The motion was unanimously carried.

**9. BUDGET AMENDMENT # 5:**

Town Administrator Gregg Whitehead presented Budget Amendment #5 which would allocate \$859.00 in funds to pay for the yearly insurance for Revive Downtown Richlands. Since Alderman Bunce and Alderman Conner are on the Revive Downtown Richlands committee, they would need to recuse themselves from the vote.

A **motion** was made by Alderman Kent Painter, seconded by Alderman Kandy Koonce to recuse Alderman Conner and Alderman Bunce. The motion was unanimously carried.

A **motion** was then made by Alderman Kandy Koonce, seconded by Alderman Kent Painter to approve Budget Amendment #5. The motion was unanimously carried.

10. **RESOLUTION:**

Town Attorney Keith Fountain stated a resolution needs to be approved for the closing of the sale of the property next to town hall authorizing either the Mayor or Mayor Pro-Tem to execute such documents as necessary to purchase the property next door as approved by the Board.

A **motion** was made by Alderman Paul Conner, seconded by Alderman Kandy Koonce to approve the Resolution authorizing the Mayor or Mayor Pro-Tem to execute any and all documents necessary to purchase the property. The motion was unanimously carried.

X. **ADMINISTRATOR NOTES AND UPDATES:**

A **motion** was made by Alderman Marilyn Bunce, seconded by Alderman Kandy Koonce to go into closed session to discuss personnel. The motion was unanimously carried.

Mayor Smith called the meeting back to order. No action was taken; a discussion was held regarding personnel.

Town Administrator Gregg Whitehead announced his retirement at the end of the year, thanked the Board for their support, and stated he will advertise the position and assist with the transition. He shared that his long tenure was due to the strong community, dedicated employees, and the many relationships he has built within the town and county.

Alderman Bunce voiced her hope that there will be an overlap of at least a month or two for the new Town Administrator.

Alderman Kent Painter wished Mr. Whitehead all the best.

Alderman Tom Brown stated Mr. Whitehead made their job as Alderman easy.

The Town Administrator, Gregg Whitehead, presented a copy of notes and updates to the Board which is incorporated by reference and hereby made part of these minutes. He also reported on the following:

- Town Hall will be closed on Monday, September 1<sup>st</sup> in observance of Labor Day.
- Will be out of the office Tuesday, September 2<sup>nd</sup>- Friday September 5<sup>th</sup>.
- Due to these dates, the Board may want to consider moving the September meeting date to Tuesday, September 16<sup>th</sup>.

A **motion** was made by Alderman Paul Conner, seconded by Alderman Kandy Koonce to move the September regular Board meeting to September 16<sup>th</sup>. The motion was unanimously carried.

- Currently the fee schedule lists a charge of \$50.00 for parade permit fees. Mr. Whitehead asked the Board if they wanted to continue charging this fee.

The Board agreed, considering the work that is involved with the parade permits, that the town should be charging the fee.

- Has been in contact with Congressman Murphy's office and they will be putting the street paving project into next year's federal budget. He is hoping for some discretionary funding or grant money.

## **XI. POLICE REPORT:**

Chief William A. Horne presented a copy of the Activity Report for July 2025 and is incorporated by reference and hereby made part of these minutes. He also reported on the following:

- Officer Lessner attended and passed radar certification. Sergenat Nailer passed recertification as well.
- The battery on Car 9 died and National Dodge replaced the alternator and battery under warranty. It is now back at National Dodge after not starting up again.
- Waiting on the replacement warranty on the new motor Waller Tire will be installing.
- Officer Pool is resigning in September and will be working for the Kinston Police Department.
- BLET position is open and now Officer Pool's position. The open positions are posted on the town website as well as the sign in front of town hall. Hoping to hire only certified officers for the time being.
- Would like to schedule a Public Safety meeting as soon as possible.

## **XII. BOARD MEMBER CONCERNS AND COMMITTEE UPDATES:**

**Alderman Marilyn Bunce:** Expressed that Mr. Whitehead is the reason that she is on the Board and has enjoyed working with him, his wife Dana, and the Board.

**Alderman Tom Brown:** Appreciates all that Mr. Whitehead has done for the town and expressed how great it has been since he was hired.

Also commented on how terrible the acoustics in the boardroom are and that the audience and the board members themselves have a tough time hearing when people are speaking.

**Alderman Kandy Koonce:** Expressed how the town has had a lot of changes in the past 5 years. She is Grateful to be a part of the board while Mr. Whitehead was here and feels it will be tough spot to fill.

**Alderman Paul Conner:** Thanked Mr. Whitehead and expressed his appreciation for everything he has done since he has been with town.

**Mayor McKinley Smith:** Thanked the Board for making the decision to hire Mr. Whitehead and feels he has done an outstanding job.

**Eli Perry with Perry Management** stated he has been working with the town for 10 years and considers Mr. Whitehead to be a pro. He has worked with many towns and feels he is very efficient in all that he does.

**Ward Sylvester** commented that Mr. Whitehead will be missed.

**XIII. PERSONNEL:** None

**XIV. CLOSED SESSION:** None

**XV. ADJOURN:**

With no further business, a **motion** was made by Alderman Marilyn Bunce, seconded by Alderman Paul Conner to adjourn the meeting at 7:32 pm. The motion was unanimously carried.

Respectfully Submitted,

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Mayor McKinley Smith

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Attest:  
Erin Juhls, Town Clerk