

TOWN OF RICHLANDS NORTH CAROLINA

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The Richlands Board of Aldermen met in Regular Session on September 16, 2025, at 6:00 pm at the Richlands Town Hall. Present for the meeting were:

Mayor McKinley Smith
Mayor Pro-Tem Tom Brown
Alderman Kandy Koonce
Alderman Marilyn Bunce
Alderman Paul Conner

Absent: Alderman Kent Painter

Also present were:

Gregg Whitehead, Town Administrator
Erin Juhls, Town Clerk
William A. Horne, Chief of Police
Royce Bennett, Chairman, ONWASA Board of Directors
Keith Fountain, Town Attorney
Johnathan Jarman, Public Works Director

There were 4 citizens present.

I. MEETING CALLED TO ORDER:

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

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: Ms. Arthine Thomas

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

V. ADOPTION OF MINUTES (August, 2025):

A **motion** was made by Alderman Kandy Koonce, seconded by Alderman Paul Conner to approve the meeting minutes of August 12, 2025. The motion was unanimously carried.

A **motion** was then made by Alderman Tom Brown, seconded by Alderman Paul Conner to approve and publish the closed session minutes from August 12, 2025. The motion was unanimously carried.

VI. PUBLIC COMMENT:

Rob Enebrad spoke regarding speeding on East Foy Street and vandalism by Trexler students. He feels there is a need for a speed bump near Trexler to help slow down traffic. He stated Officer Lessner and the Student Resource Officer have both been very attentive and helpful with his concerns. He also requested no parking signs on the east side of North Nicholson due to parents parking on the side of the road which leads to a backup in traffic.

VII. PUBLIC HEARING:

1. SPECIAL USE PERMIT (DUPLEX):

Mayor Smith opened the public hearing in order to receive public comments regarding the Special Use Permit.

Town Administrator Gregg Whitehead informed the board of the Special Use request by Mr. Daniel Jacoby to construct a duplex at 119 Comfort Road.

Mr. Gregg Whitehead, Town Administrator and Mr. Daniel Jacoby, 121 Comfort Hwy, were sworn in by Town Clerk Erin Juhls.

Town Attorney, Keith Fountain questioned Mr. Whitehead on the following:

- 1) Have you reviewed the application in this manner? I have
- 2) Does it appear to be complete in your opinion? It does
- 3) Is the request within the jurisdiction according to the table of permissible uses? Yes, it is a Special Use
- 4) Do you think that if it is granted, it would comply with the requirements of the zoning ordinance of the Town of Richlands? Yes
- 5) Is there anything you want to add? No, there is an adjacent duplex to the property that would be a continuation of the current development.

Town Attorney, Keith Fountain questioned Mr. Jacoby on the following:

- 1) Mr. Jacoby, you are the owner of the property that is being requested for the Special Use Permit correct? Yes
- 2) Do you own any property that is adjacent to this? 20 acres behind and the ½ acre lot beside it.
- 3) Do you think if the board should grant this Special Use Permit it would materially endanger the public health or safety? No sir
- 4) Have you sought out and obtained a determination on whether the use will substantially reduce the value of the adjoining or abutting property? Yes, I have a statement from Janice Harrison stating the adjacent home's value will not be affected.
- 5) Is there anything you would like to say? No

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

VIII. OLD BUSINESS: None

IX. NEW BUSINESS:

1. ONWASA Articles of Incorporation Amendment Proposal:

Mr. Royce Bennett, Chairman of the ONWASA Board of Directors presented to the Board a proposed amendment to the Articles of Incorporation that will allow member governments the ability to appoint non-elected directors to represent them. Currently, only elected officials are authorized to be appointed to represent their respective member governments. The ONWASA Board is made up of 8 elected officials, 6 of which are up for reelection this year. The ONWASA Board does not feel it is good business practice for the possibility of a 75% turnover of the board in one year. The Resolution allows the town to appoint anyone to the board whether they are elected or not to serve a 3-year term. The term for the town's representative expires on October 3, 2026.

A **motion** was made by Alderman Tom Brown, seconded by Alderman Kandy Koonce to approve the Resolution to Amend the Articles of Incorporation of the Onslow Water and Sewer Authority. The motion unanimously carried.

2. SPECIAL USE PERMIT (DUPLEX):

Now that the public hearing has been held, Town Administrator Gregg Whitehead presented to the Board the Special Use Permit request which would allow the construction of a duplex at 119 Comfort Road, Richlands. The property in question is referenced as Onslow County Tax Parcel #43D-1 and is located in the R-8 Residential District, which allows duplexes as a special use.

A **motion** was made by Alderman Marilyn Bunce, seconded by Alderman Tom Brown that the requested Special use Permit is within its jurisdiction according to the table of permissible uses, the application is complete, if completed as proposed in the application, the development will comply with all of the requirements of this chapter, the use will not materially endanger public health or safety if located where proposed and developed according to the plan as submitted, the use will not substantially reduce the value of adjoining or abutting property or that the use is a public necessity, and the location and character of the use, if developed according to the plan as submitted and approved, will be in harmony with the area in which it is to be located and in general conformity with the plan and development of the town. The motion was unanimously carried.

3. NCDOT SPEED LIMIT RESOLUTION (2025-06):

The North Carolina Department of Transportation has requested that the resolution adopted at the August meeting concerning lowering the speed limit on portions of Wilmington Street, Franck Street, and Hargett Street be updated with additional language that is necessary in order for NCDOT to process the change to their municipal speed limit ordinances. The additional language doesn't change any of the proposed speed limit locations. NCDOT provided a map that corresponds with the proposed speed limit changes listed in the Resolution which is incorporated by reference and hereby made a part of these minutes.

The board members voiced some concern with the wording on numbers 6 and 7.

Town Administrator Gregg Whitehead stated that NCDOT added items 6 and 7. He referenced an email from DOT which stated “the last two ordinance changes listed above are needed due to the deletion of an SR number that had been used as a location reference in 1980 for the 45-mph ordinance but which had been deleted from the state-maintained system later. They do not involve any change in speed limit for the 45-mph road section”.

A **motion** was then made by Alderman Marilyn Bunce, seconded by Alderman Paul Conner to approve Resolution 2025-06. The motion was approved with 3 ayes (Alderman Bunce, Alderman Koonce, Alderman Conner) and 1 Nay (Alderman Brown).

Alderman Conner and Alderman Bunce requested some clarification from NCDOT of items 6 and 7 when the Resolution is sent back to them.

4. **RESOLUTION 2025-05 and 2025-06:**

Town Administrator Gregg Whitehead presented two resolutions which direct the Town Clerk to certify two voluntary annexation petitions received by the town. Resolution 2025-05 will annex approximately 126.64 acres located along Francktown Road in the Extra-Territorial Jurisdiction of Richlands and Onslow County. Resolution 2025-07 will annex approximately 67 acres along Gum Branch Road in the Extra-Territorial Jurisdiction of Richlands. Once the petitions are certified, the Board may schedule a public hearing on the proposed annexations.

The first is for Carolina Sapphire, they would like to annex two properties that are adjacent to Steeds Park. The town recently rezoned one of the properties, the other is in Onslow County. The second is for Mercer Mills which is adjacent to the Richlands High School development. They recently requested a rezoning of R-6 and decided to inquire on the annexation process.

A **motion** was then made by Alderman Marilyn Bunce, seconded by Alderman Paul Conner that the clerk investigate the petitions 2025-05 and 2025-07 to investigate the applicability of annexing. The motion was unanimously carried.

5. **BUDGET AMENDMENT #6 AND #7:**

Town Administrator Gregg Whitehead presented Budget Amendment # 6 which will budget \$87,316.00 in installment purchase funds needed to purchase the patrol vehicle and pickup truck and Budget Amendment #7 which will move the first year’s installment payment for the two vehicles from the Capital Outlay line items to Debt Service line items in the budget.

A **motion** was made by Alderman Tom Brown, seconded by Alderman Kandy Koonce, to approve Budget Amendment #6 and #7. The motion was unanimously carried.

X. **ADMINISTRATOR NOTES AND UPDATES:**

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:

- Public Works Director Johnathan Jarman has been working on the details of the street lighting discussion from a few months back. He has been communicating with Duke Energy, and they developed a map showing where the streetlights are located and where they recommend adding lights. There would not be a fee to install, only the monthly payments which would be \$9.50 per 70 watt light a month. They recommended adding 26 lights, which would be a total of \$247.00 a month.

A **motion** was made by Alderman Tom Brown, seconded by Alderman Kandy Koonce to proceed with new 70-watt lights in the recommended locations. The motion was unanimously carried.

- A public works committee meeting needs to be scheduled.
- Received an estimate on updating the Board Room acoustics and microphones. The cost to update to shot gun microphones would be \$24,000.00, to update to wireless would be \$30,000.00 and to add acoustic tiles to the back wall and ceiling would be \$14,000.00. This could be an item to discuss further or possibly add to next year's budget.
- Reminded the Board to stay for pictures for the Onslow County directory.

XI. POLICE REPORT:

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

- Officer Pool officially resigned and is working with the Kinston Police Department.
- Sergeant Sandoval turned in his resignation but will be staying on as a part time reserve officer.
- Have one applicant that currently works at another agency that would like to transfer to the town.
- Car 8 is back in service after its motor was replaced for the second time due to a defect.
- When picking up Car 9 (the ghost Durango) from National Dodge, a broken part was discovered. They informed Chief Horne it would be ready by Thursday afternoon, but he has not received any updates since.
- The department has received a couple of traffic complaints and have had some juvenile issues after school. Officer Lessner has been on Foy and Wilmington streets running radar.

XII. BOARD MEMBER CONCERNS AND COMMITTEE UPDATES:

Alderman Marilyn Bunce: Agreed with Mr. Enebrad's concerns regarding speeding on E Foy Street. She resides across from Trexler and regularly witnesses vehicles speeding and hears loud mufflers in the area. Although she has not experienced vandalism personally, she continues to deal with issues related to vehicles blocking driveways during school pick-up times. Hopefully, these issues will be addressed and taken care of. She stated that there are not speed bumps on Foy Street and does not feel the town is in favor of them. Mr. Whitehead added that the speed bumps end up penalizing the residents more than addressing the actual speeding problem.

Also thanked Elliot Jarman and the Richlands Fire Department for Farmers Day. She felt it was a tremendous success and hopes they did well with their fundraising efforts.

Alderman Kandy Koonce: Inquired if the stump from the tree that was cut down on W Hargett Street by the North Carolina Department of Transportation was going to be removed. Mr. Whitehead stated he can reach out to NCDOT and request it be removed.

Also asked if the parking spaces on W Hargett Street by Precious Resources could be designated as no parking from 7:00 am – 8:30 am and 2:30 pm-4:00 pm to help with the traffic flow for the school/childcare center.

Mr. Whitehead will look into limiting the time for parking in that area.

Thanked Mr. Royce Bennett for coming out for the meeting.

Alderman Paul Conner: Thanked everyone for coming to the meeting. Also spoke to Chief Horne regarding an individual that has been speeding coming from the park area heading towards Hwy 258. He is worried that they might hit someone.

XIII. PERSONNEL: None

XIV. CLOSED SESSION: None

XV. ADJOURN:

With no further business, a **motion** was made by Alderman Tom Brown, seconded by Alderman Paul Conner to adjourn the meeting at 7:00 pm. The motion was unanimously carried.

Respectfully Submitted,

Mayor McKinley Smith

Attest:
Erin Juhls, Town Clerk