

# **TOWN OF RICHLANDS**

## **NORTH CAROLINA**

Office of the  
Town Clerk  
(910) 324-3301  
(910) 324-2324 fax  
[townclerk@richlandscnc.gov](mailto:townclerk@richlandscnc.gov)



Mailing Address:  
P.O. Box 245  
Richlands, N.C. 28574

The Richlands Board of Aldermen met in Regular Session on Tuesday, December 9, 2025, at 6:00 pm at the Richlands Town Hall. Present for the meeting were:

Mayor McKinley Smith  
Alderman Kent Painter  
Alderman Tom Brown

Alderman Kandy Koonce  
Alderman Marilyn Bunce  
Alderman Paul Conner

Also present were:

Gregg Whitehead, Town Administrator  
Isaura Flores, Town Clerk  
Johnathan Jarman, Public Works Director  
The Honorable James W. Bateman, III  
Alice Betts, Newly Elected Alderman  
The Honorable Michael A Lazzaro NC Senator

Keith Fountain, Town Attorney  
William A Horne, Chief of Police  
Gregory T. Redman, CPA  
Ronnie Christopher Roberson

There were 32 citizens present.

### **I. MEETING CALLED TO ORDER:**

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

### **II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** Alderman Kandy Koonce

### **III. INVOCATION:** Mayor McKinley Smith

### **IV. ADOPTION OF AGENDA:**

Gregg Whitehead, Town Administrator, presented the agenda to the Board.  
Chris Roberson added 5A and 5B to the agenda.

A **motion** was made by Alderman Paul Conner seconded by Alderman Marilyn Bunce to adopt the amended agenda. The motion was unanimously carried.

### **V. ADOPTION OF MINUTES (November 19, 2025):**

A **motion** was made by Alderman Tom Brown, seconded by Alderman Marilyn Bunce to approve the Regular Board Meeting Minutes of November 19, 2025. The motion was unanimously carried.

## **VI. PUBLIC COMMENT:**

John Michael Moore, a founding member of Operation Deploy Santa and a 28-year veteran of the Sheriff's Office, addressed the board. Operation Deploy Santa, which began in this town in 2008, ensures that every child receives a toy and that no one is turned away. Unlike other programs, participants do not need to register; children meet Santa Claus in person and receive quality toys. The program welcomes all participants and is run to make everyone feel appreciated during the holiday season.

## **VII. SPECIAL PRESENTATION:**

Chris Roberson introduced Michael Farris, who provided a special presentation to the Board in recognition of Town Administrator Gregg Whitehead's retirement. Mr. Farris addressed the Board and shared remarks regarding Mr. Whitehead's long career in local government, emphasizing the demands of the Town Administrator role and commending Mr. Whitehead for his professionalism, integrity, dedication, and years of service to the Town. Mr. Farris also noted his long-standing friendship with Mr. Whitehead, having known him for over 30 years.

Alderman Paul Conner addressed the Board and shared remarks regarding Mr. Whitehead's 27 years of service. Alderman Conner stated that Michael Farris nominated Mr. Whitehead for *The Order of the Long Leaf Pine*, one of the highest honors awarded by the Governor of North Carolina.

Tom Brown presented Mr. Whitehead with *The Order of the Long Leaf Pine* and offered congratulatory remarks recognizing Mr. Whitehead's leadership and service to the Town.

Mayor McKinley Smith addressed the Board and presented Mr. Whitehead with a plaque in recognition of his service as Town Administrator from April 1, 1998, to December 31, 2025, citing his leadership, integrity, and dedication to the Town.

Alderman Kandy Koonce addressed the Board and expressed appreciation for Mr. Whitehead's leadership and service.

At the Mayor's request, Town Attorney Keith Fountain addressed the Board and commended Mr. Whitehead for his professionalism and leadership.

Mr. Whitehead addressed the Board and expressed his appreciation to the Board, staff, and community and thanked them for the opportunity to serve the Town.

Mayor McKinley Smith recognized State Senator Mike Lazzara, who addressed the Board and shared remarks regarding the Town's growth and future challenges.

Town Attorney Keith Fountain addressed the Board and recognized State Senator Lazzara being named legislator of the year by the North Carolina Airport Association.

**VIII. ADJOURNMENT:** Mayor Smith adjourned the board at 6:40 pm

**IX. SWEARING IN OF NEWLY ELECTED OFFICIALS:**

The Honorable James W. Bateman, III, District Court Judge administered The Oaths of Office for the incoming Mayor and Alderman. The Officials sworn in were:

McKinley D. Smith, Mayor  
Alice Betts, Alderman  
Tom Brown, Alderman  
Paul Conner, Alderman  
Kent Painter, Alderman  
Marilyn Bunce, Alderman

Following the swearing-in, the Board recessed. Gregg Whitehead noted a reception for the newly elected officials.

Alderman Alice Betts offered brief remarks, thanking God and supporters, and expressed her enthusiasm for working with her fellow Aldermen.

**X. MEETING CALLED TO ORDER:**

Mayor McKinley Smith called the meeting to order at 7:21 pm.

**XI. MAYORAL COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS:**

**1. APPOINTMENTS:**

Mayor McKinley Smith made his appointments as follows:

Public Safety Committee:

Alderman Tom Brown, Alderman Kent Painter, Chief William Horne and Ronnie Chris Roberson, Town Administrator

Public Works Committee:

Alderman Alice Betts, Alderman Marilyn Bunce, Johnathan Jarman, Public Works Director, and Chris Roberson, Town Administrator

Finance Committee:

Mayor McKinley Smith, Alderman Paul Conner, Town Clerk / Finance Officer Isaura Flores, and Town Administrator Ronnie Chris Roberson

**XII. NOMINATION AND APPOINTMENT OF MAYOR PRO TEMPORE:**

Town Attorney, Keith Fountain, presided over the appointment of Mayor Pro Tempore by either verbal voting from the Board or by ballot if preferred. The Board decided on verbal voting. Attorney Fountain accepted nominations from the Board for Mayor Pro Tempore.

Alderman Paul Conner nominated Alderman Tom Brown for Mayor Pro Tempore.

A **motion** was made by Alderman Marilyn Bunce, seconded by Alderman Kent Painter to appoint Alderman Tom Brown as Mayor Pro Tem. The motion was unanimously carried.

No ballot was needed.

**XIII. PUBLIC HEARING:** None

**XIV. OLD BUSINESS:** None

**XV. NEW BUSINESS:**

**1. SWEARING IN OF TOWN ADMINISTRATOR:**

Isaura Flores, Town Clerk, administered the Oath of Office to newly appointed Town Administrator, Ronnie Christopher Roberson.

**2. FY 2024-2025 FINANCIAL AUDIT REPORT:**

Mr. Gregory T. Redman, CPA, presented the financial audit report to the Board for the 2024-2025 Fiscal Year. He reported on the following highlights:

- Audit was submitted on time.
- Unmodified Opinion (no findings).
- Assets of the Town exceeded liabilities at end of FY 2024/2025 by \$3,566,440
- Total net Position decreased by \$18,529.
- At the end of FY 2024/2025, governmental funds balance of \$2,423,837 a decrease of \$79,112 in comparison with the prior year.
- Approximately 90% (\$2,186,871) is available for spending (unassigned fund balance).
- As of June 30, 2025 no total debt outstanding.
- Net Profit in comparison of revenues and expenditures is \$5,753
- Net Pension Liability of \$488,824
- Property Tax Collection rate of 98.27%.

A **motion** was made by Alderman Paul Conner, seconded by Alderman Tom Brown to accept the FY 2024/2025 Audit. The motion was unanimously carried.

**3. BUDGET AMENDMENT #11 (PUBLIC SAFETY) AND #12 (OPERATION SANTA DONATIONS):**

Town Administrator Chris Roberson presented Budget Amendment #11 and #12.

Budget amendment #11 will account for \$400.22 of unused PD Walmart Grant from FY 24/25.

A **motion** was made by Alderman Marilyn Bunce, seconded by Alderman Paul Connor to approve Budget Amendment #11. The motion was unanimously carried.

Budget Amendment #12 will account for \$2,500 Donations for Operation Santa.

A **motion** was made by Alderman Tom Brown, seconded by Alderman Paul Connor to approve Budget Amendment #12. The motion was unanimously carried.

#### **XVI. ADMINISTRATOR NOTES AND UPDATES:**

The Town Administrator, Chris Roberson, reported on upcoming events:

- Reminded everyone of the Christmas luncheon on the 17<sup>th</sup> from 12-2.
- Operation Deploy Santa on the 20<sup>th</sup> from 12PM -6 PM
- Chamber Christmas Parade on the 13<sup>th</sup> starts at 5:30PM

Mr. Roberson also provided updates on current upcoming projects. He reported that several projects initiated by his predecessor are in early stages and will continue to move forward. He discussed ongoing discussions with USDA regarding potential project financing and grant opportunities to offset local costs. He also noted increased development activity within the Town.

#### **XVII. POLICE REPORT:**

Chief William A. Horne Chief Horne also reported on the following:

- New Employee S. Vega expected to complete training on the 21<sup>st</sup>. The department anticipates starting the new year fully staffed.
- Flag outside to be replaced. Two 4x6 flags to be provided, one will be kept as a spare.
- The Christmas parade will be held on Saturday December 13<sup>th</sup> route adjustment utilizing both the front and back of the school. Officers from other towns will assist with parade security.
- Chief Horne recognized staff member Trish with their assistance with Operation Deploy Santa, which will be held December 20<sup>th</sup> at 12:00 pm-6:00pm at the Town Hall.

#### **XVIII. PUBLIC COMMENT:**      None

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

**Alderman Marilyn Bunce:** Welcomed Town Administrator Chris Roberson and expressed appreciation for his appointment.

As a member of the County Planning Board, Alderman Bunce reported that there is limited county development activity affecting the Town. She noted that a rezoning request for a project located along Highway 258 near Walmart was presented to the County Commissioners and was not approved.

**Alderman Alice Betts:** Expressed concerns regarding the website and emphasized the importance of keeping information and dates current and up to date.

**Alderman Paul Conner:** Welcomed Alderman Alice Betts and expressed appreciation to Town Clerk Isa Flores and Town Administrator Chris Roberson for their work.

**Alderman Kent Painter:** Welcomed Alderman Alice Betts and Town Administrator Chris Roberson and stated he looked forward to working with them.

**Alderman Tom Brown:** Welcomed Alderman Alice Betts and requested that enforcement regarding loud vehicle mufflers continue, asking for a schedule from the Chief of Police.

**XVIII. PERSONNEL:** None

**XIX. ADJOURN:**

With no further business, a **motion** was made by Alderman Paul Conne, seconded by Alderman Tom Brown to adjourn the meeting at 7:58 pm. The motion was unanimously carried.

Respectfully Submitted,

Isaura Flores  
Attest:  
Isaura Flores, Town Clerk

McKinley Smith  
Mayor McKinley Smith