

TOWN OF RICHLANDS
NORTH CAROLINA

Office of the
Town Clerk
(910) 324-3301
(910) 324-2324 fax
townclerk@richlandsc.gov



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

The Richlands Board of Aldermen met in Regular Session on January 13, 2026, at 6:00pm at the Richlands Town Hall. Present for the meeting were:

Mayor McKinley Smith
Alderman Paul Conner
Alderman Alice Betts

Alderman Tom Brown
Alderman Kent Painter
Alderman Marilyn Bunce

Absent:

Also present were:

Chris Roberson, Town Administrator
Isaura Flores, Town Clerk
William Horne, Chief of Police

Keith Fountain, Town Attorney
Johnathan Jarman, Public Works Director

There were 8 citizens present.

A. MEETING CALLED TO ORDER:

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

1. **INVOCATION:** Mayor McKinley Smith

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

B. ADOPTION OF AGENDA:

Chris Roberson, Town Administrator, presented the agenda to the Board.

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

C. ADOPTION OF MINUTES (DECEMBER, 2025):

Keith Fountain, Town Attorney, noted corrections to the December 2025 minutes and requested approval of the minutes with amendments.

A motion was made by **Alderman Paul Conner**, seconded by **Alderman Tom Brown**, to approve the December 2025 minutes with amendments. The motion was **unanimously carried**.

D. PUBLIC HEARING: None

E. PRESENTATIONS: None

F. OLD BUSINESS: None

G. NEW BUSINESS:

1. ECC Board Appointment:

Chris Roberson, Town Administrator, advised the Board that **Mayor McKinley Smith** is the Town's current representative on the **Eastern Carolina Council of Governments (ECC) General Membership Board**. He requested that the Board select a Town representative, either by reappointing Mayor Smith or appointing another individual.

A motion was made by **Alderman Tom Brown**, seconded by **Alderman Paul Conner**, to **reappoint Mayor McKinley Smith** as the Town's representative to the ECC General Membership Board. The motion was **unanimously carried**.

2. JUMPO TAC Appoint:

Town Administrator Chris Roberson advised the Board that the **Jacksonville Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (JUMPO)** has requested the Town appoint a representative to serve on the **Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC)**. He noted that **Alderman Kandy Koonce** previously served in this capacity while she was a member of the Board.

A motion was made by **Alderman Tom Brown**, seconded by **Alderman Marilyn Bunce**, to appoint **Alderman Alice Betts** as the Town's representative to the JUMPO Transportation Advisory Committee. The motion was **unanimously carried**.
Alderman Kent Painter joined the meeting at 6:06 p.m.

3. Upcoming Planning Board/Board of Adjustment Vacancies: Review Only

Chris Roberson, Town Administrator, informed the Board that several seats on the **Planning Board** and **Board of Adjustment** are set to expire mid-year. He stated that no action is required by the Board at this time. An advertisement and application will be prepared for the upcoming vacancies to allow for the reappointment of incumbents or the appointment of new members. The applications are expected to be presented to the Board in the spring, at which time the Board may appoint or reappoint members to the expiring seats.

H. DEPARTMENTAL MONTHLY REPORTS:

1. Public Works: None

- 2. Police:** The Chief of Police provided an update regarding departmental software, noting **NCIC-related licensing and compliance requirements**. He advised that the current software company is no longer conducting business in **North Carolina** and stated that he would be meeting with the **Sheriff's IT Department** regarding this matter. The Chief also reported that he would be out of town the following week attending a **week-long Chiefs Conference**.

Alderman Tom Brown raised concerns regarding **muffler noise** and requested that enforcement efforts continue. He also inquired about a recent **high-speed pursuit** and the applicable pursuit policy. The Chief advised that the pursuit was conducted by the **Sheriff's Office**, with Town officers providing assistance.

3. Finance – December 2025 Budget vs. Actual Report.

Town Administrator Chris Roberson stated that the budget was prepared by a previous administrator, and staff are working with the information available. The figures were presented as reported.

I. ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT:

Town Administrator Chris Roberson reported on the following:

Grants and Street Improvement Project

- Mr. Roberson stated that he is in the process of getting up to date on the street improvement project since assuming the position in early December.
- He reported that there is no grant funding available for this project.
- The project will be funded through a USDA loan.
- The preliminary engineering report is underway and nearing completion.

Venter's Park Restrooms and Stage Project

(NC Commerce Rural Transformation Grant)

- Bids were received for the Venter's Park restrooms and stage project; however, all bids were over budget.
- Changes will need to be discussed.
- A meeting will be scheduled with the lowest bidder to explore possible modifications.
- Alderman Paul Conner asked about the length of the USDA loan. Mr. Roberson stated the loan is anticipated to be a 20-year term.
- Alderman Conner also discussed pricing related to the stage and possible changes. Alderman Kent Painter clarified that Alderman Conner is not a contractor but is assisting with planning and design.

Planning, Zoning, and Economic Development

- Proof rolling of the proposed streets for the Squires Run Subdivision has been completed in preparation for future paving.
- Development is anticipated to begin soon on two commercial outparcels.
- A third outparcel is awaiting a buyer for future commercial development.
- The Planning Board meeting is scheduled for January 26.

Christmas Parade Discussion

- Town Administrator Roberson presented information to the Board regarding the possibility of bringing the Christmas Parade in-house rather than continuing to partner with the Chamber of Commerce. He advised the Board of insurance and liability considerations.
- Alderman Marilyn Bunce stated that the Chamber of Commerce does not have sufficient volunteers and that there were line management issues during the parade. She noted that other towns conduct their parades internally and expressed that the Town could do the same.
- Town Attorney Keith Fountain advised against the Town assuming responsibility for the parade due to liability concerns.
- Alderman Alice Betts agreed with Attorney Fountain.

Agenda Distribution

- Town Administrator Roberson apologized for the late and inconsistent distribution of agenda due to software.

J. INFORMAL PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Mr. Tim Higgins reported that on multiple occasions, most recently on December 18, water from a neighboring property's above-ground pool had been discharged and collected around his home, causing standing water on his property and along the roadway.

He stated that he contacted the Richlands Police Department and the Town and was advised that the matter is considered a civil issue and that current regulations only require a fence on the property.

Mr. Higgins requested that the Board consider an ordinance amendment regarding the discharge of pool water so that it does not impact on neighboring properties.

Alderman Marilyn Bunce stated that the Board could not comment at that time but would look into the matter.

Mr. Billy Spencer distributed a written document to the Board, which he stated was prepared using North Carolina Department of Transportation traffic data and information from the Police Department's year-end report.

Mr. Spencer expressed concerns regarding traffic volume, vehicle noise, and enforcement within the Town. He stated his belief that the Town does not have sufficient law enforcement manpower to manage traffic within the city limits and questioned whether citations are being issued in accordance with state statutes.

Mr. Spencer stated that excessive vehicle noise, including loud mufflers, continues to be an issue and expressed that he believes the Town and its citizens deserve better.

K. BOARD MEMBER CONCERNS AND COMMITTEE UPDATES:

Alderman Paul Conner: Expressed interest in holding a meeting or planning retreat for the Board to discuss budget matters, community noise concerns, and other issues, possibly with the

assistance of a facilitator. He also commented on the Board's role during public comments, noting that the Board listens but does not engage in discussion during that portion of the meeting.

Ms. Alice Betts: Suggested the installation of a **metal detector** at the Town Hall entrance.

Alderman Marilyn Bunce: Reported on the upcoming Brick Mill Cemetery Day of Remembrance event. She also provided an update from the County Planning Board, where she serves as a member. Alderman Bunce shared that a subdivision project off Highway 258 is currently undergoing zoning and development processes. She emphasized her commitment to keeping the Board informed of any developments within the town or city limits.

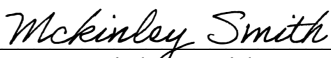
Alderman Tom Brown: Reiterated concerns regarding **muffler noise** within the Town.

Alderman Kent Painter: Also expressed concerns regarding **noise** in the community.

L. ADJOURN:

With no further business, a **motion** was made by Alderman Paul Conner seconded by Alderman Kent Painter to adjourn the meeting at 6:56 pm. The motion was unanimously carried.

Respectfully Submitted,



Mayor McKinley Smith



Attest: Isaura Flores, Town Clerk