

TOWN OF RICHLANDS
NORTH CAROLINA

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

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



The Richlands Board of Aldermen met in Regular Session on March 10, 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: None

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 12 citizens present.

A. MEETING CALLED TO ORDER:

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

1. Invocation – Mayor Mckinley Smith
2. Pledge of Allegiance – Mayor McKinley Smith

B. ADOPTION OF AGENDA:

Chris Roberson, Town Administrator, presented the agenda and proposed an amendment to the order of Section G, specifically moving Item 1 to Item 6, and Item 6 to Item 1.

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

1. **ADOPTION OF MINUTES (FEBRUARY 10, 2026):**

A **motion** was made by Alderman Paul Conner, seconded by Alderman Tom Brown, to approve the January 2026 minutes with amendments. The motion was unanimously carried.

C. **PUBLIC COMMENT:** None

D. **PUBLIC HEARING:** None

E. **PRESENTATIONS:**

1. Rivers & Associates – Update on the Street Upgrade Project

Scott Godefroy provided an update on the street upgrade project. The 2023 pavement evaluation graded roads using a Pavement Condition Index (PCI), with many rated in red (severe) or blue (poor) condition.

Proposed Treatment:

For streets highlighted in red (severe) and blue (poor), full depth reclamation is recommended. Mill the surface, mix in cement powder, add water, and apply two inches of asphalt. This process provides a better long-term result, especially for roads that exceed 30% full depth patch.

Costs & Timeline:

Initial estimates were \$2.9 million; the updated cost is now approximately \$3.6 million due to price increases. The project will be phased, and streets will be prioritized based on their condition.

Questions:

- Marilyn Bunce inquired about roads near Trexler Middle School, affected by ONWASA pipe work. Scott will review this during the design phase.
- Paul Conner asked about the timeline. Scott estimated 13 months: 4 months for design, 1 month for bidding, 7 months for construction, and 1 month for finalization.
- Marilyn Bunce asked about addressing red-rated roads first. Scott explained that prioritization will depend on funding and other factors.
- Paul Conner raised concerns about old water lines. Scott confirmed that the depth will be assessed.
- Marilyn Bunce mentioned truck traffic restrictions. Chris Roberson noted that some roads are not designed for heavy loads, and traffic regulations will be considered in the planning process.

Funding:

Chris Roberson discussed a potential \$2.0 million USDA loan. Funding will need to be balanced to cover street upgrades while maintaining a fund balance for other needs.

F. **OLD BUSINESS:** None

G. **NEW BUSINESS:**

1. **Release of Drainage/Utility Easement – Richlands Mini Storage Request (ACTION):**

Town Administrator, Chris Roberson presented a request to terminate the 20' drainage and utility easement at Richlands Mini-Storage. After consultation with the Public Works Director, it was determined there was no benefit for the Town to retain the easement, as it has no outlet. Town Attorney Keith Fountain stated he had spoken with the adjoining property owners who had no objection to the release of the easement and suggested that the easement was probably an oversight from the 1994 recombination. Attorney Robert Kenan from Burgaw spoke, requesting the termination.

A **motion** was made by Alderman Tom Brown, seconded by Alderman Paul Conner, to approve the Termination of Easement and Release as presented. The motion was unanimously carried.

2. **Southeast Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan Approval (ACTION):**

Town Administrator, Chris Roberson provided an update on the Southeastern North Carolina Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan. Staff have worked with a consultant to address the Town's Hazard Mitigation recommendations, and now a resolution is required to officially adopt the plan and participate in it.

A **motion** was made by Alderman Paul Conner, seconded by Alderman Marilyn Bunce to adopt the Resolution as presented. The motion was unanimously carried.

3. **Special use permit for 182 Huffman Town Road (ACTION):**

Mr. Roberson presented the request for a special use permit for a home occupation at 182 Huffmantown Road. The Planning Board has already recommended approval. The Town Board is now being asked to set an evidentiary hearing for the April 14, 2026, Board of Aldermen meeting in accordance with the required quasi-judicial procedure.

A **motion** was made by Alderman Marilyn Bunce and seconded by Alderman Paul Conner to set the evidentiary hearing for the 4/14/26 Board of Alderman meeting. The motion was unanimously carried.

4. **Appeal/Variance for Ervin Farm Subdivision (ACTION):**

Mr. Roberson presented the request for an appeal of the proposed Ervin Farm Subdivision off Richlands Loop Road. Due to the length of the cul-de-sac exceeding the allowable distance, Planning Staff was unable to approve the subdivision as submitted. The Planning Board previously recommended forwarding the appeal to the Town Board for consideration. As such, the Town Board is required to conduct an evidentiary hearing in accordance with the quasi-judicial procedure outlined in the ordinance.

A **motion** was made by Alderman Marilyn Bunce, seconded by Alderman Paul Conner to set the evidentiary hearing for the 4/14/26 Board of Alderman meeting. The motion was unanimously carried.

5. Short Form Agreement for Planning/Development Services (ACTION):

Mr. Roberson requested that the item be tabled due to ongoing discussions with the county regarding a potential partnership and to allow further review of budget and procurement requirements.

A **motion** was made by Alderman Tom Brown and seconded by Alderman Paul Conner to table the item until next meeting. The motion was unanimously carried.

6. Website Upgrade Update (ACTION):

Mr. Roberson provided an update regarding the proposed website upgrade, including available proposals, budget considerations, and potential improvements to the Town's website.

Discussion was held among board members regarding the scope of the project, funding options, and timing of the project.

A **motion** was made by Alderman Marilyn Bunce, seconded by Alderman Alice Betts to accept the proposal from 17 Blue for the website upgrade. The motion was unanimously carried.

H. DEPARTMENTAL MONTHLY REPORTS:

- **Police (Review):**

Chief of Police William Horne provided a department update, including recent training activities and the installation of in-car camera systems.

The Chief thanked Public Works Director Jonathan Jarman for assistance with a recent water related issue.

The Chief also provided general updates regarding enforcement considerations related to noise complaints and accordance with other agencies.

Additionally, the Chief noted that updates to the internal systems are now operations.

- **Finance – February 2026 Budget vs Actual Report (Review):**

The February 2026 Budget Reports, including Revenue and Expenditure Budget vs. Actual reports were presented for review. No action was taken.

I. ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT:

- Updates/Additional Information (Review)

Town Administrator Chris Roberson provided the monthly report for February 2026, including updates on grant funding and street repair estimates, planning and development activities, audit preparations, and ongoing Town projects.

J. BOARD MEMBER CONCERNS AND COMMITTEE UPDATES

Alderman Tom Brown: Reported that he has completed the required ethics training and encouraged other members to complete the training. He also briefly discussed potential updates to ordinances related to noise enforcement.

Alderman Paul Conner:

Alderman Kent Painter:

Ms. Alice Betts:

Alderman Marilyn Bunce: Expressed appreciation to Elliot Jarman, who was in attendance.

K. ADJOURN:

With no further business, a **motion** was made by Alderman Marilyn Bunce, seconded by Alderman Tom Brown to adjourn the meeting at 7:17 pm. The motion was unanimously carried.

Respectfully Submitted,

Mayor Pro-Tem Tom Brown

Attest: Isaura Flores, Town Clerk