

# **TOWN OF RICHLANDS**

## **NORTH CAROLINA**

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The Richlands Board of Aldermen met in Regular Session on April 14, 2026, at 6:00pm at the Richlands Town Hall. Present for the meeting were:

Alderman Tom Brown  
Alderman Kent Painter  
Alderman Alice Betts

Alderman Paul Conner  
Alderman Marilyn Bunce

Absent: Mayor McKinley Smith

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 Pro Tem Tom Brown called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm

1. Invocation – Mayor Pro Tem Tom Brown
2. Pledge of Allegiance – Board Member Marylin Bunce

### **B. ADOPTION OF AGENDA:**

Chris Roberson, Town Administrator, presented the agenda and proposed an amendment to include Budget Amendment #15 to section I Finance 2.

A **motion** was made by Alderman Paul Conner, seconded by Alderman Kent Painter, to adopt the amended agenda to include Budget Amendment #15. The motion was unanimously carried.

### **C. ADOPTION OF MINUTES (MARCH 11, 2026):**

A **motion** was made by Alderman Paul Conner, seconded by Alderman Tom Brown, to approve the March 11, 2026 minutes as presented. The motion was unanimously carried.

**D. PUBLIC COMMENT:** None

**E. PUBLIC HEARING:**

**1. Special Use Permit – 182 Huffmantown Road**

A **motion** was made by Alderman Marilyn Bunce, seconded by Alderman Paul Conner, to open the public hearing regarding the Special Use Permit request for 182 Huffmantown Road. The motion was unanimously carried.

Attorney Keith Fountain administered the oath to all individuals presenting testimony or speaking during the public hearing.

Town Administrator Chris Roberson presented a summary of the special use permit request for the property located at 182 Huffmantown Road. The request was for approval to operate a home occupation within an accessory structure on the property.

Four individuals signed up to speak regarding the request.

- Michael Bennetch, neighboring property owner at 180 Huffmantown Road, expressed concerns regarding safety and speeding on the shared driveway, privacy and security concerns, deterioration of the driveway, and potential impacts to surrounding property values.
- Wilma Futrell expressed concerns regarding safety within the neighborhood, particularly for elderly residents in the area.
- Applicant Alyson Carpenter stated she owns and operates Progressive Wellness Specialized Services in the Richlands area and was requesting approval to use an accessory structure on the property as a home occupation for individual mental health counseling services by appointment only. Ms. Carpenter stated the practice serves first responders, military-connected individuals, and their families. She explained the business would operate by appointment only with one client at a time, limited traffic, on-site parking, no signage, and no exterior evidence of business activity. Ms. Carpenter stated the business would operate approximately two to three days per week between the hours of 10:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. She also stated clients would be advised of safety concerns when entering the shared driveway.
- Steven Carpenter stated he did not believe the proposed use would negatively impact surrounding property values. Mr. Carpenter stated plans were in place to improve the driveway and noted he would be present during client appointments. He also stated the property is monitored by security cameras and that clients are screened prior to appointments. Mr. Carpenter stated no business signage would be placed on the property.

A **motion** was made by Alderman Marilyn Bunce, seconded by Alderman Paul Conner, to close the public hearing. The motion was unanimously carried.

**F. PRESENTATIONS:** None

**G. OLD BUSINESS:** None

## **H. NEW BUSINESS:**

### **1. FY 25-26 Audit Proposal (ACTION):**

Town Administrator Chris Roberson presented the FY 25-26 audit proposal and provided a summary of the audit services request for proposals process. Mr. Roberson stated Thompson, Price, Scott and Adams was the only firm to submit a proposal.

A **motion** was made by Alderman Paul Conner, seconded by Alderman Marilyn Bunce, to select Thompson, Price, Scott and Adams as the Town's auditor for Fiscal Year 2025-2026 and authorize execution of the engagement letter and Contract to Audit Accounts. The motion was unanimously carried.

### **2. Special Use Permit for 182 Huffmantown Road (ACTION):**

Attorney Keith Fountain advised the Board that conditions could be placed on the Special Use Permit if approved.

The Board reviewed and considered the required Findings of Fact related to the Special Use Permit request for 182 Huffmantown Road.

The Board voted on the Findings of Fact as follows:

1. The requested permit is within its jurisdiction according to the table of permissible uses.  
Approved unanimously.
2. The application is complete.  
Approved unanimously.
3. If completed as proposed in the application, the development will comply with all requirements of the chapter.  
Approved unanimously.
4. The use will not materially endanger the public health or safety if located where proposed and developed according to the plan as submitted.  
Following Board discussion, conditions were added limiting the business to two to three clients per day, two days per week, between the hours of 10:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. The finding was then approved unanimously.
5. The use will not substantially reduce the value of adjoining or abutting property, or that the use is a public necessity.  
Approved by a vote of 4-1.
6. 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 of development of the town.  
Approved by a vote of 3-2.

A **motion** was made by Alderman Paul Conner, seconded by Alderman Marilyn Bunce, to approve the Special Use Permit for 182 Huffmantown Road with the stated conditions. The motion was unanimously carried.

### **3. Set Public hearing for rezoning off of Francktown Road (ACTION):**

Town Administrator Chris Roberson presented a request to set a public hearing for a proposed rezoning of approximately 50 acres located off Francktown Road from RA (Rural Agricultural) to RM-6 (Residential) for residential development purposes.

A **motion** was made by Alderman Marilyn Bunce, seconded by Alderman Paul Conner, to set the public hearing for May 12, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. The motion was unanimously carried.

4. **FY 26-27 Budget Calendar/Discussion (ACTION):**

Town Administrator Chris Roberson presented the proposed FY 2026-2027 Budget Calendar and discussed the proposed budget preparation timeline and upcoming budget workshops.

Board discussion included street projects, Local Government Commission, fund balance requirements, USDA loans, and prioritization of street improvements for the FY 2026-2027 budget.

A **motion** was made by Alderman Paul Conner, seconded by Alderman Marilyn Bunce, to approve the FY 2026-2027 Budget Calendar with the amendment changing the April 21 budget workshop date to April 20. The motion was unanimously carried.

5. **Richlands Elementary Proclamation (ACTION):**

Town Administrator Chris Roberson presented a proclamation recognizing Richlands Elementary School for 100 years of excellence.

A **motion** was made by Alderman Paul Conner, seconded by Alderman Kent Painter, to approve the proclamation as presented. The motion was unanimously carried.

I. **DEPARTMENTAL MONTHLY REPORTS:**

- **Police (Review):**

Police Chief William Horne presented the Police Department monthly report and provided updates regarding camera quotes, department equipment, traffic enforcement activities, and officer recognition. Chief Horne also discussed recent loud muffler enforcement efforts conducted by Officer Lessner.

- **Budget Amendment #15:**

Town Administrator Chris Roberson presented Budget Amendment #15 to account for the reallocation of full-time wages and associated benefit expenses from Public Safety to Administration.

A **motion** was made by Alderman Marilyn Bunce, seconded by Alderman Alice Betts, to approve Budget Amendment #15. The motion was unanimously carried.

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

The March 2026 Revenue and Expenditure Budget vs. Actual Reports were presented for review. No action was taken.

**J. ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT:**

- Updates/Additional Information (Review)

Town Administrator Chris Roberson provided the monthly report for March 2026, including updates regarding street projects and grant funding, Venters Park construction, zoning and development activity, audit preparations, website upgrades, and ongoing Town operations and projects.

**K. BOARD MEMBER CONCERNS AND COMMITTEE UPDATES**

**Alderman Tom Brown:** Commented on the amount of information included in the meeting agenda packet.

**Alderman Paul Conner:** Thanked those in attendance for their participation and patience during the meeting.

**Alderman Kent Painter:** None

**Ms. Alice Betts:** None

**Alderman Marilyn Bunce:** Provided an update regarding the United Way-sponsored CHEW Program, which supports local children and families. Alderman Bunce also discussed a volunteer and sponsor appreciation event held in recognition of those who support the program.

**L. ADJOURN:**

A **motion** was made by Alderman Kent Painter, seconded by Alderman Marilyn Bunce, to recess the meeting until April 20, 2026, at 9:00 a.m. The motion was unanimously carried.

Respectfully Submitted,

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Mayor Pro-Tem Tom Brown

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Attest: Isaura Flores, Town Clerk