

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 February 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 9 citizens present.

I. MEETING CALLED TO ORDER:

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

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: Justin Garza

III. INVOCATION: Mayor McKinley Smith

IV. ADOPTION OF AGENDA:

Chris Roberson, Town Administrator, requested the addition of Budget Amendment #13 to the agenda and asked that the agenda be approved with the amendment.

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

V. ADOPTION OF MINUTES (JANUARY 13, 2026):

Alderman Marilyn Bunce noted corrections to the January 2026 minutes.

A motion was made by Alderman Marilyn Bunce, seconded by Alderman Kent Painter, to approve the January 2026 minutes with amendments. The motion was unanimously carried.

VI. PUBLIC COMMENT: None

Mayor McKinley referred to the Public Comment Policy before proceeding with the meeting.

VII. PUBLIC HEARING: None

VIII. OLD BUSINESS: None

IX. NEW BUSINESS:

1. ENGINEERING AGREEMENT FOR STORMAWATER/CULVERT IMPROVEMENTS IN TOWN:

Town Administrator Chris Roberson reminded the Board of the November 2025 discussion regarding storm drainage rehabilitation for the West Foy/North Railroad Street area. He recommended approval of the agreement with Rivers & Associates for Phase I engineering design services, which will involve upgrading three sets of existing culverts. Johnatha Jarman, Public Works Director, noted that the bids and project structuring were still in the preliminary stages.

A **motion** was made by Alderman Tom Brown, seconded by Alderman Alice Betts, to approve the agreement. The motion was unanimously carried.

2. BUDGET AMENDMENT #13 (RURAL TRANSFORMATION GRANT):

Town Administrator Chris Roberson presented Budget Amendment #13, which amends the budget to create and fund the Grant Project Ordinance (Amended) Rural Transformation Grant Ordinance 2025-04, adopted on April 8, 2025. The Town Administrator requested approval of this amendment.

A **motion** was made by Alderman Marilyn Bunce and seconded by Alderman Paul Connor to approve Budget Amendment #13. The motion was unanimously carried.

3. VENTER'S PARK IMPROVEMENTS COSTRUCTION ESTIMATE/CONTRACT:

Town Administrator Chris Roberson provided an update on the Venter's Park project. He noted that the Town had initially sent out bids to five vendors but only received two responses. After negotiations, the low bidder, Elite Contracting Group of Richlands, was selected, and the project is now close to coming in within budget. The Town will not need to use the full contingency amount previously appropriated. There was a revision to the agreement based on the

attorney's review, which included an estimated timeline for completion. While the schedule is not fixed, the project is expected to take between three to six months and will include bathrooms and a stage. Due to budget constraints, some parts of the project were scaled back, but it will still function as planned. The total project cost is \$339,608, with \$330,000 funded by the Rural Transformation Grant and a \$9,608 local match.

A **motion** was made by Alderman Marilyn Bunce and seconded by Alderman Paul Connor to approve the project as presented. The motion was unanimously carried.

X. ADMINISTRATOR NOTES AND UPDATES:

1. Administrator's Report for January 2026:

Chris Roberson, Town Administrator, presented and reviewed the January 2026 Monthly Report, which included updates on various projects such as grants, the Street Upgrading Project, Venters Park improvements, planning and zoning matters, utilities, building and grounds, and website upgrades. He also provided an update on ongoing administrative projects, including discussions with the Rotary Club and the community building sign, and mentioned that a location for the board retreat in March was still being sought. Discussion was held regarding USDA funding timelines and projected costs for the Street Upgrading Project and website upgrades. No formal action was taken.

Marilyn Bunce inquired about the status of the website, referencing new Department of Justice regulations requiring websites to be ADA compliant by 2027 for small towns. Chris confirmed that these requirements would be addressed as part of the upcoming website upgrade. He also noted ongoing discussions about property tax reform, with more information expected after the 27th.

2. January 2026 Budget Reports:

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

XI. POLICE REPORT:

1. **Police Report:** Chief of Police William Horne attended the Annual Chief Conference. Vehicle #9 (Durango) has been returned and will be issued to Officer Lessner. Reported one major incident due to weather and commended officers for their performance during a difficult, emotional situation.

Alderman Tom Brown expressed appreciation for the officers' work, acknowledging the emotional toll of the incident.

XII. BOARD MEMBER CONCERNS AND COMMITTEE UPDATES:

Alderman Tom Brown: Raised the issue of discharging pool water. Town Administrator Chris Roberson is researching ordinances and statutes related to this. Attorney, Keith Fountain confirmed there are no specific ordinances, but some statutes may apply, still under review.

Alderman Paul Conner: Expressed appreciation for the officers' response to a recent incident.

Alderman Kent Painter: Thanked Chris Roberson for his quick adaptation to the new role.

Ms. Alice Betts: Asked about weight limits on Gum Branch Road. Attorney, Keith Fountain stated that any action would need to come from DOT, as it is a state road. This could be addressed with a resolution from the Board.

Also raised concerns about GFL trash service. Jonathan Jarman, Public Works Director, clarified that customers can contact either Town Hall or GFL directly for missed pickups.

Alderman Marilyn Bunce: Mentioned Day of Remembrance rescheduled for some time in April. Onslow County Announced that the Day of Remembrance is rescheduled for April. Provided updates on Onslow County Planning Board, mentioning two major subdivisions: Richlands Forest (110 lots on 59.24 acres) and another (296 lots on 142.51 acres), both near Cow Horn Road, potentially adding over 400 homes to the area.

XIII. GUEST INTRODUCTION:

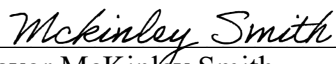
Justin Garza – Boy Scouts Merit Badge:

Justin Garza was introduced to the board. He attended the meeting to fulfill a requirement for earning a Boy Scouts merit badge. His attendance was noted for the record.

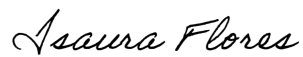
XIV. ADJOURN:

With no further business, a **motion** was made by Alderman Tom Brown seconded by Alderman Paul Conner to adjourn the meeting at 6:50 pm. The motion was unanimously carried.

Respectfully Submitted,



Mayor McKinley Smith



Attest: Isaura Flores, Town Clerk