REGULAR MEETING – AUGUST 7, 2025

The Mayor and City Council met in regular session on Thursday, August 7, 2025 at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers of City Hall located at 114 West Sycamore Street, Lincolnton, North Carolina 28092. The following Council Members were present:

JOHNSON TIPTON JETTON

NOTE: Council Member Kevin Demeny was not in attendance

Mayor Ed Hatley called the meeting to order and asked those in attendance to stand for a moment of silence, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of Regular Agenda

Mayor Ed Hatley asked Council if there were any additions or deletions to the agenda. Hearing none, he called for a motion to approve the regular agenda as presented.

> **Motion by Council Member Roby Jetton to approve the regular agenda as presented. Members voted 3-0 in favor of the motion.**

Approval of Consent Agenda

Mayor Hatley noted there were three items on the consent agenda and called for a motion to approve. The items listed were as follows:

- June 26, 2025 – Regular Meeting Minutes
- Approval of Request for Releases – June 16, 2025 – July 15, 2025
- Adoption of Fees for the 2025-2026 Fee Schedule

Motion by Council Member Jill Patton to approve the consent agenda items. Members voted 3-0 in favor of the motion.

Public Comment

Mr. Alan Hoyle addressed Council and expressed appreciation for Mayor Hatley's community involvement, specifically noting the Mayor's attendance at a drug rehabilitation program graduation at the courthouse and a 104-year-old WWII veteran's birthday celebration. He mentioned that the Mayor had prepared a proclamation for the veteran and compared the city's representation favorably to the county's, noting no county representatives attended either event. Mr. Hoyle then shifted topics to express his opposition to alcohol, citing health concerns including increased cancer risks, brain function impairment, and Alzheimer's risk, referencing a psychiatrist's research on brain disorders.

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Special Presentation

Presentation of OSHA SHARP (Safety & Health Achievement Recognition Program) Award

Debbie Rogers-Lowery presented the OSHA SHARP recertification award to the city's Distribution and Collection Department. She explained that this recognition is given to public sector departments and noted that the Distribution and Collection Department had earned recertification through the program.

Ms. Rogers-Lowery outlined the four components required to qualify for the program:

- Low OSHA injury log numbers (noting the department had zero injuries for several years)
- Passing a two-part OSHA inspection covering both safety and health/hygiene aspects
- Management commitment to provide necessary equipment, training, and supplies
- Employee commitment to prioritize safety in all projects

She described the extensive responsibilities of the 11-person department, which maintains 110 miles of gravity-fed sewer lines, 10 miles of force main sewer, 19 lift stations, 143 miles of waterlines ranging from 1-20 inches in diameter, 6 elevated tanks, and 3 booster pump stations. Ms. Rogers-Lowery highlighted the department's experience level, noting that the team collectively has 178 years of experience, with some members having served for nearly 40 years.

She presented the award to the department members in attendance, emphasizing that they were one of only 41 departments across North Carolina to hold this certification.

Mayor Hatley thanked the employees and acknowledged their exceptional service to the city.

Regular Agenda

BA-08-25

Approval of Request for an Amendment to the Annual Budget Ordinance for Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2026

Finance Director Pamela McBryde requested approval to amend the budget to include $32,479 of funds that had been reverted at the end of the previous fiscal year. These funds were from federal equitable money for the police department, SAC money, and the Veterans Banner program.

Ms. McBryde also provided updates on other financial matters:

- The city received a credit of over $46,000 from AT&T for telecommunication services

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- FEMA reimbursements were finalized, with the city receiving approximately $400,000 plus $21,000 in administrative costs
- She had processed budget amendments for new truck leases that came in after the previous council meeting

Motion by Council Member Mark Johnson to approve the budget amendment request. Members voted 3-0 in favor of the motion.

Mayor Hatley joked that the Council never turns down adding money to the budget.

C-20-25

Consideration of Tyler Tech Contract for Credit Card Processing Fees

Business Services Director David Ramsey presented a proposal to move credit card processing to Tyler Technology's contract, which would save the city approximately $10,000-$12,000 per month in addition to the $400,000 annual savings discussed at the previous meeting. Mr. Ramsey noted implementation would take approximately four months once approved.

Motion by Council Member Jill Tipton to approve the Tyler Tech contract for credit card processing. Members voted 3-0 in favor of the motion.

Adoption of Filing Fees for the 2026 Election

City Clerk Daphne Ingram reported that the Board of Elections had contacted the city regarding filing fees for the 2026 election. She explained that current fees are $48 for the mayoral race and $36 for council members. Per general statutes, fees cannot be less than $5 but can be up to 1% of the position's salary, which would allow increasing the mayoral fee to $84 and council seat fee to $50.

Ms. Ingram noted that the mayor's seat and two council seats (Jill Tipton and Kevin Demeny) would be up for election in 2026.

Motion by Council Member Roby Jetton to maintain the current filing fees. Members voted 3-0 in favor of the motion.

Other Business

City Manager's Update / Activity Report

City Manager Ritchie Haynes began by announcing a ribbon cutting for the new Hometown Grill (in the former Pizza Hut building) scheduled for the following day at 10 AM.

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Mr. Haynes provided several updates from the city page:

- New employees: Michael Farley (Street Department) and Jonathan Morris (Wastewater Treatment Plant)
- Promotions: Jake Gregg (Firefighter 2), Jason Moretz and Trent Huss (Equipment Operator 2)
- Training certifications: Kristy Morris received her Residential Energy Auditing 101 certificate

He thanked everyone involved with the July 4th celebrations, noting the perfect weather and good attendance at the parade and fireworks. Mr. Haynes mentioned that with upcoming construction at City Park, an alternate location for future fireworks would need to be identified.

Mr. Haynes reported on several public safety events, including the Fire Department badge pinning ceremony and National Night Out, which had fewer host sites but larger crowds at each location. He also mentioned the Police Department's summer camps - the LEADS camp and a new "Howl With Honor" camp conducted with the football team.

Additional updates included:

- Monthly homeless report: 19 incidents and 13 charges
- Paving schedule: completed streets for the year with costs (noting Lithia Inn cost over $280,000 for paving and striping)
- Recycling totals for the year
- City Park project: environmental review completed, site review planned for September, with council approval anticipated in October and construction likely to begin January 2026
- Public Service Center project also expected to begin construction in early 2026
- First Federal Phase 2 project planning to begin

Council Member Roby Jetton expressed concerns about the Betty Ross Park playground, stating it only had swings and monkey bars with nothing for children to do. Mr. Haynes explained that park improvements were being implemented according to the master plan, with City Park as the first priority, followed by Highland Drive (recently completed for approximately $130,000), First Federal, and then Betty Ross Park.

In response to a question about fencing near the river at Betty Ross Park, Mr. Haynes explained that the insurance company did not require fencing, and flooding would make maintaining a fence difficult.

City Attorney's Report

William Scott, the assistant to the city attorney, reported that most litigation cases mentioned in the prior meeting were still in process with no significant updates. He announced that one case, City v. Houser, had reached a settlement agreement.

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News Media

Mike Powell requested information about the paving schedule and asked for updates on permitting for Sam's Car Wash and Target. City Manager Haynes confirmed that Target was still moving forward with their plans and performing due diligence. He indicated that the Sam's Car Wash project was also proceeding through site review.

Mr. Powell also inquired about the closing of Brick Tree and its impact on nighttime entertainment downtown. Mr. Haynes acknowledged that while the building was vacant, there was potential interest from a new tenant, possibly for restaurant or service-oriented business. He emphasized the building's historic nature and excellent location in the central business district.

Adjournment

Motion by Council Member Roby Jetton to adjourn. Members voted 3-0 in favor of the motion.

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Daphne Ingram, City Clerk

Ed Hatley, Mayor