City Council Meeting – April 2, 2026
Meeting minutes

The Lincolnton City Council met in Regular Session on Thursday, April 2, 2026 at 6:30 p.m. in the Council Chambers of City Hall located at 114 West Sycamore Street, Lincolnton, N.C. 28092. The following members were in attendance:

DEMENY JOHNSON TIPTON JETTON

Mayor Ed Hatley called the meeting to order, asking all those in attendance to stand for a moment of silence, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance. Mayor Hatley noted an addition to the agenda, adding item 4D, and announced the need for a closed session later in the meeting.

> **Motion: Councilmember Jill Tipton made a motion to approve the agenda as amended. The motion carried with members voting 4-0 in favor of the motion.**

Asking for a motion to approve the consent agenda, Mayor Hatley specifically highlighted the resolution honoring public power line workers during Line Worker Appreciation Days, expressing appreciation to Brent Turner and his team for their dedicated service to the city.

> **Motion: Councilmember Roby Jetton made a motion to approve the consent agenda items as submitted. Motion carried as members voted 4-0 in favor of the motion.**

Public Comment

Three citizens addressed the council during the public comment period, with each speaker limited to three minutes.

Alan Hoyle opened by commending the city's electrical department for their professional teamwork he observed during recent power restoration work. He then shifted to religious commentary about Easter and various social issues he considers problematic, including what he termed curses upon the community for various behaviors and beliefs.

Chris Duschel, representing the American Legion, requested city sponsorship for their annual flag placement program on veterans' graves. The Legion places approximately 5,000 flags yearly at a cost of $1.25 each. City Manager Ritchie Haynes suggested that a formal request be submitted, which can be discussed at the upcoming budget retreat.

Bryson Brooks, owner of a local towing company, continued his ongoing advocacy for fair competition in the police department's towing rotation system. He argued that when one ownership group holds multiple spots on the rotation list, it reduces competition and negatively affects pricing, service quality, and accountability for citizens. Mr. Brooks emphasized his goal is to ensure the system remains transparent, competitive, and fair for both local businesses and the people they serve, noting he's not targeting any specific person or business but seeking equity in the system.

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Before moving to the next agenda item, Assistant City Manager Scott Clark presented a trophy to the Lincolnton Police department for their victory over the Lincolnton Fire department in a recent hometown heroes basketball tournament. The United Way of Lincoln County sponsored the event, with proceeds benefiting local families. Over 100 people attended the good-natured competition between the departments.

Special Presentation – American Legion 30 Baseball – Matt Craig

Matthew Craig presented an extensive proposal to re-establish American Legion baseball in Lincolnton under Post 30. Craig, who played American Legion baseball at Post 100 in Cherryville in 2003, emphasized the program's role in promoting Americanism and developing young men aged 13-17.

The program would use Lincolnton High School's field, located half a mile from downtown. Craig highlighted the leadership development aspect, incorporating military values like honor, integrity, and service into the baseball program. The coaching staff includes Craig, Joell Dalton, and Sean Andrews, all bringing relevant experience including military leadership training.

Tryouts are scheduled for May 2-3, with hopes to eventually expand from a junior program to include senior league play. The sustainability model relies on fundraising, local sponsorships, gate revenue, and concession sales. Craig presented historical jerseys based on a 1946 newspaper article about Lincolnton's previous American Legion team and discussed the long-term vision of recreating the community baseball tradition.

Council members expressed strong support, with Councilmember Roby Jetton sharing memories of Lincolnton's rich baseball history, including the semi-professional Lincolnton Cardinals that played at the old field in the 1950s. City Manager Ritchie Haynes noted the potential economic benefits of visiting teams bringing tax dollars to the downtown area.

Public Hearings

CZ-1-2026
Application from Manuel & Sherley Brito requesting a conditional district rezoning

Planning Director Jean Derby presented the conditional rezoning request to change 3.969 acres on Georgetown Road from Residential Single and Two-Family Medium Density (R-8) to Residential Multi-Family Conditional District (RMF-CD) for 24 townhomes in six buildings.

Ms. Derby explained that under current R-8 zoning, the developer could build 14 duplexes (28 units) by right without council approval. The proposed conditional rezoning would allow 24 townhomes with enhanced buffering requirements - 35-foot screening buffers in most areas compared to the ordinance requirement of only 20 feet. The development would feature 16 two-bedroom and 8 three-bedroom units with 28.6% impervious surface coverage, well below the watershed limit.

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Several residents expressed concerns about flooding and traffic impacts. Resident complaints focused on existing flooding issues in the area, with one neighbor reporting water reaching halfway up car tires and coming to the back porch during heavy rains. Traffic concerns included Georgetown Road's narrow width and existing congestion, particularly during trash collection days.

Landscape architect David Ledford, representing the developer, addressed stormwater concerns by explaining the topography and drainage patterns. He noted the natural drainage flows through a power line easement, with the affected neighbor's house positioned approximately 4-5 feet above the low point. Mr. Ledford emphasized that the proposed development would maintain lower impervious coverage than allowed by state guidelines.

Police Chief Brian Greene installed traffic counters on Georgetown Road, to show peak daily traffic. The counters recorded 262 vehicles in one direction and 244 in the other - well below the 3,000-trip threshold requiring state traffic impact analysis.

Ms. Derby reported that Planning Board members recommended approval 6-1, noting the development's consistency with housing diversity goals and efficient use of municipal infrastructure, despite not aligning with the future commercial designation on the land use plan.

Motion: Councilmember Jill Tipton made a motion to close the Public Hearing. Members voted 4-0 in favor of the motion.

Motion: Council member Kevin Demeny moved to approve the rezoning from residential R-8 to residential multifamily conditional district, approve the statement of consistency and reasonableness, and amend the future land use map to show the area in residential high density. Members voted 3-1 in favor of the motion with Councilmembers Kevin Demeny, Mark Johnson, and Jill Tipton voting in favor of the motion, and Councilmember Roby Jetton voting against.

Regular Agenda

Extension of Agreement for Completion of Improvements - Carpenter Farms

Planning Director Jean Derby presented a request from Century Communities to extend their surety bond agreement for completing infrastructure improvements at Carpenter Farms subdivision. The original two-year agreement needs extension to allow completion of sidewalks and street landscaping as construction continues.

Of the 209 approved units, 136 building permits have been issued and 85 homes sold, with average sales prices around $322,000. The developer requested a three-year extension due to current market conditions, with the surety bond remaining in place throughout the extension period.

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Motion: Kevin Demeny moved to approve the extension of the agreement for completion of improvements as recommended by staff. Members voted 4-0 in favor of the motion.

IT-03-16-26
Toshiba Desktop Printer - Managed Solution Proposal

Technology & Innovation Director Chris Jones proposed transitioning from individual printer purchases to a managed solution that would reduce annual printing costs from approximately $16,000 to $6,000. The five-year agreement (three years firm, then year-to-year) would provide 34 desktop printers citywide with complete maintenance and supply management.

Jones explained the current system requires purchasing ink cartridges through Amazon and other vendors at about 36 cents per copy, while the managed solution would cost less than a penny per copy. The arrangement mirrors the city's current copier management system, with Toshiba providing Brother or Lexmark laser printers and handling all maintenance and supply needs.

Motion: Councilmember Mark Johnson moved to approve the proposal as presented. Members voted 4-0 in favor of the motion.

IT-03-16-26-2
Cybersecurity Plan Adoption (2026-2028)

Technology & Innovation Director Chris Jones presented the cybersecurity plan for council adoption, explaining it serves multiple purposes including grant eligibility and insurance compliance. The plan outlines the city's technology direction for 2026-2028, addressing artificial intelligence integration and cybersecurity protocols.

Mr. Jones clarified that no additional funding was being requested, as all referenced expenditures are already budgeted. The plan primarily provides a framework for potential future grant applications and demonstrates compliance with insurance requirements.

Motion: Jill Tipton moved to approve the cybersecurity plan adoption. Members voted 4-0 in favor of the motion.

BA-03-26
Request for Amendment to the Annual Budget Ordinance for the Fiscal Year ending June 30, 2026

Finance Director Pamela McBryde requested approval to add $927,350 to the budget across multiple funds. The general fund addition of $274,174 includes off-duty police payments from DSS and schools, additional interest income, and vehicle lease proceeds.

The water treatment, wastewater treatment and distribution and collection fund addition of $575,633 primarily consists of $361,429 in loan proceeds from the state

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for clarifier improvements and $186,000 in lease proceeds for new trucks. The electric fund addition covers investment income and equipment leases.

Motion: Roby Jetton moved to approve the budget amendment as presented. Members voted 4-0 in favor of the motion.

Request for Approval of Recommendation for Auditing Services for the Fiscal Year 2526

Finance Director Pamela McBryde reported that the City's current auditor is downsizing operations to focus on tax preparation, necessitating a new audit firm selection. Following an RFP process conducted in February with responses due in March, staff evaluated proposals based on current client municipalities, references, and pricing.

The recommendation is Thompson, Price, Scott and Adams Company from Whiteville, North Carolina, which audits similar-sized municipalities including Cleveland County, Morganton, and Burke County. Their proposal came in 4% lower than the city's current audit costs.

Motion: Kevin Demeny moved to approve Thompson, Price, Scott and Adams. Members voted 4-0 in favor of the motion.

O-01-26
Consideration of Amendment to an Ordinance to amend the City of Lincolnton Code of Ordinances, Title VII: Traffic Code, Chapter 70: General Provisions Schedule X: No Through Truck Traffic

Police Chief Brian Greene presented an ordinance amendment adding several streets to the no-through truck traffic restrictions. The additions include Alexander Street between North Flint and North Laurel Streets, East Hook Street between North Flint and North Cedar Streets, East McBee Street, East Sumner Street between North Laurel and North Poplar Streets, and North Cedar, North Laurel, and North Oak Streets.

City Manager Ritchie Haynes informed that, courtesy of the Electric Department, he was given extensive documentation of damage caused by tractor-trailers over the past two years in residential neighborhoods. The restrictions apply to vehicles with dual tires on three or more axles but allow delivery trucks to access businesses with legitimate purposes. The traffic safety committee vetted and approved the proposal, ensuring no businesses would be isolated without access.

City Manager Ritchie Haynes noted the restrictions would help protect neighborhoods while still allowing trucks access to Main Street businesses. Signs will be installed on all affected streets following approval.

Motion: Councilmember Jill Tipton made a motion to approve the ordinance amendment as presented. Members voted 4-0 in favor of the motion.

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Consideration of Request to Approve Purchase Electric Substation Repair Components

Electric Utilities Manager Brent Turner presented a critical infrastructure request for four new circuit breakers totaling $152,368. Mr. Turner explained the urgent need stemming from equipment failures beginning with a regulator explosion in July 2025, followed by the failure of a 25-year-old circuit breaker during the recent ice storm.

The city currently operates without spare circuit breakers, creating significant vulnerability. Turner emphasized that a single failure could result in extended power outages affecting the entire system, potentially causing issues with Duke Energy if faults aren't properly contained at the substation level.

The proposed magnetic-type circuit breakers offer superior reliability compared to the existing mechanical types, typically lasting 30+ years versus requiring expensive maintenance every two years. With a 22-week lead time, Turner stressed the importance of ordering immediately to restore redundancy to the electrical system.

The purchase includes spare parts and will allow removal of two existing vacuum breakers to serve as backup units, providing the city with proper emergency inventory for the first time in months.

> **Motion: Councilmember Kevin Demeny moved to approve the purchase of electric(circuit breakers) substation components. Members voted 4-0 in favor of the motion.**

Electric Utilities Manager Brent Turner also presented a request to purchase six Viper vacuum reclosers. Mr. Turner explained that reclosers prevent any fault from reaching your substation, which protects your substation and makes it easier to troubleshoot. Requested amount: $222,690.

> **Motion: Councilmember Roby Jetton moved to approve the purchase. Members voted 4-0 in favor of the motion.**

Consideration to approve the contract for construction phase services by McGill and Associates for the City Park project

Public Services Director Nathan Eurey requested approval for McGill and Associates to provide construction phase services for the city park project. McGill has been involved throughout the entire process from master planning through design and bidding and would now serve as construction manager and liaison between the city and contractor JD Goodrum.

Mr. Eurey reported that the pre-construction meeting recently held went very well, with the contractor eager to begin work. JD Goodrum plans to install construction fencing on Monday, April 6th, begin surveying, and potentially mobilize equipment by the following Wednesday.

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Motion: Councilmember Kevin Demeny moved to approve McGill for the construction phase services. Members voted 4-0 in favor of the motion.

Consideration of Request for an Extension of Current Lease Agreement

City Manager Haynes requested extension of the lease agreement with Local Roots restaurant through December 2026. The original lease-to-purchase agreement has expired while the restaurant owners work on financing to purchase the building outright, expected to occur during summer or fall 2026.

Haynes noted the Local Roots project represented one of the city's best decisions, demonstrating municipal investment in downtown development and spurring additional growth. The successful model of city-facilitated business development has been recommended by the school of government as preferable to traditional incentive programs.

Motion: Councilmember Mark Johnson made a motion to extend the lease purchase agreement. Members voted 4-0 in favor of the motion

Other Business

No items were presented under Other Business.

News Media

Reporter Mike Powell requested background information on the Local Roots lease agreement and clarification about the City Park construction contractor. City Manager Ritchie Haynes explained the RFP process that brought Local Roots to the city-owned building and confirmed JD Goodrum as the construction contractor with municipal project experience.

Closed Session

Motion: Councilmember Roby Jetton moved to go into closed session. Member voted 4-0 to enter closed session.

Upon returning to open session, City Manager Ritchie Haynes provided a comprehensive overview of the meeting held earlier that day with Lincoln County officials, which included himself, Assistant City Manager Scott Clark, and Mayor Ed Hatley. The purpose of the meeting was initially unclear, but it focused entirely on sales tax distribution changes that would significantly impact the city's budget.

Mr. Haynes explained the historical context of sales tax distribution, noting that for the past 15-20 years, the allocation has been based on population, with Lincolnton receiving approximately 13.2-13.3% of the county's sales tax revenue based on its population percentage. The state collects sales tax and sends it to the county, which then distributes it to municipalities according to the agreed formula.

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The county revealed they are facing a $2-3 million budget shortfall and have decided to change the distribution method from population-based to property tax (ad valorem) based allocation. This change would reduce Lincolnton's share to approximately 8.2%, resulting in a loss of $2.3 million annually for the city. Mr. Haynes expressed disagreement with this methodology, arguing that much of the county's sales tax revenue is generated within city limits due to large retail establishments and a thriving downtown area that attracts shoppers from throughout the county.

The City Manager emphasized the devastating impact this would have on the city's $20 million budget, where property tax, sales tax, and fire tax comprise approximately $15.8 million. He noted there are no alternative revenue sources to replace this significant loss, describing it as representing 10% or more of the city's budget compared to a much smaller percentage of the county's $200 million budget.

Councilmember Kevin Demeny expressed disappointment about the timing and political implications, noting that historically tense city-county relations had recently improved. He questioned whether there were ways to verify actual sales tax generation within city limits and suggested examining all co-mingled funding arrangements between the city and county.

Assistant City Manager Scott Clark shared his experience from a previous municipality where a similar situation occurred, noting that in that case, the county agreed to phase in the reduction incrementally over 10 years rather than implementing it all at once. He suggested this approach might be more manageable for Lincolnton.

Mayor Ed Hatley expressed strong opposition to the change, characterizing it as the city "bailing out the county" for their overspending on capital projects including new buildings for animal control, sheriff's department expansion, and a planned social services building. He emphasized that city residents pay county taxes, therefore they are paying for the same service twice.

The discussion revealed frustration that county officials presented this as essentially a done deal, with the decision expected to be formalized at an upcoming county meeting. Council members discussed the need to contact county commissioners to express their concerns and explore whether the decision could be phased in gradually or reconsidered entirely.

City Manager Ritchie Haynes concluded by stating he would spend the weekend analyzing the entire general fund budget to identify potential cuts, emphasizing that everything would be "on the table" including potential reductions to outside contributions and services that aren't core city functions.

Other Business

City Manager Ritchie Haynes distributed updates on homeless activity, noting an increase in transient individuals, including a recent case of someone who had traveled from New York through multiple jurisdictions before arriving in Lincolnton specifically because of the shelter services available.

Council members discussed concerns about the Hesed House of Hope homeless shelter serving individuals from outside Lincoln County, contrary to their stated

mission. Mr. Haynes indicated this issue would need to be addressed with the shelter's board.

The discussion touched on various budget implications and the need to prioritize core city services for Lincolnton residents above regional or county-wide services and contributions.

Adjournment

Motion: Councilmember Roby Jetton moved to adjourn. Members voted 4-0 in favor of the motion.

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Daphne Ingram, City Clerk	Ed Hatley, Mayor

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