City Council Meeting - March 5, 2026
Meeting minutes

The Lincolnton City Council met in Regular Session on Thursday, March 5, 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 to stand for a moment of silence and the pledge of allegiance. The mayor called for a motion to approve the regular agenda as presented.

Motion: Councilmember Jill Tipton moved to approve the regular agenda as presented. Members voted 4-0 in favor of the motion.

Mayor Hatley called for a motion to approve the consent agenda as follows:

- February 5, 2026 Regular Meeting Minutes
- approval of request for release from January 16 to February 15, 2026
- Proclamation for Procurement Month 2026.

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

Public Comment

Mr. Allen Hoyle addressed the council, emphasizing the importance of understanding the Constitution and its foundation in scripture. He referenced Article 6 stating the Constitution is the supreme law of the land and Amendment 10 regarding powers reserved to states and people. Mr. Hoyle discussed the First Amendment's establishment clause and referenced Noah Webster's 1828 dictionary definition of religion, and he expressed concerns about Islam's influence in America. He also emphasized that justice, liberty, and freedom come from the Creator, whom he identified as Yahweh or Jehovah rather than other deities.

Special Recognition

Battalion Chief Joe Fletcher gave well-deserved recognition for the fire department's recent pre-hospital saves. He highlighted two successful cardiac arrest responses: one on February 4th on the east side of the city where Engine 2 responded and successfully restored a pulse, and another on January 2nd at 3:00 AM where crews again achieved return of spontaneous circulation.

Chief Fletcher reported impressive statistics: He reported that the city responded to 31 cardiac arrest calls in the past year, with 3 resulting in return of pulse, which exceeds national average rates according to the American Heart Association. Between the city and Boger City district, the

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fire department protects $302,200,000 worth of property, with only $196,000 lost to fire damage in 2025.

Response times are excellent, with medical calls averaging 3 minutes 50 seconds and fire responses 4 minutes 18 seconds from alarm to arrival. The department achieved 3,847 hours of documented training, with likely an additional 2,000 hours of informal mentoring.

Councilmember Jetton asked about liability concerns regarding CPR, with Fletcher explaining Good Samaritan law protections. When asked about the high number of cardiac arrests, Fletcher noted the presence of numerous nursing homes in the city and coverage of the Boger City district. City Manager Ritchie Haynes mentioned that 32,000 cars daily pass through the East Main and Lithia Inn intersection, contributing to the service population.

The following firefighters were recognized: Battalion Chief Jason Ingle, Engineers Mason Reynolds and Luke Workman, Firefighter Wayne Hunsucker, and Lieutenants Mike Holmes and Tyler Swafford.

Regular Agenda

Water & Sewer Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) Presentation

Assistant City Manager Scott Clark introduced the Water and Sewer Capital Improvement Plan, explaining that Birch Environmental assists with grant applications and project management. The company is currently applying for $5 million in water-related grant funding and $5 million in sewer funding with no local match required.

Mr. David Twiggs from Birch Environmental explained that the CIP development started with AIA (Assessment, Inspection, and Analysis) grants allowing comprehensive system inspections. The planning process involved three levels: engineering inspections, staff meetings to identify historical problems, and forward-looking capacity projects to accommodate growth.

The plan spans 10 years with closer years being more accurate and later years remaining flexible. Mr. Twiggs emphasized this is a "living document" that adapts to changing priorities, funding opportunities, and technological advances. The plan serves as both a budget and strategy for capital funding, with different funding approaches for different project types.

Assistant Manager Scott Clark provided specific details about the abbreviated two-page document showing water and sewer projects. He explained that projects like Jennings Street water main replacement involve upgrading from 1-inch galvanized to 6-inch lines. Staff input identified areas with frequent breaks and leaks, with some areas needing larger diameter pipes for improved system resiliency, fire flow, water quality, and reliability.

The CIP includes phased pipeline rehabilitation and relining projects based on TV inspections of sewer lines using camera systems. Water system assessments scored lines based on age, size, and consequence of failure.

Mayor Hatley confirmed this ensures infrastructure keeps pace with growth and aging. Mr. Twiggs agreed, noting some infrastructure is properly sized but 25-30 years old and needing updates. The plan balances upgrades, upsizing where needed, and managing operational costs.

City Manager Ritchie Haynes noted the city has spent $750,000 to $1 million annually on capital improvements but acknowledged future rate increases will eventually be necessary, though

none are expected this year. The last rate increase was in 2016 or 2017, making the city fortunate to maintain stable rates despite rising costs.

Motion: Councilmember Kevin Demeny made a motion to approve the water and sewer asset management plan and capital improvement plan. Members voted 4-0 in favor of the motion.

Approval of List of Recommended Land Appraisers

Planning Director Jean Derby explained that city ordinance requires a council-approved list of land appraisers for situations involving land dedication or fee-in-lieu requirements. The department reached out to local realty companies for recommendations and verified the suggested appraisers were licensed and willing to serve on the list. Council could add additional qualified appraisers if desired, with no cost to the city. The listed land appraisers are as follows:

- Pat Kelly - Kelly Appraisal of Carolina
- Addie Carson/Lackey Holdings
- Paul R. Henry – Real Estate Appraisal
- Brian Kelly – Superior Appraisals

Motion: Councilmember Mark Johnson made a motion to approve the list of recommended land appraisers as presented. Members voted 4-0 in favor of the motion.

R-03-2026
Resolution for the Adoption of the Transportation Agreement between the Lincoln County Sheriff's Office and the City of Lincolnton

Police Chief Brian Greene explained that state statute requires an agreement between city and county for transporting involuntary commitments. When a magistrate issues an involuntary commitment, someone must transport the patient to Atrium Hospital for evaluation. The agreement, carrying over from the previous 2019 version, establishes that if patients live in the city or are stopped within city limits, the city is responsible for transport. The county handles those living in or stopped in the county, and each agency retrieves patients when they're released without transportation home. The sheriff's department is statutorily required to handle all out-of-county transports to long-term facilities.

Motion: Councilmember Jill Tipton made a motion to approve the transportation agreement between the sheriff's department and the city of Lincolnton. The motion carried unanimously with members voting 4-0 in favor of the motion.

Consideration of Revision to Personnel Policy Article IV Section 14, On-Call Policy and Section 15, Call Back Compensation

Human Resources Director Tanya Osborne explained that during a training session, department directors identified issues with the current policy's implementation. The revisions address fair compensation for two types of employees: those serving on-call (required to be available after hours) and those called back to assist with emergencies. The policy changes remove three problematic sections to ensure equitable pay for both on-call employees who handle emergencies independently and those called back to provide additional support.

Motion: Councilmember Roby Jetton made a motion to approve the changes in personnel policy for Article IV Sections 14 and 15. The motion carried unanimously with members voting 4-0 in favor of the motion.

Consideration of Appointment to the Historic Preservation Commission

City Clerk Daphne Ingram reported that the unexpected death of Mr. Rob Buff created a vacancy on the Historic Preservation Commission. The county forwarded an application from Ms. Vicky Yount, a city resident who applied through the county website. Yount would fill the unexpired term ending in 2027, after which she could be appointed to her first full three-year term if desired.

Motion: Kevin Demeny moved to approve Vicky Yount for appointment to the Historic Preservation Commission. The motion carried unanimously with members voting 4-0 in favor of the motion.

Consideration/Approval of Resolution for Signature Events Road Closures

City Manager Ritchie Haynes explained this was the second year using a resolution approach rather than sending individual letters to the Department of Transportation (DOT) for each event. The resolution covers DDA events and other signature events that close Main Street. DOT requires assurance that qualified individuals will close streets, maintain closures, and reopen them safely. The resolution is as follows:

RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL
OF THE CITY OF LINCOLNTON, NORTH CAROLINA
FOR SIGNATURE EVENT ROAD CLOSURES

WHEREAS, the City of Lincolnton acknowledges that our goal is to provide special events for the pleasure of our citizens and visitors; and

WHEREAS, the City of Lincolnton encourages its citizens and others to visit Lincolnton's historic downtown; and

WHEREAS, the City of Lincolnton acknowledges that a special event requires approximately two (2) hours to install signing and traffic control and requires two (2) hours for removing signs, traffic control, and litter removal.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Mayor and City Council of the City of Lincolnton, North Carolina, pursuant to the authority granted by G.S. 20-169, that they do hereby declare temporary road closure during the days and times set forth below on the following described portion of a State Highway System route, Main Street, NC Hwy 27/150.

Alive After Five: May 21, June 18, July 16, August 20 and September 17
7:00 p.m. -10:00 p.m. - Court Square to Poplar Street

Lincolnton Food, Wine & Brew Festival: DDA hopes to resume in 2027

Cruisin' for a Cause: September 19th
2:00 p.m. – 10:00 p.m. – Court Square to Laurel Street

Apple Festival: October 17 (road closed midnight October 16th)
Grove Street to Flint Street

Veterans Day Parade: November 11
10:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. Court Square to Academy Street

Tree Lighting: November 27
4:00 pm to 8:00 p.m.
Christmas Parade: November 29
4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. Court Square to Flint Street

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Apple Drop: December 31:
2:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. Court Square to Cedar Street

All of these being held in 2026. This Resolution becomes effective when signs are erected giving notice of change of traffic flows and implementation of adequate traffic control to guide vehicles around the event route.

ADOPTED this the 5th day of March 2026.

Motion: Councilmember Jill Tipton made a motion to approve the road closures as outlined. Members voted 4-0 in favor of the motion.

Other Business

Update on Winter Event

City Manager Ritchie Haynes provided extensive recognition for city employees' performance during two major winter storms. He emphasized the preparation required days in advance and the round-the-clock nature of emergency response.

The Street Department worked over 575 man-hours during both storms, plowing continuously, clearing sidewalks and parking areas downtown, and maintaining city facilities. They deployed 125 bags of ice melt and handled different challenges from ice versus snow conditions.

Water Resources dealt with over 20 leaks in three weeks due to below-normal temperatures, including 8 main water breaks. One main break occurred during the snowstorm, in teen temperatures, with old valves that couldn't fully shut off, creating dangerous working conditions. Staff checked lift stations running on generators and responded to numerous residential calls for burst pipes.

The Electric Department benefited from proactive right-of-way clearing, preventing more severe outages. A late-arriving regulator installation just before the storm allowed better circuit management. Crews rode lines every six hours to identify potential issues.

The Fire Department responded to 23 calls totaling 29 man-hours during the first storm and 9 calls totaling 6 hours during the second storm, mostly EMS-related. Mr. Haynes noted the department's often-unrecognized role in clearing tree-blocked streets to maintain emergency access.

Police doubled up officers and vehicles to ensure two-person response to incidents, protecting against secondary accidents and reducing equipment vulnerability.

Administrative staff, IT, HR, Parks and Recreation, and all department heads contributed significantly. Mr. Haynes particularly thanked Assistant City Manager Scott Clark for maintaining communication between departments and with council and gave special recognition to Mayor Hatley for his availability and support not only during the storms but throughout his tenure.

City Manager Ritchie Haynes concluded by thanking council for providing necessary equipment and manpower, noting that many communities lack adequate resources for such emergencies. He expressed appreciation for council members' offers of support during the storms.

Council members agreed the conditions could have been much worse given the initial weather forecasts, with the city benefiting from temperature changes that reduced ice accumulation.

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Mayor Ed Hatley opened the floor for questions from the new media. Mr. Mike Powell, with Lincoln Times News requested a copy of the water and sewer CIP presentation and asked about fire department medical response procedures, confirming they serve as first responders.

Being no further business, Councilmember Roby Jetton made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Members voted 4-0 in favor of the motion.

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Daphne Ingram, City Clerk	Ed Hatley, Mayor

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