SESSION NOTES – FOR INFORMATION ONLY
(No Quorum Present, Listening Session Only)

Thursday, March 19, 2026 – 6:00pm
Mary C. Jenkins Community Center

Members Present:	Randy Lytle, Co-Chair, MCJCC Board Member Gary Daniel, Council Member (arrived at 6:45pm) Pamela Holder, Co-Chair, Council Member (Zoom; arrived at 6:15pm) Edith Darity, MCJCC Board Member Karen Darity, MCJCC Board Appointment Victor Foster, MCJCC Board Appointment Ella Jones, Citizen Member Morgan Monshaugen, Citizen Member Mayor Maureen Copelof, Ex-Officio
Staff Present:	Tyree Griffin, Community Center Director Paul Ray, Planning Director Shawnee Cummings, Assistant to the City Manager
Guests:	Darlene Norman, Sarah Knox, Linda Mackey, Letitia Robinson, Kim Howell, Rodney Locks, Anthony Darden, Chris Norman

A. Welcome & Call to Order

Board Co-Chair Randy Lytle called the meeting to order at 6:00pm.

B. Certification of Quorum

Assistant to the City Manager, Shawnee Cummings, did not certify a quorum, as there were no City Council members present at the start of the meeting.

C. Silversteen Picnic Pavillion Update

Mayor Copelof explained that she obtained $45,000 from a donor to pay for the engineering and design of the picnic pavilion at Silversteen Park. It is now under contract with an architectural firm, who will provide schematics and cost estimates needed to pursue grant funding. Mayor Copelof stated that we do not yet have funding for construction.

Mayor Copelof said that she and Mr. Ray have discussed potential grants that are geared specifically toward parks. She added that the grants often look for strong community support, which can be shown through the community's donation of the land and over $10,000. The engineering designs are expected in the next couple

months. She highlighted that most grants require a match and there is no money in the City's budget for next year. If a grant is awarded, the City will need to find a funding source for the match.

Mayor Copelof suggested that the Committee members write thank you letters and mail them to the donor to show their appreciation for the donation and express how important this project is to the community. She added that she wants to invite the donor and his wife to the events in the Rosenwald community, as the donor had never visited until recently. Mayor Copelof also suggested having the donor attend the Juneteenth celebration as a special guest and welcomed suggestions from the Committee on how to show appreciation for the donation.

Mayor Copelof explained that obtaining the engineering design will account for water and sewer lines, floodplain considerations, ADA accessibility standards, and other technical details. She added that visually, it will look very similar to the rendering created by Councilmember Lauren Wise.

Mr. Ray suggested having a community engagement event to host the donor in the community, unveil the shelter design, and serve food at the Mary C. Jenkins Community Center. It would be a recent community event that would also strengthen a grant application. Mr. Griffin said that he thinks the Juneteenth celebration will be the perfect opportunity to immerse the donor in the community.

D. Community Concerns

Mr. Lytle introduced the community's concerns in relation to the Norton Creek Stream Restoration project and Mr. Ray gave a brief presentation on the current state of the stream, project objectives, cost and funding opportunities, and status of conservation easements (Attachment A). Mr. Ray stated that the project is in the early stages of design and the funding thus far has been provided by the NC Land and Water Fund (NCLWF). He added that part of the creek runs through the tannery site, which is a brownfield, making work involving soil disturbance more difficult.

Mr. Ray said for any work required as a result of the project, such as moving fence lines or small storage structures, there would be no cost to the property owner if they are willing to participate. He added that the design incorporated shifting the project more onto the tannery site and rerouting the stream so that it would not affect the properties of those who do not wish to participate in the project.

Mr. Ray explained that the conservation easement limits building, grading, and vegetation removal to allow the streambank restoration to remain protected. He stated that walking, fishing, and other forms of passive recreation will still be permitted, as it is still the property owner's land to use.

Mr. Lytle asked about invasive plants that will encroach over time and whether upkeep will be the property owners' responsibility. Mr. Ray said that the City would

try to get Conserving Carolina, with the property owners' permission, to remove invasive species once a year.

Mr. Lytle stated that he was looking at the letters sent to residents and that the initial letters mentioned a 20-foot conservation easement from the center of the creek, but that a letter received later mentioned 30-foot easements. Mr. Ray said that there are variances in the easements requested because the creek curves and gets closer to some properties than others.

Mr. Lytle said that he did not want to speak on behalf of everyone, but he believes the concern is that people feel like something is being taken from them. Mr. Lytle opened the floor for public comment so that residents could voice their concerns.

E. Public Comments

Ms. Norman spoke on behalf of her and her neighbors, Sarah and Letitia, on Hemphill Circle, stating that her letter specified a 50-foot easement and stated that she would not be able to touch it after the vegetation is planted. She added that she has talked to the Planning Committee and the City about portions of her lot that are eroding badly, and when she has tried to add river rock or dirt to stop the erosion, she has been told she cannot do so. She added she will not have any property in the future due to the erosion and that she needs help. She is paying taxes on her land and she feels that the City is trying to take her property. Mr. Ray said that it might feel that way and he understands that, but that that is not the purpose of a conservation easement. He added that the purpose is to leave the vegetation alone and undisturbed so that it has a chance to grow and stabilize the stream bank.

Mr. Ray added that he heard her when she came to his office and they have moved the project away from her property. Ms. Norman said she appreciated that and asked if she can now place rock on the bank to help stop the erosion, to which Mr. Ray explained that FEMA controls a lot of the regulations in the floodway, but that FEMA has eased up on individual restoration restrictions due to the damage caused by Hurricane Helene. Mr. Ray said if he knows what she wants to do, he can contact FEMA and find out if they will allow it without requiring permits. Ms. Norman stated that she was also told that once the property has eroded, she would not be allowed to add any rock or dirt to build it back up and that it is gone. Mr. Ray confirmed that that is correct because any added materials have downstream effects on the neighbors and other parts of the stream. After further discussion and questions, Ms. Norman stated that she did not want the project on her property but that she would talk to Mr. Ray about individual methods to stop the erosion.

Ms. Mackey said that the conservation easement affects her property value if she ever wants to sell the property. She is also concerned about people coming onto her property if there is fishing, bird-watching, and other things along the creek.

Ms. Robinson and multiple other residents voiced concerns about people being on their property without permission and despite private property signs. Ms. Karen Darity asked if there is a path by the creek, to which Ms. Robinson stated that there is not. Mr. Ray asked if the people on their property were surveyors because the City sent letters about surveyors. Ms. Robinson said that some of them have not been surveyors. Mayor Copelof said that if there are people on their property who are not surveyors, City employees, or someone the City notified them about, they are trespassing and residents need to call the police. Mr. Ray added that if the project ever happens, it will not open the stream to public use. Ms. Robinson said that she is worried that when people hear about the project, it will attract more people.

Mr. Lytle asked if City employees are required to be identifiable or have identification. Mayor Copelof said that Public Works employees are required to have their City shirts on and drive City vehicles. Mayor Copelof said that if any City employee has been on their property without notifying them, it was a mistake and that she apologizes for that.

Mr. Locks added that the area next to the properties is all brownfield and no one is allowed to go through there, but people still do. Mr. Locks said that once you make it clean, how are you going to stop people from going through the brownfield? Mr. Ray said that there will be 'No Trespassing' signs that are closer together and Mayor Copelof added that there will be a fence along the trail, on both sides, so that people cannot go off trail. Mayor Copelof said people are not allowed to enter the brownfield for their own safety, so part of this will be education.

Mr. Foster said people are trying to buy property in the neighborhood and residents feel that they are being forced, or cheated, out of their property. He added that he sees people taking photos on his property and receives offers to buy his property.

Mr. Daniel said maybe we need to talk to the Chief of Police and see if we can get bike patrols in the area so that they would be able to see if people are trespassing.

Ms. Norman mentioned that the new condos have a brick wall and asked why the whole stream bank cannot do that to keep the bank from eroding away. Mr. Ray said the brick wall is outside of the floodway, a very short section of the creek, and it required expensive permitting and engineering. He added that if they put a wall next to the creek, it would create a channel and speed up the flow of water.

After additional discussion related to the brownfield, contaminant testing, and the tannery smokestack, the Committee members thanked the residents for coming to the meeting, voicing their concerns, and making the Committee aware of the issues they are facing in relation to their property. The Committee members reiterated that if there are people on their property, they did not authorize people to be on their property, the people have not identified themselves as City employees, surveyors, etc., and they have 'No Trespassing" signs up, they need to call the police.

F. Set Date for Next Meeting

The next meeting was scheduled for Thursday, April 16, 2026 at 6:00pm at the Mary C. Jenkins Community Center.

G. Adjourn

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:11 pm.

Notes Approved: May 21, 2026

X Pamela Holder

Pamela Holder, Co-Chair, City Council Member
Randy Lytle, Co-Chair, MCJCC Member

X Shawnee A. Cummings

Shawnee Cummings
Assistant to the City Manager