

Kinston City Council



MINUTES January 3, 2023

Minutes
Kinston City Council
City Hall · 207 East King Street
Tuesday, January 3, 2023
Regular Meeting - 5:30 pm

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REGULAR MEETING

Mayor Don Hardy called the City Council meeting to order at 5:31 pm.

Mayor Hardy led the prayer followed by the Pledge of Allegiance

Council Members' Roll Call

Present: Councilmembers Robert Swinson, Sammy Aiken, Mayor Pro-Tem Hardy and Mayor Don Hardy

Present Also: Rhonda Barwick, City Manager, and Tim Carraway, Attorney

Absent: Councilmembers Felicia Solomon and Chris J. Suggs

CITIZEN COMMENT

Citizens must sign in before the start of the meeting if they wish to address the City Council. Citizens should state their name and address prior to beginning their comments and may speak up to a maximum of 3 minutes. Citizens seeking assistance or asking questions will be contacted by a member of the Governing Body or by appropriate City Staff.

Curtis Henderson, 605 McLewean Street, Kinston NC. Mr. Henderson stated that his non-profit organization, Hope To Destiny Youth, sponsored Toy for Tots and was able to help ten families. Additionally, they hosted a toy drive and raised approximately five hundred toys and ten bikes which were distributed on 12/23/22. Mr. Henderson added that he is looking forward to working with City Council and City officials in 2023. He has a few projects this organization is doing that will benefit the children and the citizens of Kinston. Mr. Henderson invited City Councilmembers and City Officials to the Martin Luther King Day service on January 16th, 10 am at the Temple of Zion International Ministries, 1012 Dixon Ave, Greenville. He will be receiving the President Volunteer Service Award and the ENC Non-Profit Service Award. Mr. Henderson asked Council for information on the ARPA funds. He stated that during his research, he believes those funds were set aside for local community use and organizations. Mr. Henderson also shared that the Eastern Carolina Area Agency on Aging is providing up to \$500 in grocery reimbursement to seniors. Participants who apply for the program will submit their grocery receipts to the Eastern Carolina Council Area Agency on Aging and will receive a check in the mail for reimbursement of eligible items. He asked if this could be placed on the City website, as this would be helpful to the citizens of Kinston.

Mayor Hardy thanked Mr. Henderson and noted that his concern would be taken under advisement.

Adoption of the Agenda

If a Councilmember wishes to revise the agenda, the Motion to add or delete an item will be entertained prior to the Adoption of the Agenda

Councilmember Swinson made the motion, seconded by Councilmember Aiken and upon a unanimous vote of [3-0], the agenda was adopted

MINUTES

Consider approval of the minutes of the City Council meeting held on, Tuesday, December 3, 2022, and the Special Meeting on December 15, 2022

Althea Simmons / Debra Thompson

Councilmember Swinson made the motion, seconded by Mayor Pro-Tem Hardy and upon a unanimous vote of [3-0], the minutes for December 6th & 15th, 2022, were approved.

PRESENTATIONS AND RECOGNITIONS

1. Law Enforcement Officers’ Professional Certification Program-----Keith Goyette

Mayor Hardy asked that this item be moved to a later date.

ACTION AGENDA

1. Consider Interlocal Agreement with Lenoir County to Provide Building Inspection Services to the City of Kinston -----Elizabeth Blount

Elizabeth Blount, Planning Director, shared that during the November 15th meeting, Council tabled the decision for the Interlocal Agreement to the second meeting in January concerning the building inspectors merging with the county, and since then, we have had the two individuals in the positions specifically indicated in the agreement to resign,

Ms. Blount explained to Council that there are two parts to the Planning Department. There is the building part and there is the planning part. The building portion deals specifically with plumbing, mechanical, electrical, and overall building permits. The planning portion deals with site plan approval, nuisance abatement, floodplain, condemnation/demolition, signs, site plan review, minimum housing, special use permits, planning and zoning approvals. The Interlocal Agreement that was presented before Council was only dealing with the inspections part.

In the Interlocal Agreement, the original content that the County would receive: the Permit Tech and the Code Enforcement Officer. They also asked for the transfer of a 2016 Ford F-150 and they would also be receiving the building permit fees. The City would maintain the condemnation/demolition site plan review, signs, minimum housing, site compliance, and overall planning.

Ms. Blount stated that after she had reviewed the minutes from the previous meetings, she shared the pros and cons. The PROs: The City would not have to compete locally for inspectors. There would be no cost to get a Level 3 inspector because the County has level 3 inspectors and if we are unable to get with the County, the State will have to come in. The city would not have to pay the County for any type of inspection. North Carolina has a great demand for level 3 inspectors. Level 3 inspectors are hard to hire and even harder to maintain because of the demand. The CONs: The City will lose the inspection revenue. The planning duties will have to fall on a 3-person department and the City would still be involved in the development because businesses will still be coming to Kinston.

After careful consideration and even though the cons may outweigh the pros, Ms. Blount's recommendation is that the City allow building inspections to be managed by the County. For the construction or renovation projects and building permits, the County would be responsible for building permits for the electrical, plumbing, and mechanical. Fire would remain part of the City's permitting process. All other permitting fees and duties such as site plan reviews, stormwater, utilities, floodplain, etc., affiliated with said projects within the city limits and ETJ will still be managed by the City of Kinston. Also, Ms. Blount recommends that since the staff in the aforementioned slots have resigned that the paragraph about the employment and vehicle that is in the original agreement be removed. Ms. Blount also asked that the County honors the statement that the City would not pay for this agreement nor for any type of inspection services. Another recommendation as stated by Ms. Blount is to change the terms, the current agreement says 10 years, she recommends that it be changed to 5 years with 180-day notice to withdraw or terminate the agreement, which will give the City at least 6 months if decided to pick up inspections again and to try to hire the people that are needed.

Another recommendation is that representatives from the County and City develop an effective method for a request for services. In the original package, they were given a letter that would be an opportunity to ask for our services. Ms. Blount asked the Council to give her the liberty to look at it in a more effective way in making those requests.

Councilmember Swinson shared that he had conversations with Ms. Blount and the City Manager about the Interlocal agreement and he believes it is the right move. He added that going forward a better system will be put in place pertaining to the permit funds. Planning is currently a one-person department and Councilmember Swinson asks that we do not bombard Ms. Blount as she will be managing the work by herself. He asked that Council look at getting her help as we approach the budget session.

Mayor Hardy stated that he was in full agreement with Councilmember Swinson and thanked Ms. Blount for the work that she is doing.

Councilmember Aiken mentioned that the City would be losing the revenue from the homes that are being built in The Briery (250 homes) and Butterfield (69 homes). The building permits are approximately \$150 per permit.

Mayor Pro-Tem Hardy shared that he is in full agreement with Councilmember Swinson. He also had conversations with Ms. Blount and with the City Manager and he believes that we are on the right track regarding the Interlocal Agreement.

Councilmember Aiken asked does the city have a retiree coming back to assist with inspections. Rhonda Barwick, City Manager answered that we currently have a retiree who assists us with inspections. The employee has agreed to stay another month as needed during the transition. If Council should agree that the County would take over the inspections, we would not need that employee.

Councilmember Aiken asked we have started advertising for an inspector. Rhonda Barwick, City Manager answered that we have not; we are waiting to find out what Council desires before we start advertising.

Councilmember Swinson made the motion, seconded by Mayor Pro-Tem Hardy and upon a vote of [2-1], the Interlocal Agreement with Lenoir County to Provide Building Inspection Services to the City of Kinston was approved.

Elizabeth Blount, Planning Director, shared some additional aspects of the Planning Dept.

- As the City of Kinston continues to grow, the Planning Department will need to expand.
- The City currently has a Planning and Inspections Department. The department would go from Planning & Inspection to Planning & Zoning.
- There are four components to planning (1) Permits (2) Community & Development (3) Code Enforcement (4) Zoning. The work that planning is responsible for are (CDGB Grants, Essential Single-Family Grants, Urgent Repair, Kinston 101, signs, site plans review, zoning compliance, zoning approvals, site compliance rezoning, and special use permits. All these components are currently being done in Planning.
- As it stands now, there is a Planning Director, Community Development Planner, Abatement Officer, Permit Technician, and Code Enforcement Officer. The Code Enforcement Officer and the Permit Tech positions will not be filled. Ms. Blount asked that the positions be frozen for now as she would like to keep the positions as part of the planning department. Ms. Blount stated that during the budget cycle, she would like to address rebranding those positions in helping the planning department become what the City of Kinston needs to thrive and grow. The Planning Department is now a three-person Department and with all the things that were presented to Council, Ms. Blount added that she needs help.
- Ms. Blount shared that the City is now in the process of ending the cycle of grants that the city is working on with The Wooten Company. The person that had been overseeing the grant for the city is retiring. An agreement now must be in place with Insight to do the Essential Single Family Repairs Loan Program. Ms. Blount shared that over the years, the City has been contracting and having consultants be our managers. Ms. Blount would like to investigate rebranding and having the funds managed in-house.

Councilmember Swinson shared that ECU has a graduation coming up and getting some interns, as well as reaching out to UNC Chapel Hill. He also thanked the Planning Director and the City Manager for being helpful and insightful in making this transition better.

Councilmember Aiken shared that the City at one time contracted Planning out to Benchmark. Rhonda Barwick, City Manager shared that before Benchmark, the City had twelve people in-house.

INFORMATION AND UPDATES

1. Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration-----Keith Goyette

Interim Chief Keith Goyette shared that the Lenoir County NAACP Branch request a Special Event Permit for Sunday, January 15th at 2 pm. The location will be at Lenoir County Courthouse steps and a walk to Saint Augustus A.M.E. Church.

2. City of Kinston Police Survey-----Keith Goyette

Interim Chief Goyette shared that as part of KPD’s ongoing outreach to engage with the community and measure their success, the Department has created a community survey link to obtain valuable community feedback for their performance as well as crime within our City, which will assist the Department in the development of their strategies to meet the needs of the community. The survey will be posted on their websites as well as the Kinston Police Department website for 30 days

Councilmember Aiken asked that the surveys be distributed to churches, Public Library, and the Council on Aging.

Councilmember Swinson commended the people of KPD for producing the survey.

3. Parks and Recreation Updates-----Cory Povar

Corey Povar, Parks and Recreation Director shared the 2022 year-end review:

- The Kinston Community Center now has ten new treadmills.
- New Year’s Offer – If you join, you will get the first month free with no sign-on fee
- KCC is the only center in town that has a year-round pool
- KCC has issued a program follow-up survey. To follow up on their programs and to be in contact with the community as they participate in the programs to help KCC improve the way they offer their programs.
- Advertise –The programs are marketed through social media, Kinston Lenoir County Facebook, school flyers, and word of mouth.
- Martin C Freeman – Corey extended heartfelt thanks to Woodmen Life Chapter 46. They have been a wonderful support and they also donated the flagpole.
- Kinston Lenoir County Sports Hall of Fame is now back. There are twelve individuals and two teams they are hoping to induct The event is scheduled for August 19, 2023. The

Sports Hall of Fame is a 15-member board of which Mayor Pro-Tem Hardy is a board member.

- Fairfield Park – On January 3, 2023, a local construction company will be in to prep out the land.
- Bill Faye – In the process of ordering the equipment.
- Mock Gym – The cost is \$50/year. It is a great gym, with new floors, and a drop-down batting cage.
- Pickleball – Players meet every day, at 9 am at Fairfield.
- Pearson Park – The bathroom is a huge enhancement.

To Come in 2023

- Grainger Stadium Scoreboard and Grandstand Renovation
- Kinston Community Center Inflatable Structure
- Emma Webb Park Renovation
- Continued park improvements
- Enhance programs - advertising more events-based programming and youth education programs.

Mayor Hardy conveyed his appreciation to Corey, Ms. Sue Ellen Maddux, Chairperson, Kinston Lenoir County Parks & Recreation, and all those who play a major part in putting together programs for our youth in the community. Mayor Hardy expressed that as KCC expands and grows; parents need to make sure they take advantage of these programs.

Mayor Pro-Tem Hardy shared that the Recreation Commission is a great group of individuals who are doing what is right for the community.

CITY MANAGER'S REPORT

Rhonda Barwick, City Manager, shared that during the first strategic session in August 2022, five goals were identified for the City. Ms. Barwick will be getting the group together to have the second meeting on strategic goals. This meeting will include the department heads to help identify actual steps under each goal. Ms. Barwick will reach out to Council with some dates hopefully having the meeting in January.

The Finance Director and City Manager are getting ready to start the budget process instructions to go out to the department heads.

CITY ATTORNEY'S REPORT

The City Attorney had no report.

MAYOR AND COUNCILMEMBER REPORTS

Mayor Hardy shared that during the recent Community Forum on Violence, he discussed establishing a crime intervention committee to include representatives from the District Attorney's office, Lenoir County Public Schools, as well as other stakeholders to discuss gang violence and crime prevention in our City. He has already reached out to some individuals in the community and asked if you have any contacts you feel would be strong participants to please let him know. Mayor Hardy shared that he wants this to be an effective group to be able to pull resources to the table to curb the violence in our City. Mayor Hardy is also looking for support from the faith base community, and Big Brother/ Big Sister to do their part.

Mayor Hardy stressed that we need to set some dates soon to take steps to see what the strategic plans look like, how we can put it in place, and what we need to do. Mayor Hardy added that he is looking forward to having conversations with county and city government officials to talk about different things that we can do collaboratively moving forward. This is something we must do, city, county, state, and federal governments working together to make sure we are on the same page to advocate for what we need most.

Councilmember Swinson asks that the Mayor include Lenoir County Public Schools on the Crime Intervention Task Force.

Mayor Pro-Tem Hardy thanked the staff for all the work they do and wished everyone a Happy New Year.

ADJOURNMENT

Councilmember Swinson made the motion, seconded by Aiken and upon a unanimous vote [3-0] the meeting adjourned at 6:41 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Althea Simmons, Deputy City Clerk