

# Kinston City Council



## MINUTES March 15, 2022

**Minutes**  
Kinston City Council  
City Hall · 207 East King Street  
**Tuesday, March 15, 2022**  
Work Session Canceled · Regular Meeting at 7:00 pm

**This meeting was held in person and published electronically at**  
<https://www.facebook.com/KinstonCityHall>

**REGULAR MEETING**

**Mayor Pro Tem Antonio Hardy called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.**

**Councilmember Chris J. Suggs delivered the prayer followed by the pledge of allegiance.**

**Councilmembers' Roll Call**

**Present: Councilmembers Sammy Aiken, Felicia Solomon, Chris J. Sugg, and Mayor Pro Tem Antonio Hardy.**

**Present Also: Rhonda Barwick, Interim City Manager and James Cauley, City Attorney.**

**Absent: Councilmember Robert Swinson and Mayor Don Hardy.**

**CITIZEN COMMENT**

Citizens must sign in prior to 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.

**There were no citizens' comments.**

**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 Adoption of the Agenda.*

**Councilmember Aiken made the motion, seconded by Councilmember Suggs, and upon a unanimous vote of [4-0], the agenda was adopted.**

**PRESENTATIONS**

**1. Women's History Month Proclamation ----- Mayor Pro Tem Hardy**

Councilmember Solomon read the proclamation proclaiming March 2022 as Women's History Month by Mayor Don Hardy.

Mayor Pro Tem Hardy thanked Ms. Solomon and stated that it was only fitting for Ms. Solomon to deliver the proclamation.

## **2. Eastern NC Neighborhood Revitalization Proposal -----Margo Dawson, TTUS**

Ms. Margo Dawson introduced Jelyse Dawson, assisting with the presentation. She shared that Lin Dawson was also a part of the team but due to flying, would be joining the meeting later. Ms. Dawson explained that they are here to rebuild, reclaim, and restore futures through education, career training, health, and social programming with the purchase of J. H. Sampson School. She noted that this could be reached by facility restoration workforce development, and providing a community center. The timeline from purchase in 2013 through the present was shared. The building was opened in 2014 for programming with the support of people around the state. Ms. Dawson discussed the work of TRAINTHEMFORSUCCESS that was conducted within the community.

Ms. Jelyse Dawson explained that they are mindful of what is happening in this area regarding the Lenoir County stats in comparison to the National Average for household income, poverty rate, unemployment, households with broadband, high school graduation or higher, and bachelor's degree or higher. She stated they are creating programs to help with these issues. There was a discussion about the building needing to be restored. If they can restore the building, it could be a potential rental space; partner with companies to get people trained for warehousing, and supply chain; senior housing; and veteran housing. This could help bolster and support the community with this facility. The second option is to turn the building into a workforce development space. She stated they saw four career tracks for Kinston as 1) business administration, 2) IT, 3) manufacturing, and 4) skilled trades. Ms. Dawson discussed the current partnership with the Kinston Community Health Center "100 Fit Females". Through a grant, the program provides virtual free fitness, mindfulness, and life coaching to women. She stated that so far there are over 100 women signed up from age 21 to 79. She stated that 65% of the women have some pre-existing health condition (high blood pressure, diabetes) and some are beginners in their fitness journey. Ms. Dawson presented two options for consideration. The first is facility renovation and the second is to focus on workforce development.

Councilmember Suggs thanked the Dawsons for the presentation and their commitment over the years. Mayor Pro Tem Hardy thanked them also.

Councilmember Aiken asked if they had any type of engineering report that could be presented later. Ms. Margo Dawson stated they did and would email it to the Council along with other financial sources they are pursuing as well.

Councilmember Solomon asked if they had plans to be in the community this summer outside of the "100 Fit Females". Ms. Margo Dawson stated they are working on getting the courses ready for the workforce development project. She said they have an upcoming meeting with Amazon and if they cannot get assistance with renovations, they are looking for someone interested in purchasing the building that would enhance the community. Councilmember Solomon asked if they had talked with Rusty Hunt at LCC. Ms. Dawson shared that they had a meeting with LCC about six months ago, but they have problems with getting people there

to take the array of courses they already have for whatever reason. She stated that if the renovations are done, it could be a satellite location.

**3. Glenn Raven Mill Redevelopment Update-----Marcia Perritt**

Marcia Perritt, Community Development Consultant stated that Glenn Raven Mill is located at 800 Manning Street in Mitchelltown (Arts and Cultural District). The building is a historic mill (spinning mill) and was donated to the City in 2016. She reminded everyone that the building is vacant and ready for revitalization. Ms. Perritt showed an aerial view of the building and shared that some portions of the mill are in the 100 and 500-year floodplain. She gave some of the building stats and noted that the City did enter into an option to purchase agreement with a private developer in June 2019. That option was extended several times and has expired. It is now available for other uses. Ms. Perritt stated she was compelled to bring this up again by the renaissance of the Mill Tax Credit. This is a program that was active in 2000/the 2010s, and a lot of the mill redevelopments seen around the state are a result of this program. It ended but was recently revived and is an excellent tax credit for mill rehabilitation. It is coupled with historic tax credits and the building is potentially eligible for these tax credits. Because of the siding, the State Historic Preservation Office has said they cannot yet tell if it is qualified. They need to see the siding removed, but there is a high likelihood given the age and the integrity of the historic structure. The Historic Tax Credit coupled with the Mill Tax Credit could make this a project that is financially feasible and attractive to a private developer. Ms. Perritt shared some of the projects from around the state. The examples were of similar size to Glen Raven and were now luxury apartments and affordable housing (low-income housing tax credit program),

Councilmember Aiken asked if this is where Phase II of the Riverwalk ends, and Phase III begins. Ms. Perritt stated that Phase III is to run from Glen Raven Mill to the Kinston Music Park. Mr. Aiken asked if we would have an easement if a developer purchased it. Mr. Cauley stated we could retain an easement for that purpose. Mr. Aiken mentioned that there were nice apartments behind McDonald's.

Councilmember Suggs stated that with the siding removed it would open up options for tax credits and asked if she was suggesting that the City invest in removing the siding. Ms. Perritt responded that she was, and taking proactive actions (removing the siding, placing the building on the National Register) to ready the building for private investment will help open the pool of potential developers who might be interested. Also, going so far as developing what uses we would like to see in that building (commercial, market-rate affordable housing); exploring what uses are possible from a market and financial perspective, and being a little more prescriptive when you go to the development community to say, this is what we would like to see happen with this building. It not only advantages the City but is more of a benefit to the private sector in them knowing that the City is willing to partner with them, and they spend less time with pre-development. Step one would be to remove the siding so that it could be listed on the National Register. Without unlocking the Historic Tax Credit possibility, which unlocks the Mill Tax Credit this would be a very challenging project without the two tax credits.

Councilmember Aiken asked if there was asbestos. Ms. Perritt stated that Phase I & II environmental assessments for this mill.

Councilmember Solomon asked if was possible to schedule a site visit for the Council. Ms. Barwick stated she could and asked the Council if this was something they would like Marcia to pursue to give a plan and some cost estimates for the siding, and other pre-development work.

The Council gave a consensus to move forward. Ms. Perritt stated she would bring more information so they would know what the path ahead looks like and if they wanted to move ahead with more pre-development work.

Councilmember Solomon asked if when talking about the Sampson property, what would qualify that property to be able to be on the Historical Register. Ms. Perritt stated that given its age and the cultural significance of the building, it is worth exploring listing it on the National Register which would open up the building for the Historic Tax Credit. It was previously explained that affordable housing, rental housing, veteran housing, or senior housing could be a viable use for that building and could open other sources of financing; particularly the low-income housing tax credit. It is challenging for low-income housing tax credits because of its location. The NC Housing Finance Agency (allocates those tax credits), the most competitive one (9%) which provides the most financing, it is challenging to get it in areas where there is high distress. That said, the building may qualify for a 4% tax credit, and paired with other funds, may make it a viable path. The building’s location is important (along the MLK corridor); the Health Center will be constructing a new facility on the corner of MLK and King Street, the Wood Ducks stadium is to the north, and J.H. Sampson is in the middle. Ms. Perritt stated she thinks the J.H. Sampson is key to a broader revitalization strategy of the MLK corridor. The building is challenging because of its condition and because of its layout. The Historic Tax credit means you have to maintain the historic layout of the building and makes redevelopment more constrained. Ms. Solomon asked Ms. Perritt if in looking at the options presented were there any other funding sources to support the vision.

Councilmember Suggs thanked Ms. Perritt and thought this was the perfect time with the tax credit coming back.

**MINUTES**

**Consider approval of the minutes of the City Council meeting held on Tuesday, March 1, 2022 ----- Debra Thompson**

**Councilmember Aiken made the motion, seconded by Councilmember Suggs, and upon a unanimous roll call vote (Councilmembers Aiken, Suggs, Solomon, and Mayor Pro Tem Hardy – Yes) of [4-0], the minutes for March 1, 2022, were approved.**

**ACTION AGENDA**

- 1. Consider Approval of Capital Project Ordinance Amendment – Briary Run Phase V (S9206) Budget ----- Donna Goodson**

**Ms. Barwick shared that Ms. Goodson was a new grandmother and Ms. Carol Bell would go over the project budgets tonight.**

Carol Bell, Assistant Finance Director stated that funding of \$1.4 mil was received for this project. After the bidding process was concluded, the bid was over the amount awarded. They applied for and were approved for \$2.9 mil. and asked for a budget amendment for this amount.

**Councilmember Suggs made the motion, seconded by Councilmember Aiken, and upon a unanimous vote of [4-0], the Capital Project Ordinance amendment – Briary Run Phase V (S9206) budget for \$2.9 mil. was approved.**

**2. Consider Adoption of Capital Project Ordinance NCGTP Terminal Waterline Replacement Project (W9121) Budget ----- Donna Goodson**

Carol Bell, Assistant Finance Director shared that they would like to establish this Capital Project for \$716,300 with 50% (up to a maximum of \$358,150) to be forgiven and the remainder of the payable at the maximum interest rate of .18%.

**Councilmember Solomon made the motion, seconded by Councilmember Suggs, and upon a unanimous vote of [4-0], the Capital Project Ordinance – NCGTP Terminal Waterline Replacement Project (W9121) Budget for was adopted.**

**3. Consider Adoption of Capital Project Budget Ordinance – State SCIF Directed Grant Project (G9147) Budget ----- Donna Goodson**

Carol Bell, Assistant Finance Director asked that the establishment of the grant for the SCIF for the Capital Project (G9147) for \$100,000. This will be for resurfacing multiple parking lots in the downtown area that need repairing, sealing, asphalt resurfacing and stripping.

**Councilmember Aiken made the motion, seconded by Councilmember Suggs, and upon a unanimous vote of [4-0], the Capital Project Budget Ordinance – State SCIF Directed Grant Project (G9147) Budget was adopted.**

**INFORMATION AND UPDATES**

**FY 21-22 Quarter 2 Budget Status ----- Donna Goodson**

Carol Bell, Assistant Finance Director shared that the information in the budget packet was for six months (50% of FY 21-22) and does not include any approval. Ms. Bell stated this is for July 1, 2021 to December 31, 2021. With all the funds combined, the City received \$46,475,162 in revenue and expended \$41,842,052. She explained that the General Fund comes from three major sources. The Property Tax (43%), the Local Government Sales Tax (17%), and State Shared Revenue Franchise Tax (7%). We are at 44% of the budget in what was spent compared to the actual amount spent for FY 22. Ms. Bell explained that also in the packet were the General Operating Expenditures by the organization, with a breakdown of the budget being \$24.3 mil and we are at \$10.5 mil for actual expenses. The graphs show the revenues versus expenditures with \$46.4 mil revenues and spent \$41.8 mil. She also noted

that the requested information regarding training and development by organizations was included in the packet.

Councilmember Suggs asked for an explanation of the General Fund is the only one that underperformed at the midpoint of the fiscal year. Ms. Barwick responded that the General Fund is primarily revenues and the time that people pay their taxes creates that reverse. They are the only ones at this time of year that may have more expenses than revenue but will have enough cash in the other funds to carry it through until the taxes come in.

Councilmember Solomon asked if it was the end of this month that the property tax list would be published. Ms. Bell stated that was correct.

### CITY MANAGER'S REPORT

#### **Police Department Update – K9 Update and Illegal Firearm Seizure----- Jenee Spencer**

1. Major Keith Goyette, Kinston Police Department discussed what has been done for the last two years in the K9 division. Major Goyette stated we currently have four police K9 teams that consist of the police dog and a handler. We have a canine instructor within our agency which saves \$10,000-\$15,000 per year for having the instructor. We currently use Belgian Malinois/German Shepherd mix dogs. All of our dogs hail from Europe and have passports. Each of our K9 handlers and dogs completes a 240-hour basic training block, receives 16 training hours per month as well, and is certified annually with 40 hours of training in Greenville. They are trained in controlled substance detection, building searches, man tracking, handler protection, and suspect apprehension. In 2021 our K9 teams performed 47 tracks and located 19 individuals, which is about a 41% success rate. Of our four K9s, two are over 8 years old and stated that they would be retired out and replaced by new dogs. Major Goyette shared some success stories regarding a runaway juvenile (located in 5-10 minutes); officers were engaged in a foot chase, the K9 officer was called to the location of the start of the foot chase, and during the track, the K9 team located a loaded semi-automatic firearm in a yard; and lastly during a vehicle stop as the officer approached the driver side of the vehicle, the driver sped off, he was pursued and the K9 officer returned to the start of the chase to find another firearm that had been stolen.

Councilmember Aiken inquired about the bomb threats at the school and if the dogs were trained for detecting bombs. Major Goyette stated they were not and shared that we would have to get an additional dog for that (usually Labradors). Mr. Aiken asked who we called in those cases. Major Goyette stated that the Police Department coordinates with the Fire Department and depending on whether it is a credible threat Cherry Point or Camp Lejeune is contacted for assistance.

2. Major Goyette reviewed some of the illegal firearm seizures that have been made over the last three years. In 2020 the officers seized 145 firearms, in 2021 187 were seized, and for 2022 to date, we have seized 37 firearms, including 2 today. The goal is to reduce crime in the city and produce a safe atmosphere for the citizens. One way of deterring crime is seizing illegal firearms. Major Goyette responded to Mr. Aiken's question of where the guns were being stolen from by saying that most were stolen from unlocked vehicles. He encouraged owners

Councilmember Suggs asked about the major traffic operation conducted in February. He asked if it was a part of the illegal firearm seizure program. Major Goyette said that was utilizing the local, state, and federal resources to get illegal guns off the streets.

Councilmember Solomon shared for the sake of clarity that during that operation, unfortunately, a citizen was hit. The circulated video showed that officers were laughing and raised a lot of concern to the citizens. After looking into the incident, it was found that it was not one of our officers.

Mayor Pro Tem Hardy asked for an update on the event that occurred today. Major Goyette shared that around 5:53 pm our officers heard gunshots coming from the direction just behind the Police Department (Carver Courts), they called it in and responded. One there, a subject was seen shot in a vehicle. EMS was contacted and gave the victim assistance needed. Thirteen shell casings were located at the scene and the case is currently under investigation. Mayor Pro Tem Hardy stated we never know what is going through an individual's mind or the action they may take and noted that our police officers are on the job.

Mayor Pro Tem Hardy announced that Mayor Hardy is in Washington, DC advocating for the City of Kinston.

3. Keegan Huynh, Human Resources Intern stated he has taken over the monitoring of the COVID-19 vaccination and testing efforts, as well as working to complete the hiring process for the Vaccine Program Administrator position. The position is fully funded by the COVID-19 Community Development Block Grant that we were awarded. The purpose is to have an individual whose work scope is completely devoted to strategizing how we can increase vaccination and testing rates here in the community. Mr. Huynh discussed the qualifications of the position and shared that there were several applications. Chasity Pate stood out as the most qualified and was selected to fill the position. Ms. Pate will start next week and make sure we get our vaccination rates up. Mr. Huynh shared that the State would switch our providers from Star Med to Radius Labs. Radius Labs has been working with the hospital on their testing efforts and this should be a seamless transition. Star Med's last day will be March 31st and on April 1st Radius will start. Over the past month, our vaccination and testing numbers have sharply declined. In January there was an average of 571 tests and 12 vaccines being administered every week, in February it fell to 107 tests and 14 vaccines per week, and last week there were 38 tests and 8 vaccines. Starting with Radius on the 1st

we will start having a single vaccination location per day and will work on more evening vaccination drives, potentially at-home visits, and weekend events. Councilmember Solomon stated she spoke with Pam Brown, Director of the Lenoir County Health Department who expressed how appreciative she was of the work the City was doing to help with the vaccinations. Mr. Huynh said that they would be coordinating with the County.

Councilmember Suggs thanked Mr. Huynh for his leadership and for stepping in to fill the void in terms of our vaccination and testing events. He shared that he was excited about Chasity stating and that she has done a lot of great work here in the last few years. She has worked with Kinston Teens and the Fresh Food Interest Group.

Mayor Pro Tem thanked Mr. Suggs and the Kinston Teens program for their work in passing out testing kits in the area.

#### CITY ATTORNEY'S REPORT

James Cauley, City Attorney shared that the recruitment search consultant prepared the draft brochure. He was asked to share the draft, which was done this afternoon. He stated he did get some comments back and asked the Council to look at the brochure and let him know of any concerns. He will collect the comments, submit them back to the consultant so that any revisions needed can be made to the brochure. She is ready to get the brochure circulated and start the process.

#### MAYOR AND COUNCILMEMBER REPORTS

Councilmember Solomon addressed the City Manager and the City Attorney to see if it was possible to look at creating a policy on the use of the City Seal. We do not want other agencies or individuals who may be doing something within the city to use the seal and it is interpreted that it is a City function. We want to avoid any gray areas of assuming liability and in consideration of branding. Mr. Cauley shared that he could get that done fairly easily.

Councilmember Suggs spoke regarding the Public Information Officer position and felt that having a single person who can be consistent in our branding, our messaging, and our communications for the City. This will fill a void in how we market and present our city to ensure that we have consistent and good public information sent out. Mr. Suggs apologized to those tuning in at home regarding the inconsistencies in our Facebook Live stream. Ms. Barwick shared that Mr. Thomas felt that it was in the signal and not the building.

Mayor Pro Tem Hardy thanked the Dawsons for the presentation, Marcia for her presentation, and the staff for continuing to do a great job. He asked everyone to pray for the Swinson family.

**ADJOURNMENT**

**Councilmember Solomon made the motion, seconded by Councilmember Aiken and upon a unanimous vote of [4-0], the Kinston City Council Meeting was adjourned at 8:17 pm.**

Respectfully submitted,

Debra Thompson, City Clerk