Lenoir Planning Retreat Agenda
<u>February 23, 2021, 8:30 a.m.-11:30 a.m.</u>
Virtual Meeting Via Zoom

Call to Order and Opening Comments - Mayor Joe Gibbons/Anthony Starr [8:30am]

Mission Statement & Vision Review - Anthony Starr [8:35am]

State of the City "Hindsight 2020" Presentation [9:00am] - Scott Hildebran

Break [9:50am]

Update from the NC League of Municipalities - Paul Meyer, Executive Director [10:00am]

Review of 2020-21 Strategic Priorities - Scott Hildebran [10:30am]

Wrap Up: Questions/Comments - Anthony Starr [11:15am]

Adjournment [11:30am]

<u>February 25, 2021, 2:00 p.m.-5:00 p.m.</u>
Virtual Meeting Via Zoom

Customer Service Team Update - Hannah Williams/Maria Swanson [2:00pm]

Presentations [2:30pm]

A. Caldwell County Revaluation Update - Monty R. Woods, Tax Administrator [30 minutes]
B. Comprehensive Plan Update/Foreclosures Program Update - Jenny Wheelock [35 minutes]

Break [3:35pm]

Facilitated Discussion - Priorities [3:45pm]

A. What current issues/projects should be continued as priorities for 2021-22 and what new issues/projects should be included for future consideration?
B. Which of these issues are the most important for the City invest effort and resources during 2021-22?
C. Ranking Exercise

Wrap Up: Questions/Comments - Anthony Starr [4:45pm]

Adjournment [5:00pm]

<u>Budget Planning Retreat – March 23, 2021. 8:30 a.m.</u>

Enclosures

- City of Lenoir Mission/Vision Statement
- State of City Hindsight 2020 Slide Show **(to be forwarded)**
- 2020-21 Strategic Priorities
- 2021 Customer Service Team Update
- Customer Service Keys
- 2020 Department Updates/2021 Department Focus Areas
    - Communications
    - Finance/Administration
    - Fire Department
    - Main Street
    - Parks & Recreation
    - Planning & Community Development
    - Police Department
    - Public Utilities
    - Public Works

CITY OF LENOIR MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the City of Lenoir is:

- to serve our citizens and the community by providing a clean, safe, healthy, and attractive living and business environment, through the efficient delivery of essential city services in a fiscally responsible manner.
- to identify, plan, and act on opportunities for preserving and improving the quality of life of all of our citizens and co-workers.

VISION FOR THE CITY OF LENOIR

We aspire to be the city of choice in western North Carolina for current and future generations—beautiful, clean and safe.

We will achieve our vision through:

- *a healthy economy*
- *strong businesses*
- *vital neighborhoods*
- *a vibrant downtown*
- *extensive recreational and cultural opportunities*

We will preserve Lenoir's friendly, small town atmosphere and celebrate the diversity of our people.

We require a city government that is:

- *accessible and engaged with the public*
- *accountable*
- *efficient and responsive*
- *an employer of choice*
- *forward thinking*
- *honest and ethical*
- *inclusive, innovative, collaborative*
- *transparent*
- *fiscally responsible*

with funding that is fair, affordable, and stable.

Service Beyond Measure
The Golden Rule

2020 Council Budget Priorities

1. **Employee Recruitment/Retention:**
   - Continue efforts to offer competitive compensation and benefits for employees
   - Increase Employee Engagement
   - Incentivize/Reward Efficiencies
2. **Housing:**
   - Continue Minimum Housing & Code Enforcement (acquire tracking software)
   - Pursue Market Rate Housing
   - Market City-owned Properties to Sell
   - Encourage Downtown Living
   - Continue to promote shovel-ready areas such as Hibriten Mountain, Stonecroft, Huntington Woods, Summerhill, Park Ridge, Parkview, Heritage Hills (Woodbine/Williamsburg) & Georgetown Estates
   - Work with WPCOG Vacant & Substandard Housing Task Force
3. **Community Beautification:**
   - Develop & Implement Branding/Wayfinding Signage
   - Support Code Enforcement (including Strategic Foreclosures)
   - Work on Commercial Blight (city-wide & downtown)
   - Address Major Visibility Issues (city entry corridors)
   - Develop West End Area Neighborhood Plan
   - Implement North Main Area Plan & Fairfield South Plan
4. **Healthy Infrastructure:**
   - Technology/Cybersecurity/Digital Services
   - Street Paving
   - Sidewalks/Greenway/OVT
   - City Facilities/Fleet
   - Water/Sewer Improvements
   - Stormwater Improvements
   - Downtown 2-Way Traffic Implementation
   - Bike/Ped Plan
5. **Economic Development:**
   - Encourage Public/Private Partnerships
   - Continue Work with Caldwell EDC
6. **Public Engagement:**
   - State of the City Presentations – Lenoir 2020
   - Market Quality of Life Amenities
   - Neighborhood Meetings
   - Walk-through’s

Customer Service Team 2020 Report

The Customer Service Team continued to boost employee morale and equip City staff to provide "Service Beyond Measure."

Due to the Covid Pandemic and associated challenges, CST programs were paused between April and October 2020. Despite the challenges brought on with the pandemic, we are happy to report the following:

The mission of the City of Lenoir Customer Service Team is to encourage and equip all city employees to work together to exceed the expectations of our residents, businesses, and visitors, and to motivate our coworkers through support and recognition of a job well done. – Adopted December 2018

MEETINGS

- CST resumed regular monthly meeting in October to discuss ways to improve customer service.
- Maria Swanson was voted in as the new co-chair of the Customer Service Team. We thank outgoing co-chair, Zack Carter, for his years of service and leadership.

TRAINING

- CST held new employee Customer Service Training in January, March and December.
- Beginning in late 2020, Customer Service Representatives led trainings via Zoom for new employees. During training, CST reviews the customer service keys, sets expectations for new employees, and gives an overview of city departments and services.

RESOURCES

- Team Talk – with the help CST, Joshua Harris published 12 Team Talk employee newsletters.
  Team Talk is an opportunity for employees to share good news with one another. The newsletter includes upcoming birthdays, announcements, promotions, employee profiles, and more.
- Contact Cards – Joshua Harris assisted the CST with developing new City of Lenoir Contact Cards.
  These cards have phone numbers for various city resources to inform Lenoir residents exactly where to call when issues arise.

EMPLOYEE APPRECIATION

- Christmas Raffle – For a socially distanced Employee Appreciation initiative, CST hosted a Merry Christmas Raffle in December. Employee' s names were placed in a drawing for various items, which included gift cards, a blue tooth speaker, ear buds, a Yeti cooler, a day off with pay, and much more.
- City of Lenoir Branded T-shirts – In coordination with the Downtown Department, CST began planning to provide a t-shirt with the new city logo to each city employee.

GOLDEN TICKETS

- City employees gave out 16 Golden Ticket nominations to their coworkers. Golden Tickets are given to employees who go above and beyond to provide service beyond measure. The CST team voted on the annual winner and the winner will be announced in March.

2021

- 2021 is already off to a great start for the CST. We completed one New Hire Orientation in January and have the t-shirt ordering underway.
- CST plans to carry on these activities throughout the year:
  - Golden Tickets
  - Bi-Monthly New Hire Customer Service Training
  - Customer Service Resources for Current Employees
- When COVID restrictions allow, the CST will resume these activities:
  - Take a Break on Us
  - Employee Appreciation Night
  - Information Tent at City Festivals

Lenoir's Customer Service Keys

Key #1 Personable
- **Be approachable and make a positive first impression**
- **Demonstrate caring and patience**
- **Be friendly and outgoing**
- **Provide polite and helpful service**

Key #2 Pro-Active
- **Anticipate customer needs**
- **Make customers feel important**
- **Go above and beyond – exceed expectations**

Key #3 Effective Communication
- **Demonstrate positive body language**
- **Be a good listener**
- **Keep people updated and informed**

Key #4 Professionalism
- **Know your job**
- **Create and maintain a customer friendly atmosphere**
- **Pay attention to detail**
- **Be knowledgeable about city services**
- **Take time and show interest in our customers**
- **Treat others as you would like to be treated**

Key #5 Timely and Efficient
- **Be consistent**
- **Fulfill commitments in a timely manner**
- **Respond to phone calls and emails promptly**

Key #6 Teamwork
- **Develop and know your community partnerships**
- **Provide seamless service between departments**
- **Deliver good value**

Key #7 Equitable Service
- **Treat everyone with respect**
- **Apply policy evenly and fairly**
- **Be sensitive to the situation**

Key #8 Successful Service Recovery
- **Listen effectively**
- **Show empathy and concern**
- **Take responsibility**
- **Try to resolve customer concerns**
- **Follow up promptly**

Communication & Public Information Report 2021

Joshua Harris, Communication & Public Information Director, Feb. 1, 2020

Last year was another good year for City communications. We added more pages and forms to the website. We sent out more new content about the City, and we grew our followers and impact.

Accomplishments in 2020

CONTENT: Although 2020 was a different than normal, we created plenty of content:

- 58 news releases
- 415 photos
- 38 videos that received 54,600 views (a decrease from 2019)
- 15 Radio Public Service Announcements
- 432 alerts including Notify Me and CodeRED (47% increase in alerts)
- 39 messages on the electronic sign at the LFD Station 1
- 12 employee newsletters

WEBSITE: I created a few new pages on the website including the Coronavirus Action Plan, 8CANTWAIT, Bill Payment Help, and Bill Payment Plan pages. City website had 387,583 pageviews in 2020 averaging right at 32,300 a month. The top pages for the year excluding the home page were:

2.	/461/Payment-Options	48,952	(12.63%)
3.	/547/COVID-19-Coronavirus	16,152	(4.17%)
4.	/Jobs.aspx	15,527	(4.01%)
5.	/198/Water-Sewer-Service	15,350	(3.96%)
6.	/213/Garbage-Collection	11,345	(2.93%)
7.	/163/Police	7,281	(1.88%)
8.	/408/Lenoir-Aquatic-Fitness-Center	4,895	(1.26%)
9.	/101/Services	4,735	(1.22%)
10.	/201/Parks-Recreation	4,541	(1.17%)

ONLINE FORMS: In addition to new pages, we created several new sanitation service forms on the website. These are forms that residents can complete to request things like a garbage pickup or an extra garbage cart. The requests go to sanitation staff and me. Residents and businesses submitted a total of 958 sanitation requests via the City website in 2020.

- Additional Garbage Cart Request Form (276)
- Bulk Garbage Collection Request (390)
- Report a Garbage Cart Issue (65)
- Report a Missed Garbage Pickup (224)
- White Goods Collection Request (3)

FAQS: We added a lot of FAQs (frequently asked questions) to the website last year. Staff wrote new FAQs and answers for emergencies and severe weather (4), Fire (19), Garbage and yard waste (13), garbage carts (13), Parks and Recreation (5), and Public Utilities (5). That added 59 more FAQs to the website which already had 17 Planning and zoning FAQs and 13 Police FAQs. Check them out at https://www.cityoflenoir.com/faq.aspx.

RECRUITMENT: We posted 13 full-time and two part-time jobs to the City website in 2020. Thanks to website alerts and sharing on social media, those City job postings received more than 20,500 views on the City website.

CITYLINK & TEAM TALK: Managed the CITYLINK employee intranet. CITYLINK contains content the Employee Handbook, Forms, Golden Ticket information and form, Insurance & Benefits information, Personnel Resolution & Policies, Team Talk, How To videos, and an IT Portal - more than 60 pages of content. I converted Team Talk to a digital newsletter last year in preparation for moving CITYLINK to the www.cityoflenoir.com domain. Once moved, CITYLINK will be accessible from anyone with an employee login.

TOP STORIES: As you can imagine, most of the top stories in 2020 were related to COVID-19, but the switch to automated garbage collection did get a lot of attention.

- Sheriff And Police Chiefs Issue Joint Statement Regarding Stay At Home Order
- City Facilities Remaining Closed Through Safer At Home Phase 2, July 4th Canceled
- City Declares State Of Emergency
- City Moving To Automated Garbage Collection
- City Rolling Out New Garbage Carts
- Barlow Retires, Several Firefighters Being Promoted This Month
- City Of Lenoir Coronavirus Action Plan

Goals for 2021

- Work with Department heads to add more forms to City website, increase the ability of customers to complete tasks online
- Move CITYLINK to www.cityoflenoir.com, make the site more accessible

- Build staff directory on new CITYLINK site
- Increase electronic streaming to reach citizens

City of Lenoir and Downtown Lenoir Online:

- CityofLenoir.com
- DowntownLenoirNC.com
- P2C Police 2 Citizen
- City of Lenoir, NC Government
- Downtown Lenoir
- City of Lenoir Fire Department
- Lenoir Parks & Recreation
- Lenoir Police Department
- City of Lenoir, NC
- Downtown Lenoir, NC
- cityoflenoirnc
- downtownlenoir
- City of Lenoir, NC Government
- City of Lenoir

CITY OF LENOIR FINANCE DEPARTMENT
801 West Avenue
Lenoir, NC 28645

Donna Bean
Finance Director
828-757-2180

Below is a list of goals and objectives the Finance Department was able to accomplish in 2020:

- During 2020, the Collections Department processed over 101,000 transactions totaling over $30,659,000. The number of transactions was down 12% compared to the prior year while the amount collected was up 24%. The largest percentage of the transactions was water and tax payments. The majority of the transactions were in the form of checks (93%) with cash making up 1% and credit cards being 6%. The cash and credit card transaction were down while the amount of checks was up 5%. We feel this was due to City Hall being closed during the pandemic.
- The Maintenance Department completed the renovations to the first floor of City Hall, which houses Collections. The changes allows the staff to work in a safer and more inviting environment. Barriers were installed at the Collection's counter and serve as protection from the COVID-19 virus as well as making the collections clerks safer in the event of a security breach. The first floor now meets ADA compliance criteria and provides visitors with an inviting space that includes a view of the historic vault at the rear of City Hall.

First Floor Renovation

Lobby Before

Lobby After

- The Revenue Collector has been working with Metersys, Fortiline, and Mueller vendors to coordinate the reading and billing schedules across four different platforms. This work has included assisting with coordinating route information and changing out schedules with Metersys and Fortiline. She attends weekly meetings to work to optimizing the new billing processes and to prepare the program for rollout to the city's customers. During the past year, the team has been troubleshooting incorrect data in Mi.net, WaterSmart, and Harris to make sure the data in all systems is as up-to-date as possible. The Revenue Collector has worked hard answering questions and assisting customer service/collections staff with the new software and processes. She has also been working with meter reading staff on four different reading processes and verifying results to ensure bills continue to be accurate and on schedule. Once in place, the new system should provide customers with a robust platform for bill management.
- The Collections Department worked to implement the new sanitation fee schedule. Staff developed billing processes and made the necessary additions in the financial system. This was a time consuming endeavor as there were many variables and many customer questions and concerns. The call volume in Collections was double and sometimes even triple the average volume for several weeks after implementation.
- During 2020, the Risk Manager/Purchasing Agent and the HR Director played a major role in the City's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Risk Manager/Purchasing Agent worked to develop and implement the safety plan, made centralized purchases for personal protective equipment, temperature scanners, and other sanitizing equipment, and oversaw the installation of protective barriers at the various facilities. The HR Director worked with

the departments to document all COVID-19 related time lost and properly account for it based on the federal guidelines. She also tracked employee testing status, # of positives, and worked with departments when determining when employees could safely return to work.

- The City of Lenoir received $365,713.17 in CARES Act funding to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. The majority of the CARES Act funding was spent on items to protect employees, promote social distancing, and make it possible for employees to work remotely whenever possible. The City spent a 56% of the funding to promoting social distancing, purchase PPE, and sanitizing supplies. The major purchases were:
    - PPE (masks, disposable suits, cleaning supplies, etc.) were purchased to protect employees and citizens and help slow the spread of the virus
    - Greenway improvements were made to provide the public opportunities to participate in socially distant outdoor activities
    - Additional crowd control barriers were purchased to improve safety for citizens and employees at City sponsored events. These barriers are now being used at the mobile field hospital.
    - Tables for the downtown area were purchased for local restaurants to utilize for outdoor dining
    - IT upgrades were made to allow for more opportunities for remote work
    - Temperature Scanners and touchless door locks and water coolers were purchased to help with reducing the spread of the virus
    - Splashtop, a remote assistance and inventory tool was purchased and allows IT to respond to multiple issues remotely and reduce COVID-19 transmission
    - Sanitizing machines were built to sanitize workspaces and equipment
- The City spent 44% of the total funding to cover salaries directly related to COVID-19.
    - 41% of that salary funding was allocated to cover salaries and benefits expenses directly related to COVID-19 Emergency FMLA absences
    - The remaining 59% of the salary funding was used to cover the following salary categories:
        - Staffing at the Command Center for Caldwell County
        - The City's Risk Manager/Purchasing Agent who was responsible for implementing the City's COVID plan
        - Police Officers who monitored the impact of COVID on the Police Department
- Upgrading infrastructure has been a focus for IT for the past few years. During June of 2020, IT staff completed the conversion of the server infrastructure from the vendor VMware to Hyper-V, which resulted in a savings of approximately $25,000 a year in licensing costs. Previous planning and preparations paid off during July of 2020, when lightning destroyed one of the core switches at Public Works. Due to a decision to keep spare equipment in inventory rather than being reactive, the event resulted in only an hour and a half of down-time because we had replacement equipment on hand rather than waiting for a server to be ordered and delivered which would have resulted in at least 24 hours of down time.
- The SR IT Specialist was replaced during 2020. We were able to make a smooth transition and able to continue making improvements throughout the year.
- The IT Department continued installing security cameras throughout the city. The installation of the cameras has increased security for our facilities and the public as well as proving beneficial in identifying and resolving various problems. IT staff worked in the fall to install camera coverage at the Lenoir Community Gardens. There were some logistical issues with the installation but after some research, IT was able to provide a solution that allowed

the cameras to be installed and have been operational since. The solution identified may be used as a critical infrastructure backup for the city in future projects.

- The need to evaluate IT security is a constant and the IT Director continually looks for new ways to improve our systems. Almost every day, the City gets three to ten serious virus threats and an average of 500+ phishing attempts. 2020 ushered in new Cyber threats for all municipal governments, fortunately, due to measures already in place; the City was able to remain secure. To combat external security threats, multi-factor authentication was enabled on several accounts. The new Sr. IT Specialist has an extensive Cybersecurity background and he will be able to review our systems and will be a major asset in the result of a serious breach. Having him on staff allows the City to avoid costs for contracting services for a security consultant.
- After many issues with managing multiple domains and the confusion associated with the cityoflenoir.com, ci.lenoir.nc.us, lenoir-nc.gov, and other domains, the decision to move forward with lenoirnc.gov as a permanent consolidated domain was made. The goal is to continue the transition over the next year or so. Current and existing domains will be forwarded and eventually reduce costs once the transition is complete.
- Due to fiber connectivity disruption concerns, the Wireless Point to Multipoint infrastructure (WISP) was configured and incorporated into the recently installed SkyBest connection. This will provide for redundancy in the event of a wide spread internet outage, which will allow the city to continue communicating internally. This proactive approach allows the City to avoid very costly emergency fiber repairs.

Below is a list of projects, concerns, and impacts the Finance Department plans to focus on in the calendar year:

- Finance plans to continue to evaluate and streamline processes in each area of the department. The emphasis this year will be on working to utilize technology as much as possible in response to the new work environment brought about by the pandemic. The goal is to create a robust solution to provide the ability to work remotely throughout the City whenever possible.
- Ubiquiti Inc., the manufacture of some of the City's video storage equipment, announced the end of life for the Unifi Video series of products. Our Ubiquiti units are out of warranty and plans are being finalized to upgrade the networking infrastructure to replace the equipment being used. This transition will provide an estimated savings of $10,000 annually (with a total upfront cost of less than $4,000).
- IT plans to continue evaluate the City's hardware and infrastructure needs and continue to look for ways to improve the data infrastructure and identify ways to be as cost efficient as possible. Off-site storage remains a high priority as well. The final stages of changing service providers from Conterra to SkyBest are underway, the change required digging and installation fees, but this connection will save approximately $400 a month in internet costs once complete. The move has taken months to negotiate and get installed. Once the move is complete, IT will work to design and build a new network infrastructure using the SkyBest

connection with the goal to maintain/improve internet speed and reliability. To improve inventory tracking and planning for future needs, IT staff will utilize Hardware Cycle tracing to assist with determining what equipment needs to be replaced before loss of productivity occurs.

- In response to the increased cyber threats, the IT department plans to continue to explore ways to utilize multifaceted identification techniques to help with risk reduction. The biggest cyber threat is with the end user. To promote awareness and avoid viruses due to users clicking on infected links or attachments, the IT Department is developing/identifying user security training. IT will do some simulated disaster recoveries to provide proof that multiple backups of city data can be recovered in a worst case scenario. The focus is continuing to take a proactive rather than a reactive approach to cyber security and threats.
- The financial software used by the City of Lenoir needs to be upgraded. Due to the implementation of the new electronic meter reading system, plans for the upgrade have been postponed until after the new meter system is in place. The target upgrade date is now spring of 2022.
- Finance plans to work with other departments to identify process improvements in the areas of billing, collections, and work flow.
- Salaries have been ranked as a priority for several years by Council and the City Manager and again, compensation remains a priority. The 3% COLAs the past two years have made some progress toward closing the pay gap however; there is still work to be done when compared to other municipalities in the region. Feedback from department heads continues to indicate that employees feel positive about the recent attention this item has received from Mr. Hildebran and City Council. Specifically, the bonuses given over the past five years and the COLA percentage appear to have improved morale. Paying competitive salaries is critical to recruiting and retaining quality employees. New hires seem to be more concerned with immediate return rather than the value of benefits. This is especially true for the millennial generation. City staff is continuing to review the City's current pay plan and hiring practices, with the goal of identifying opportunities to "rearrange" the starting pay and probationary raises to become more competitive while staying within the framework of the current pay plan.
- Revising and implementing the ADA Transition Plan will continue to be a major task in the coming year. Had the COVID-19 pandemic not impacted the work environment, more progress could have been made. Work continues but there is still much to be done. We are in the process of inventorying the sidewalks and facilities to determine the costs associated with implementation.
- Balancing the ever increasing capital needs with fund availability is always a challenge. Short term and long range planning processes are being evaluated in the coming year to determine where improvements can be made. Public Works is conducting a facilities inventory to catalog assets and help identify capital needs. The IWORQs software is being utilized for planning fleet and equipment replacements. These tools provide the ability to take a holistic approach to capital planning, help to manage assets and prioritize improvements and replacements.

Lenoir Fire Department

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Lenoir, North Carolina 28645

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Kenneth W. Hair
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Deputy Fire Chief
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Below is a list of goals and objectives Lenoir Fire Department was able to accomplish in the physical year 2020:

- We were able to move our VHF antenna from the County's building to the State's VIPER building site. We were approached by the County's Communication Director to let us know that by August of 2020 we would have to find an alternative site to house our VHF equipment as they would be dropping the contract with the building owner our VHF equipment was in. At the time the only equipment in the building they were leasing was ours and the school bus garage. With the help of the Communications Director and Chief Powell, we were able to move all of our equipment to the VIPER building which allowed our equipment to be in a climate controlled building to hopefully prolong the life of our equipment. **NOTE**: the only cost we had to provide was for an electrical study to ensure there was room in the building for our equipment, a new antenna and coax, and installation of the new antenna. The cost for all this was around $3,500.00. Also, we were guaranteed a 30+ year lease of our spot for the cost of $1.00.

- We replaced an HVAC system at Fire Station #1. This unit had been giving us trouble for years and fortunately we had personnel on staff that were able to keep it running until it finally shut down completely. With the help of the City's Building Maintenance Department, Gragg's Heating and Air replaced the unit with a new one which got us back up and going and should provide more efficiency. The new unit, installation, and removal of the old unit costed $5,975.00 and based upon recent bids for the LAFC went with Mike Gragg due to his consistently providing cheaper bids than other companies.

- We were able to continue our smoke alarm campaign. We installed smoke alarms for citizens that could not provide their own to improve their chances of surviving a fire in their residence. The State currently provides the smoke alarms at no cost for distribution but the alarms are becoming scarce. With COVID, this year's program was a little different. We could not physically install the alarms after March but we still distributed them to the residences with instructions of how and where to install. The State will require us to check on these installs once the pandemic is over. In the future, to continue this service, it may be necessary to locate alternate funding.

- We successfully replaced our retiring Fire Marshal. With the retiring of Chief Barlow after serving 30 years with the City, we had the ability to replace his position and promote from within to fill this vacancy. Fortunately, Captain Chris Jacobs, at 19 year veteran with our department, met the qualifications and accepted the promotion to Assistant Chief/Fire Marshal. With this promotion, we changed the title from Assistant Chief/Fire Prevention to Assistant Chief/Fire Marshal as we expanded the role of this position. Previously this position was for Code Enforcement and Fire Prevention but the City Manager allowed me to add the roles of Fire Investigation and Emergency Management. These new roles were needed by our department and will further enhance our service delivery to our citizens and businesses. Chief Jacobs has extensive knowledge in the fields of Fire Investigations (is one of our lead Investigators) and Emergency Management. Upon taking the position he was a Probationary Fire Inspector I and recently obtained his Fire Inspector I license and is currently taking classes to acquire Fire Inspector Level II.

- We were able to replace all of our building's T-8 lights with new LED bulbs and fixtures. Building Maintenance advised us that Duke Energy had rebates if we replaced our existing lights with LED and it was lucrative enough to move ahead with this project to replace all of Station 1 and Station 2 lights. Building Maintenance replaced all of our Engine Bay lights and main floor lights at both stations and Lt. Greer and the shifts replaced all the remainder of lights. We have seen that with the LED lights, they are much brighter than what we previously had so we were able to actually install fewer fixtures and still produce more light. This replacement should greatly reduce our energy bills monthly and we have already seen a return on this investment. **NOTE**: the rebate package from Duke Energy allowed us to replace all of the Engine Bay lights at no cost and the other fixtures for the building were approximately $10.00 each. When both stations were completed with the replacement of fixtures it costed $3,079.45 in total. These being LED lights, they should last for a long time and each year the City will continue to see a large net gain for this investment.

- We took advantage of having the opportunity to be involved with some Community Outreach by taking part in the Communities in Schools (CIS) mentoring program. Five of our staff took part in mentoring middle and high school children by doing visits with them weekly at their respective schools. When the pandemic was upon us, CIS made it available for the mentors to still be a part of the youth's lives by setting up virtual meetings with them via Zoom and that is still continuing through the new school year. They each have helped the children with schoolwork, issues, or questions in general. NOTE: Reports from the staff members who are participating have stated they have enjoyed the mentoring program and although they are helping develop the youth they have found the participation to be a help to them in their lives.

- Our staff took it upon themselves to beautify the property at the stations and perform some major clean ups. At Station 1, the staff wanted to improve the look of the back entrance to that facility and clean up the overgrowth that was happening at West Ave. and H. Lewis Price Blvd. They cut all the brush and shrubs out that were looking bad and trimmed the trees. They also cleaned up around the public parking area. Also, our staff asked if they could take over the care taking of the grass around the parking lot as well that had previously been served by Public Works to try and help them out. At Station 2, the staff cleaned every sidewalk around the property. The sidewalks had become very dirty and turned black due to weather and age. They cleaned them and made them all look extremely better. Station 3 staff cleaned and trimmed the trees on the bank beside Wilkesboro Blvd. to aide with being able to see to get on the boulevard. They cut all the trees on the road right of way and trimmed all around the fence line and building as well. All three station's staffs have improved the look around the stations and have taken great pride in their jobs which is wonderful to see as a department head. NOTE: in most instances, the staff brought in their own equipment and tools to perform these clean ups and they performed while on their downtime from mandatory work and training.

- Response and Operations due to the Coronavirus Pandemic. Through the pandemic, our department has had to alter operations and provide other functions to ensure we are providing the safest atmosphere as possible for the public and most certainly our staff. During the originating height of the pandemic for our City/County, our Battalion Chiefs and Deputy Chief helped staff the Emergency Operations Center to ensure the City of Lenoir maintained a voice in the operations. They rotated shifts between the four of them and helped out in any way they could for the betterment of our citizens and colleagues. Through the direction of Dr. McClinton, she stopped our staff, and other county first responders, from responding to certain medical calls so we could try and prevent our firefighters from contracting the virus. We have since phased in some additional medical call responses and increased our call volume. This year's response numbers will show a major decrease but that was due to Medical Officials trying to protect us. We had to acquire personal protective equipment that we had never had to utilize before and were able to successfully stay ahead of the shortages of supplies so we never really seen a negative impact on needed supplies. This was due to our department leadership's ability to strategically think and stay prepared for what might come in the future. We started back phasing in other medical calls in September. We were utilized as the "pilot program" for other county departments so we may gather information on needed responses and the amount of protection equipment we would foresee needing. With our help the county was able to supply all county fire departments with enough protective equipment that should well last a year for medical responses. We were also fortunate to receive donations from local businesses and funding through the CARES Act to help secure more supplies and needed items to ensure our staff and facilities will provide the utmost protection available now and in the future. Such items include hand sanitizing stations, temperature reading stations, touchless water fountains and other technological devices for safety. The county provided us with an automatic CPR machine to place on our ambulance as well. Our staff would like to thank Donna and David for seeing this through for all of our protection. At the time of this report, our department faired relatively well. We have had 10 people thus far test positive for COVID and only two required advanced medical care. Currently, all of our staff who were positive are back to working their normal duties. Our staff installed the water fountains at our facilities to take the load of building maintenance personnel allowing them to help those who needed it. We also had staff that had the ingenuity to build disinfectant sprayers which saved the City a large amount of money. So thank you to our staff for stepping up.

Below is a list of concerns and impacts Lenoir Fire Department may incur in the physical year 2021: Note: this list is virtually the same as last year's identified concerns due to the unknown impact the pandemic was going to cause the City and we financially could not move forward with these projects but are still very much our concerns for now and in the future.

- In 2021 there will be a continuing focus on the COVID-19 pandemic. This virus is still having major impacts on our department and operations. We had several staff have tested positive for the virus and on one occasion had five on one shift out at a time which affected our operational staffing for a period of time. We have purchased protective equipment for our staff to maximize the opportunity for their safety and this will continue in 2021. Our department was fortunate to receive donations and funding from local businesses, the County's Emergency Operations Center and CARES Act to get ahead of the supply needs. As we have been utilizing protective equipment for our responses, it will be necessary to have future purchases in 2021 to continue to provide for these needs. We have already began to respond to more medical calls due to the phasing back in of some Dr. McClinton had asked us not to respond to. With this phase in, our medical call response volume has already experienced a dramatic increase. In the second quarter of 2020, and the pandemic was just beginning, we responded to 29 medical calls, and during the third quarter we responded to 69, and during the fourth quarter, which is when we phased in more medical responses, we responded to 225 medical calls. So from the second quarter to the fourth we had an increase of 750% and from the third quarter to the fourth we had a 325% increase in medical responses. These numbers should continue to increase in 2021 as we are phasing in more medical calls so we will utilize more supplies and equipment for the protection of our staff. There is anticipation of a peak date for COVID positives around the middle of February to the Middle of March but as we have seen, this date could be pushed further back this year.

- Employee recruitment and retention is a major concern for our organization. The Fire Department, loss of 32 people or 55% of our department over a five year span and only three of those were due to retirement. Some of the 29 that have left were replacements for others who resigned during that same period. Currently, the department has 16 personnel or 28% of our employees that have been with the department less than three years, which has resulted in issues with inexperience. In the fire service, experience is very important. Our department takes great pride in working diligently to train our employees to our high standards and this makes them valuable for our citizens. Unfortunately, other departments know how prepared City of Lenoir people are and that makes them valuable in the job market. Our employees leave us because many other departments are able to offer them a higher wage and this seems to be our major retention problem. Recruitment is also an issue for our department. Over the last few years, we have only been at full staff a few short periods due to the low number of qualified applications for the positions of firefighter/EMTs. **NOTE:** The City has been diligent in efforts to reverse the recruitment and retention trends that we are seeing but it doesn't seem to be effective for whatever reason. I feel that the City will have to come up with something to offer employees and potential employees that no one else has offered to retain current employees and recruit new employees. I feel that the City of Lenoir offers a better benefit package than any other municipality but that does not seem to be enough in today's job market. At our department, we have produced numerous non-financial efforts to aide in the retention of our employees but these efforts have not been able to reverse the trends we are witnessing in employee retention.

- Firefighting Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Turnout Gear - We are extremely behind in upgrading our turnout gear for the firefighters. We typically try to purchase at least five coat and pants sets a year and due to other financial priorities have had to push this back for the last few years. The NFPA states that turnout gear now has a 10 year shelf life and then must be disposed of after that time. Even though we think this is unreasonable, we do not have a choice but to try and work within the confines of the recommendations. With other priorities, we have pushed this back and need to catch up. We will be applying for the AFG grant to procure gear replacements at a fraction of the normal cost. Since there is no guarantee that we will be awarded the grant, the department plans to purchase 10 sets this budget year as normal but will be seeking to purchase additional sets if the funds in our budget allow. The turnout gear is our staple for the safety of our firefighters and will have my outmost attention to catch up by saving money in other areas if feasible. **NOTE:** The Finance Director provided for more funds in this budget to purchase the additional sets this year and we plan for that to remain in the future to help us get caught up to meet NFPA. We were denied the AFG funding last year and we are applying again this year but there is no guarantee we will be awarded. The typical cost for gear now is as follows; coat and pants - $2,100.00, helmets - $375.00, boots - $350.00, gloves - $90.00, and hoods - $45.00 for a total of $2,960.00.

- As typically reflected in our reports, the type of call the fire department responds to is trending heavily toward medical calls. With the addition of Fire Station III and the trends in call, staff has begun to evaluate the equipment needs to best meet current and future demands. Based on data reviewed, the recommendations for major equipment purchases are as follows:

- The rising number of medical response needs of our citizens has been a concern for some time now in the City. Our department has experienced a steadily increasing call volume of medical calls over the past several years. In the past five years, the calls year over year have increased, on average, 5% and have increased 25% comparing 2015 to 2019. The increased responses have resulted in the aging of our apparatus fleet earlier than anticipated. Currently, we respond to all calls using of one of our large apparatus. We have done this to maintain the crew's integrity for possible fire calls that may arise while we were deployed on medical calls. We have evaluated our processed and determined that our department would be more operationally and cost effective utilizing Quick Response Vehicles (QRVs). The recommendation is to purchase 3 QRVs, one for each station, to handle the over 1720 calls per year/5 medical calls per day our department responds to citywide. The QRVs would be ¾ ton crew cab pick-up trucks with all necessary medical supplies capable of handling medical responses within the City of Lenoir. An implementation plan has been developed and approved by our Officers should the budget to acquire three QRVs be approved.

  Utilization of these vehicles will help preserve our large apparatus fleet, should prolong their operational expectancy, save money on maintenance, and prove quicker response times to patients. These vehicles would be much easier to maneuver and make responding on narrow dead-end roads safer. These vehicles will fill several other departmental needs as well. These QRVs would be utilized for out of town training transportation needs. Currently when staff attends these schools, an administrator must give up their vehicle so that they may attend safely and efficiently. These QRVs also allow the department to implement a new operational procedure for responding to rescue calls. These trucks will offer the ability to safely and legally pull our fleet of trailers with the response equipment to be utilized on calls and training. Two of the three trailers owned by our department exceed the weight limit for the ½ ton pick-up that is currently in use, to legally tow. The cost breakdown would be approximately $120,000.00 or $40,000 per QRV, which includes the cost of the vehicle and upfits. These vehicles would have to be built by the manufacturer to meet our specifications and needs and would take approximately 3 months to build from date of purchase. Immediately, the department should see response times reduced and cost savings improve.

- In accordance with the CIP, we are schedule for a new apparatus to replace an aging fleet. In the prior year's CIP, based on trends and demands, we revised our plan from purchasing another Quint apparatus and recommended purchasing two Rescue/Pumpers. Through cost/benefit analysis it was determined this would better meet the current and future demand for our citizens. Further evaluation will continue to ensure the citizens' and our infrastructure needs are met and sustained for years to come. It should be noted that putting these two apparatus into service would allow Station #1 and Station #2 to respond independent of one another and should provide cost saving for operations and maintenance needs in the future. Purchasing these apparatus this budget year would save money as apparatus prices usually increase 6 - 9% annually. During the past year, the prices increased $30,000.00 for each apparatus. The cost of the original Quint apparatus, included in the CIP in prior years, was approximately $850,000.00 and the price projection for the two apparatus would be approximately $1,250.000.00. If this purchase is approved, the department should not need to purchase another apparatus until the year

2026-2027, which should also be the time these trucks would be paid off. It takes approximately 12 to 18 months to build and deliver these apparatus and they would not be placed into service until 2022.

Submitted by:

Kenneth W. Hair
Fire Chief, City of Lenoir

Downtown Lenoir
& Main Street Revitalization

Below please find a list of goals and objectives the COL Main Street Program (LMStP) and Economic Development Department was able to accomplish in 2020.

Presented by Kaylynn Horn, Economic Development Main Street Director

Before describing the following initiatives of 2020, the Economic Development Department would like to take a moment and extend a sincere expression of gratitude and appreciation to the City of Lenoir Administrative Staff, fellow Department Heads and City Council. Our 2020 year-end reviews will look decidedly different. None of us could have imagined that we would face a year of such loss of life and livelihoods; social and economic distress; and a complete redesign on how we conduct business and our daily lives. In their tireless efforts, Team Lenoir has kept the safety of City staff a priority; the welfare of our citizens paramount; and the dedication to quality and customer service in front of every decision. It is for this reason, the Economic Development Department is proud to look back at each Department, City Board and Council and be grateful for all of their accomplishments and their exemplary conduct in the face of such adversity.

Downtown Lenoir & Main Street Program Development and Revitalization

- One of the most impactful aspects within the Economic Development Department is the benefit of having additional staff, and we are pleased to **have hired a talented new staff member, Matthew Anthony, to further our efforts.** The Main Street Coordinator position continues to enhance the activities of the Lenoir Main Street program. The department continues to expand our Downtown Lenoir website and increase social media presence further informing the public about Downtown and our initiatives. We use numerous social media platforms and our E-newsletter reaches thousands.

From left: (front) NC Senator, PNC Director Ted Alexander, Main Street Director Kaylynn Horn, Main Street Coordinator Kyle Case and Amy Plaster; (back) John Tye, Brenda Floyd, Public Works Director Jared Wright, Chris Horton and Jennifer Indicott.

- During 2020, the Economic Development staff continued to make a conscious effort to raise awareness and expose the initiatives of the downtown district on a local, regional, state and national level through marketing efforts and participating in award/recognition programs. Our staff continues to accept invitations to present at NC Main Street State and Regional meetings. During the 2020 NC Main Street Conference, we presented a session on our award winning Volunteer Recruitment, Training and Recognition Development Program ~ *Be A Part of What Makes This Work Volunteer Program.* The Downtown Lenoir Main Street Program (LMStP) summitted two applications and was honored in 2020 to be the recipient of the following **NC Dept. of Commerce Main Street State Awards** for :

- **Best Endangered Properties Rescue Efforts** ~ The Little Building with the BIG Impact – Boundary Street Project
- **Best Downtown Event or Series** ~ NC Gravity Games
- **Downtown Lenoir NC Main Street Champion** for 2020 was the City of Lenoir Sanitation Division

We are pleased to have been notified that there is a very good chance we will be honored by the NC Dept. of Commerce Main Street Center again in 2021.

- On a national level, the Lenoir Main Street Program (LMStP) was **honored to be one of 12 communities from across the country selected to be a recipient of the National Park Service / National Main Street Center Façade Improvement Grant.** This selection was primarily based on the recent revitalization and redevelopment initiatives in Downtown; projects focused on the preservation of our historic properties; and the increased efforts to utilize Historic Tax Credits within the district. This $48,000 grant is used primarily for façade improvements and building stabilization and is available to properties within the historic district. Another example of why maintaining our historic district can be so beneficial.

- Nationally, Downtown Lenoir was also highlighted during the National Main Street's celebration of woman owned businesses through their Business Spotlight Series – "Women-Owned Businesses on Main Street" . The LMStP encouraged businesses within the district to apply for this feature series and of the 18 businesses chosen from across the nation, **three Downtown Lenoir Businesses were selected and featured on the media outlets of both the National Main Street Center and the NC Main Street Center**. Iris Bender, the owner of Taste of Havana restaurant, was ultimately selected from all of them to be spotlighted by a National Main Street Sponsor, Business Office USA, and she was featured in this company's national media outlets, as well. The following businesses were selected:

  Jennifer Sime is the owner of Doodle Bugs , Heather Bryant owns High Country Herbs , and Iris Bender Taste of Havana

- The Lenoir Main Street Program (LMStP) continues to expand the award winning branding campaign. We are in the process of producing four new 2020/21 Downtown Ambassador Vignettes in the upcoming weeks. These Ambassador businesses are selected by a committee and their story is used to represent the district as a whole.

- In 2020, the LMStP hosted the annual **I HEART Main Street Gathering in** February to communicate the goals and accomplishments of the Lenoir Main Street Program, highlight the new happenings in Downtown, celebrate the Downtown Main Street Volunteer efforts, and further promote the award winning *Be a Part of What Makes THIS WORK Volunteer Recruitment Program*. Efforts to increase the number of Main Street Volunteers continue. Numbers are now over 100. With additional staff in the department, a greater focus has been made regarding electronic communications and website promotion which aided in this increase. Although these volunteers were unable to gather to support Downtown Lenoir events and activities this year, they organized numerous projects to share appreciation and **gratitude for hundreds of essential**

workers within our community, including the Samaritan's Purse Field Hospital located at the UNC Caldwell Healthcare Hospital.

- In 2020 at this year's *I HEART Main Street Gathering*, we introduced **The Gibbons Award** honoring a member of the community who has demonstrated a notable contribution to Downtown Lenoir with either their time, treasure and/or talents. The goal is to recognize people who contribute to the success of the City of Lenoir Main Street Program and downtown development. This award is in line with the NC Main Street Champions program.

- **The Lenoir Main Street Program, like all organizations in 2020, had to pivot and reevaluate the delivery of many of its services and offerings**. The majority of our events, either co-sponsored or our own, were cancelled due to the pandemic. Staff worked to offer **TOGETHER AT HOME - A virtual Concert** featuring many local musicians who donated their talents and their time to benefit local charities. The LMStP organized a **TAKE-OUT BINGO virtual challenge** to encourage the public to frequent Downtown restaurants by playing a BINGO game with prizes sponsored by Smoking in the Foothills BBQ. The LMStP created a **COVID-19 Resource landing page** which was kept up to date with the rapidly changing programs to assist small businesses and non-profits. This site was a resource for the entire community and up and running prior to many State sites. The LMStP worked with City Council and Administration to provide **TAKE-OUT ZONES** which designate on street parking in front of restaurants in Downtown in order to facilitate pickup and deliveries. Staff collaborated Parks and Rec to provide picnic tables in the square to **facilitate outdoor dining** and, with LTDA support, **black iron tables with the City brands have been produced** to be place on the square to enhance this objective. These tables are very attractive and manufactured for years of use well into pandemic recovery. We also promoted the Southern Sundown 4 Miler Virtual run held in August.
  We were able to host the safe distancing activities included in **HOPE SHINES BRIGHTLY** – our musical light show, super-sized Christmas tree and promoted the City's luminary display at Blue Ridge Memorial Gardens.

- The LMStP partnered with the NC Agriculture Extension Office of Caldwell County to help facilitate the relocation of **the Caldwell County Farmers Market in Downtown** and worked with the Public Works Dept. to coordinate the effort. The Market began in May 2020 and was held on Saturdays in the City owned section of the City/County lot behind the County offices. The farmers markets are considered essential and were permitted to operate during the pandemic. The CCFM reported that even during these difficult times, the vendors of this market saw dramatically increased sales due to this relocation. They certainly hope to continue to collaborate with the City of Lenoir and foster the growth and presence of this market in Downtown.

- Although many games and activities were cancelled due to the pandemic, **the improvements at Historic Walker Stadium** will certainly be an asset for Downtown Lenoir. Much appreciated improvements have included stadium lights and a new scoreboard. The CCC&TI **Caldwell Cobras Baseball Program** began to utilize the field for their program this year. This will certainly bring visitor traffic, as well as local support, into Downtown to the benefit of everyone.

- With the new Downtown audio/speaker system and additional power grids installed, the COL Department Staff members continue to discuss the **Downtown Lenoir Event Safety and Improvement program.** One of the issues associated with Main Street's event success is the need for special event security. Police, Parks & Rec, Public Works and the Fire Department assist not only in staffing certain activities, but also in providing heavy equipment to block vehicular access when streets are closed and occupied by pedestrians. Security has become a high priority and must be considered when budgeting for these events, especially in terms of traffic control, equipment, design, and personnel.

- The Economic Development Department partnered with the LTDA and applied for a Safe Travel Tourism Marketing Credit Program and a Tourism Recovery Grant Program available through the CARES ACT and administered by the EDPNC, Visit NC and the Count On Me NC programs. We were **the successful recipients of a $10,000 Marketing Credit grant and a $18,000 Tourism Recovery Grant**. With this funding we were able to produce:
    - Count on Me NC Masks
    - Conduct consultant managed Instagram Social Media and Facebook campaigns totally 100,000 + reaches and impressions – many seeing us for the first time
    - Create a video library of B-roll footage of our City assets available for future marketing efforts
    - Create a still photo library of our City assets available for future marketing efforts
    - Produce a YouTube video **and TV segment with Carl White featuring Lenoir's Hope Shines Brightly** reaching 10,000 and airing in numerous NC markets
    - Worked collaboratively with the Chamber of Commerce to lay the ground work for the Take 321 Enjoy the Journey and the Adventure Starts Here campaign in which:
        - a commercial was produced,
        - a rack-card was designed and produced
        - and a website, landing pages and social media campaigns produced.
        - Partnering with the Chamber, plans are underway to launch this initiative in 2nd Quarter 2021.

It is our understanding that these efforts may be highlighted in an upcoming State publication.

- Economic Development Dept continues to collaborate with the COL Parks and Recreation Department regarding **improvements in the auditorium in the Historic Lenoir High School**. Improvement projects, like downstairs bathrooms, continue to be a focus in order to allow greater use of the auditorium and adjacent buildings for much needed event spaces in the Downtown core. In addition to the bathrooms, theater/stage and audio upgrades to the auditorium would provide us with an ideal setting to host a variety of events and meetings. Discussions are underway evaluating the use of adjacent buildings in order to maximize the use of these City owned properties. The Landmark Properties firm continues to make improvements on the LHS apartments now totaling nearly $5 million in private investment just outside the district.

- **The LMStP continues collaboration with other COL Departments to utilize tools that help spur development within the district.** The LMStP continues to collaborate with The COL Public Utilities Department to employ such tools as the EPA Assessment Grants to help facilitate the property sale and future rehabilitation of the Harper Ave Dry Cleaners property and 101 Mulberry Street within the Downtown district. These assessment grants play a critical part in providing insights to building condition in order to guide projects toward successful completion.

- **The Economic Development Department continues to make residential living in and around the Downtown core a priority.** To date, with the implementation of Moving Lenoir to the 2nd Floor initiative, Main Street has toured nearly **30 properties** and initiated conversations with dozens of Downtown property owners interested in renovating their properties. This year we have seen **two more Historic Tax Credit projects** take place within the district and others being considered at this time which also feature residential use. Recently, we have seen **eight apartments** moving toward completion in the Downtown core. Continued efforts will be made to update the property inventory and evaluate the current condition of the Downtown buildings. Staff continues to collaborate with Planning and Code Enforcement to educate and help property owners get their historic structures placed back into service. Econ. Dev. Staff continues to work with Administration and Dept. Heads by engaging with developers whose focus is providing market-rate apartments and commercial use within the Fairfield South Area by rehabilitating the **Blue Bell Mill, the Steele-Cotton Mill and the Freight Depot Building** which border the Downtown Core. Not only do these mill projects address the documented need for market-rate housing, but they will have a profound and lasting impact on the economic engine of Downtown. Each person living in or near a Downtown core contributes on average $10,000 annually back into the core.

818 Harper Ave

Since 2015, Downtown Lenoir has attracted approximately **$5 million** in private investment and improvements and nearly **30 property acquisitions**. Even during these difficult times, we have seen the following:

RECENT PROPERTY ACQUISITIONS:

ADAMS, MATHEW & AMY	1013 WEST AVE
RIPSHIN LLC (J. PLASTER)	814 HARPER AVE
HOGWALLER CHURCH CONDO LLC/ BRILEI HOLDINGS	110 CHURCH ST
STEWART, STEVEN & JAMIE	819 HARPER AVE

RECENT BUSINESS OPENINGS / EXPANSIONS / RELOCATIONS

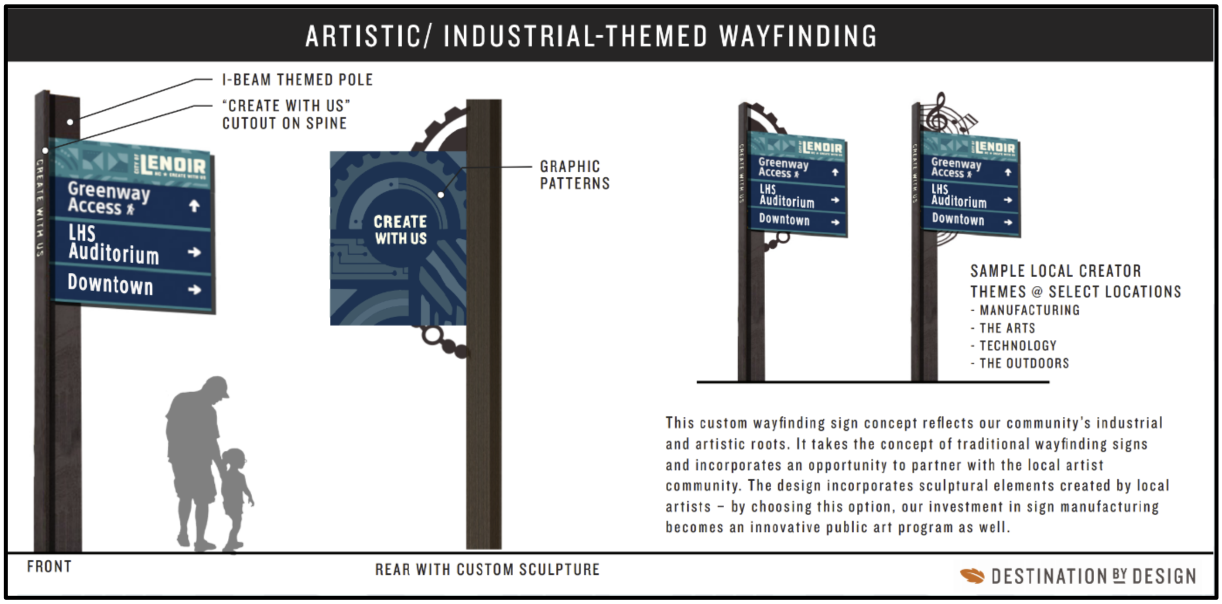
MAGIC CAFE ON MAIN	113 S MAIN ST
MOONJOY MEADERY	110 CHURCH ST
THE FLOUR SHOP	810 WEST AVE
SOUTHERN ROOTS SALON	1013 WEST AVE
MANDEM SYNDICATE BARBERSHOP	818 HARPER AVE

- **Citywide Branding and Vehicular Wayfinding**

  In collaboration with the City of Lenoir's Planning Department, the Econ Dev Dept worked with Destination by Design, a consulting firm in Boone, NC and the Lenoir Branding Team of citizens to design, produce and launch the new City of Lenoir Brand. The pandemic certainly did slow the efforts, but the goals and objectives have been achieved and well received. **A logo/brand and tagline "CREATE WITH US"** have been developed, apparel produced and other swag items. The City's website has been updated and Departments will begin incorporating its use, as well.

Wayfinding sign design is well underway and the Team will continue its efforts with DbD to complete the technical aspects of vehicular sign manufacturing and sign location planning. Considerations for gateway signage is also being discussed. Wayfinding is an excellent way to create a sense of place and tell residents and visitors about our amenities. Investing in wayfinding would demonstrate the City's commitment to public investment, create a stronger sense of place in Lenoir, and encourage travelers on 321 to make a turn at Smiths Crossroads and head downtown. Once the plan is complete, we will have a better idea of cost to implement and seek funding for fabrication and installation. Staff and the Branding Team are very pleased that not only will our wayfinding sign investment create a sense of place, but it will **simultaneously be a public art program,** as well, **further emphasizing our invitation to "CREATE WITH US!"**

This City-wide branding and vehicular wayfinding sign system could be expanded in the future, with subsequent phases being pedestrian-scale wayfinding in the Downtown, signage along our Greenways, gateway features at key entrances such as Smith Crossroads, and neighborhood "street topper" signs for neighborhood branding.



Below please find a list of initiatives/projects the Economic Development Department plans to address in 2021:

- The Lenoir Main Street Program staff will continue to be actively involved in the City-wide branding and vehicular wayfinding system projects currently underway.
- The Lenoir Main Street Program staff will continue to encourage participation in the Moving Lenoir to the Second-Floor program and help to facilitate the rehabilitation and residential use of our Downtown Historic buildings.
- The LMStP staff continues to work with the National Main Street Center to manage the National Park Service / National Main Street Façade Improvements Grant and assist property owners through the process.
- Through invitations to present at conferences (virtually for now), recognition programs, and marketing efforts, the LMStP and the Economic Development Staff will continue with efforts to raise the awareness locally and across the State about the Lenoir Main Street Program and Downtown Lenoir accomplishments and growth. LMStP is currently engaged in regional initiatives within the NW prosperity zone

NORTHWEST
NC MAIN TO MAIN TRAIL

of neighboring Main Street communities. These programs include the new Main to Main Trail program and the Little Brown Jug Tour program. We look forward to sharing more about these programs in the near future.

- The LMStP is laying the ground work for an entrepreneur boot camp program, *GEARED UP for GREATNESS.* This program would be similar in in nature to the award-winning GEM Program in Marion Downtown. Discussions are underway with GEM program directors, the Caldwell Chamber and the Small Business Center
- The LMStP and the Economic Development Department will work with community partners and COL Departments to ensure the safety and quality of our events. We will monitor and follow all State mandates as directed by City Administration and City Council. We will endeavor to transition back into in person activities with the utmost consideration to safety and regulation.
- The Lenoir Main Street Program, COL Police, Parks & Rec, Public Works and the Fire Department continue with discussion on Downtown Lenoir Safety and Event Improvement plans focused on potential security and safety issues addressing Downtown during events and on a daily basis. Safety and security continue to be a high priority and must be considered when budgeting for these events when they return, especially in terms of traffic control, equipment, design, and personnel.
- Efforts to re-establish the nonprofit arm of the Downtown Lenoir Main Street program are underway.
- In collaboration with the COL Parks and Recreation Department and with support from the LTDA, discussions will continue in 2021 that focus on the potential use of the Historic Lenoir High School auditorium and adjacent buildings as potential event spaces in order to maximize the use of these City owned properties.

Sister Cities

Our Sister Cities program has languished for several years. Also, the Western Piedmont Sister Cities Association, which was organized in the early nineties as an area non-profit organization, has struggled in maintaining a viable program as well. The original intent of the program was to exchange ideas and develop friendships with other cultures. There has been discussion to dissolve the program and the board is currently still suspended.

Retire NC

As part of Lenoir's participation in the Retire NC program, staff has access to excellent demographic data and marketing trend data which is being utilized by our Communications Director and the LTDA. The Caldwell Chamber of Commerce is assisting in this endeavor.

2020 Bullet Point List ~ Citywide Efforts to Spur Downtown Development (Public and Private Initiatives)

- City Council and City Administration continue to support the human resource needs in the Economic Development Dept. by approving the new hire of the Main Street Community Engagement Coordinator
- The Downtown Lenoir Main Street Program (LMStP) summitted two applications and was honored in 2020 to be the recipient of the following NC Dept. of Commerce Main Street State Awards for :
    - Best Endangered Properties Rescue Efforts ~ The Little Building with the BIG Impact – Boundary Street Project
    - Best Downtown Event or Series ~ NC Gravity Games
    - Downtown Lenoir NC Main Street Champion for 2020 was the City of Lenoir Sanitation Division
- We are pleased to have been notified that there is a very good chance we will be honored by the NC Dept. of Commerce Main Street Center again in 2021.
- Conducted Count on Me NC, Shop Small Shop Local and Hope Shines Brightly Facebook and Instagram promotions
- In March, launched the COVID-19 Business Resource page : https://downtownlenoirnc.com/coronavirus/ utilized by the community
- Promoted the Count on Me NC Program with the downtown business district
- Received and collaborate with Downtown property owners to participate in the National MainStreet NPS Façade Improvements $48K Grant
- The Lenoir Main Street Program (LMStP) continues to expand the award winning branding campaign. We are in the process of finalizing four new 2020/21 Downtown Ambassador photoshoots and Vignettes in the upcoming weeks. These Ambassador businesses are selected by a committee and their story is used to represent the district as a whole. This year's representatives are Tybrisa Books, Box fitness, Liquid Roots and Picollo's Pizza.
- In collaboration with the Chamber of Commerce, conducted Instagram and Facebook campaigns on social media using Tourism Marketing Credit and Recovery Grant funding featuring small businesses in the Downtown district. Tybrisa Books, Liquid Roots and Box Fitness were the representatives featured considering photoshoots were already scheduled.
- TAKE-OUT BINGO virtual challenge to encourage the public to frequent Downtown restaurants by playing a BINGO game with prizes sponsored by Smoking in the Foothills BBQ.
- The City departments collaborated to provided TAKE-OUT ZONES which designate on-street parking in front of restaurants in Downtown in order to facilitate pickup and deliveries.
- Produced the TOGETHER AT HOME virtual Concert series in collaboration with CCC&TI Bryohill Civic Center and the nonprofit Smoking in the Foothills
- Promoted the Southern Sundown 4 Miler Virtual run held in August
- Main Street partnered with the NC Agriculture Extension Office of Caldwell County to help facilitate the relocation of the Caldwell County Farmers Market in Downtown, which brings more traffic.
- Promoted a National Main Street Campaign to feature women-owned businesses and promoted the three selected from Downtown Lenoir.
- Picnic tables provided by Parks and Rec were placed on the on the square to support the greater need for outdoor dining while permanent outdoor dining tables and chairs with City and Downtown brands were being manufactured
- Downtown beautification continued with Bloom Blast – planter bed flowers and hanging baskets
- Hosted the safe distancing activities included in HOPE SHINES BRIGHTLY featuring our musical light show and super-sized Christmas tree while also promoting the City's luminary display at Blue Ridge Memorial Gardens.
- City invested in new Christmas rope lights for the historic acorn lamp poles supporting HOPE SHINES BRIGHTLY

- Conducted a City Branding and Wayfinding Campaign – Wayfinding signage will ultimately direct 321 travelers and visitors to the heart of the Downtown core
- Utilized the LTDA Tourism Recovery Grant to featured Downtown Lenoir commercial district in the Carl White Christmas TV Production, YouTube video series and commercial spots. Frye Studios and Dead People's Stuff Emporium represented the district in this production.
- LTDA continues to support and grant funding for the 321 billboard campaign focused on the commercial district to direct people to downtown (funding permitted, new billboards will be secured in the coming weeks to add to the previous campaign)
- Historic Walker Stadium improvements have included stadium lights and recently a new scoreboard. The CCC&TI Caldwell Cobras Baseball Program began to utilize the field for their program drawing teams and spectators into Downtown and prompting Lenoir hotel stays.
- Historic Lenoir High School Apartments Downtown – Landmark's $5 Million renovation project underway spurring City plans to improve the theater auditorium
- Historic Lenoir High School Auditorium and first floor bathroom improvements with second floor bathroom improvements underway to increase use of space as a major event venue Downtown
- Recently established an Historic Preservation Commission to explore Landmark Status designations and other initiatives for development
- Downtown Two-way traffic study underway
- Employed such tools as the EPA Assessment Grants to help facilitate the property sale and future rehabilitation of the Harper Ave Dry Cleaners property and 101 Mulberry Street within the Downtown district
- Tree trimming and pruning project completed to enhance visibility to both vehicular traffic and storefront visibility
- More paving of the Overmountian Victory National Historic Trail –will march directly through the heart of Downtown Lenoir, https://www.cityoflenoir.com/ovnht
- LTDA continued to support enhancements to the new downtown sound system
- City Restriped center lines, stop-bars, crosswalks, parking spaces on College Ave, West Ave., Harper Ave., Willow St.
- Downtown Streetlight LED Conversion (New LED bulbs in all historic, decorative acorn lamp poles)
- Mulberry Street paving and street Improvements (concrete repairs, asphalt resurfacing, restriping) a main corridor into downtown
- Downtown Solid Waste Conversion providing new carts to all of the Downtown community

- Additional 2020 Investments and Improvements - completed and underway:
    - Lenoir's City Hall Renovation
    - Blue Bell Apartments (46 Units) – 1241 College Avenue
    - Ed Foundation Teachery (3 units) – 1015 Ashe Avenue (PW performed sidewalk repairs)
    - Steven Stewart Project (mixed use w/ 1 unit) – 819 Harper Avenue
    - Jesse Plaster Project – 814 Harper Avenue
    - Jesse Plaster Project (Lutz Building) 5 apartments – 1001 West Avenue
    - Guarantee Store 113 Main Street Façade Improvements
    - Mandem Syndicate Barbershop (David Mauer Project) – 818 Harper Avenue
    - Moonjoy Meadery – 110 Church Street
    - Magic on Main Restaurant – 113 Main Street
    - Southern Roots Salon (Amy Adams) – 1013 West Avenue
    - The Flour Shoppe – 810 West Avenue

Recreation Administrative Offices (828)757-2165 - Fax (828)758-1315
W.B. Stronach Lenoir Aquatic & Fitness Center (828)757-2196
Mulberry Recreation Center (828)757-2165
Martin Luther King Center (828)757-2170
www.cityoflenoir.com

Below is a list of goals and objectives Lenoir Parks & Recreation accomplished in 2020:

- Installed a new HVAC unit at Mulberry Recreation Center.
- Replaced two lifeguard stands at LAFC.
- Repaired and resurfaced two tennis courts at Mulberry Recreation Center that will be used for pickle ball.
- Replaced the lane lines for the outdoor pool at LAFC.
- Replaced a Compressor on one of the HVAC systems at LAFC.
- Installed new field signs at the Optimist Park ballfields. These signs were for Harold Beach and Dave King.
- Replaced the Temperature Controller and Sensor in the Boiler for the indoor pool at LAFC.
- Replaced cameras at MLK.
- Installed netting and rock dust in the batting cages at Optimist Park.
- Replaced one slide on the playground at Mulberry Recreation Center. The slide was broken and was a safety issue.
- Paved a section of the Greenway around Wilson Park to the exiting Greenway. By paving this section, it will allowed users to park in the parking lot and walk all the way around the Park.
- Staff renovated the counter tops and painted the main lobby and hallway at LAFC.
- Staff painted the kitchen and restroom areas at Mulberry Recreation Center.
- Replaced pump for indoor pool at LAFC
- Added 4x4 post and chain around the parking lot at Optimist Park. This was done to leep cars off the grass and also for the safety of the patrons.

Optimist Park Improvements (PARTF Grant)

The Optimist Park Project has been completed.

JE Broyhill Park Improvements: (CDBG)

Phase 2 of the JE Broyhill Park Improvement Plan. NC State University continues to work on a design for the storm water conveyance system. Once they have a design in place the project will begin.

Lenoir High School Property Enhancements:

Work on this project will begin in late January 2021. Work will include renovations to the downstairs restrooms, new doors, new carpet, guttering, downspouts, painting, and lighting.

T.H. Broyhill Park Improvements:

The Broyhill Family Foundation made a generous donation to the City in the amount of $100,000.00. This donation is to make renovations to the restroom and to replace the wood on the large deck that overlooks the pond. This work will begin in late January 2021.

Disc Golf:

Staff is continuing to explore areas within the city to place a course.

Dog Park:

Staff is continuing to look at areas to place a dog park within the city. Locating a desirable site and lack of interest from private groups to help with the park have been issues.

Below is a list of concerns and impacts Lenoir Parks & Recreation may incur in 2021:

- The road leading into the Lenoir Aquatic & Fitness Center (Jim Barger Court) is in need of repairs. One side of the road is deteriorating and has been repaired once this year. The bank is washing out and this is causing the road to fall in. Also the whole road leading up to the center needs to be paved at some point.
- Replacing facility signs at Wilson Park and the Rotary Soccer complex.
- Renovations to MLK Center (Paint the Exterior of the facility)
- MLK Center is in need of a new roof on the lower part of the building.
- LAFC is in need of a new roof.
- Continue to make upgrades at LAFC.
- MLK Basketball gym floor is in need of some repairs.

Highlights for future projects:

- Lighting Mack Cook Stadium as well as the Rotary Soccer Complex.
- Replace and upgrade lights on the tennis courts at Mulberry Recreation Center.
- Interior/Exterior Renovations to the Optimist Park Clubhouse.
- Renovations to Mulberry Recreation Center (Replace tile flooring, Sand/Paint & Refinish gym floor.
- Update Shelter and Basketball court at West End Park (Paint shelter, add new picnic tables, resurface the basketball court, add new backboard and rim on basketball court).
- New Basketball goals at LHS gym.
- Resurface gym floor at LHS gym.
- Replace some of the HVAC systems at Mulberry, MLK and LAFC.

CITY OF LENOIR
PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

2021 Strategic Planning Retreat
Planning & Community Development Initiatives & Projects

Accomplishments in 2020

- **Fairfield South/Mill Projects progress** – 2020 brought many exciting public announcements on projects that have been in development for many years. Blue Bell received a Certificate of Appropriateness from the Historic Preservation Commission (the first one ever in Lenoir!) and started construction on 46 market-rate apartments. Funding through ARC led to (currently underway) clean up of construction materials on the city-owned 14-acre parcel at College Avenue/Virginia. We applied for and were awarded an RTP grant for greenway crossings on Harper, College, and Light Street. We foreclosed on the dilapidated structure at Underdown and College Avenue, and demolished the building.

- **North Main Street progress** – Design work is nearing completion for the JE Broyhill park stormwater improvements, although the grant was delayed by COVID. We've applied for a no-cost 1-year extension, and tentatively expect final plans this Spring for summer construction.

- **NCGS Chapter 160D Ordinance Updates** – Planning staff tackled this project "in house" and completed the majority of required updates in late 2020, with formal adoption by City Council in January 2021. Changes to add clarity and consistency to the administration and enforcement sections, reinforcing our goal of simple, straight-forward, and transparent regulations.

- **Stormwater Audit/Program Changes:** Our draft Stormwater Management Plan (SWMP) was approved by NCDEQ, and they released us for public comment. We are technically still "out of compliance" until the SWMP is approved by EPA and adopted by Council and our new NPDES permit is issued through DEQ – but we are complying with our enforcement deadlines and in good standing with DEQ as far as our responsiveness. We also are taking steps to meet the mapping requirements we committed to in the draft SWMP, which requires us to have the entire MS4 mapped including roadside conveyances.

- **Way-Finding Signs:** Developed a vehicular way-finding sign plan and concept design for vehicular wayfinding working with DBD (partner project: Citywide Branding).

- **I-worq Permitting/Code Enforcement Module:** Successfully implemented new software for permit management.

- **Total Audit of Powell Bill Maps/ROW books:** Reconciled field notes, recorded easements, plats and GIS information to correct inconsistencies between datasets related to street lengths and right of way widths, next steps will be to add/refine/field verify details on pavement widths and stormwater infrastructure (curb/gutter and swales)

- **Enforcement:** We had 13 owner-abated minimum housing cases; 12 made repairs to restore the home to livable condition, and one owner demolished the structure (demolition was on Bradford Mountain Rd). We assisted Lenoir Police Department on several nuisance property cases (Circle Drive/Ridgecrest and Norwood Street chickens). We inspected 20 mobile home parks and renewed 17 operating permits – 3 parks failed inspection and are currently under enforcement. We sent 10 new properties for tax foreclosure, and had 3 properties sell at auction (all park view lots). We also audited all the floodplains in the City for unpermitted encroachments erected between 2014-2019, and put 19 properties under enforcement for floodplain violations.

Ongoing/Active Projects & Next Steps

- **Greenway Planning (Top Priority)**:
  - **OVT**: design and build the road crossings and missing segments of the rail trail between Habitat for Humanity ReStore and the Freight Depot (ARC grant implementation)
  - **OVT**: work with NCDOT to design and permit a crossing of Hwy 18 in order to connect the Rail Trail with the “google” section of Greenway.
  - **Mulberry Connector**: finalize Greenway easement across Old Lenoir Mall (record Water Life Easement; reach out to outparcel owners and remaining gaps)
  - **Mulberry Connector**: easement discussions with Lenoir Golf Course, to connect to Smith Crossroads/possible use of culvert and sewer easements.

- **160D streets and subdivision updates/ Technical Review Committee**: Updates to the streets and subdivision ordinance are forthcoming, in order to reconcile our ordinances with each other and with the state requirements. As a part of this process, we will incorporate our long-time goal of establishing technical review/coordination as a formal part of the subdivision and site planning process – in particular related to the dedication of streets and sidewalks, the location of new driveways, and coordinated access management planning.

- **NCDOT Transportation projects:** NCDOT completed feasibility analysis on several possible state roadway projects in Lenoir in 2019 – upgrades to facilitate SW Boulevard/Harper/Creekway driveway to be used as a by-pass (in lieu of huge impacts from an upgrade to Smith Crossroads intersection), and access management planning (medians, consolidation of driveways, “super street” concepts) for both US 321 and for Hwy 18 (Wilkesboro Blvd). The final projects that were included on the prioritization list for the next funding cycle (in public comment now) were:
  - Access Management on US 64/NC 18 Wilkesboro Boulevard from Linkside Ct. to US 64/90 (“Regional Impact” project – higher chance of funding)
  - Arterial-to-superstreet project on NC 90/SR 1300 (Harper Avenue/Creekway Drive/North Main Street) from US 64 to US 321 (“the bypass”) (“Division Needs” project – more competitive than regional or statewide projects)

- NOTE: NCDOT's funding has been severely impacted by COVID shut-downs and reduced gas tax revenues. We anticipate a backlog of projects waiting to be funded, which will likely delay these projects a few years in Lenoir.

- **Comprehensive Plan Updates/Implementation:** A new planning requirement was adopted by the NC Legislature in 2019, which requires a "reasonably recent" comprehensive plan to be adopted by any jurisdiction enforcing a zoning ordinance. Lenoir's Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 2007, and is in need of updating. We plan to do the updates in-house, and build off of previous planning efforts in order to tie together all of the good planning that's already happening. We will use the extensive public input that we've received through other initiatives to update and modernize the 2007 Comprehensive Plan.
  - **North Main Small Area Plan**
  - **Fairfield South Vision**
  - **Pedestrian Plan**
  - **Bicycle Plan**
  - **Neighborhood Mapping**
  - **Historic Preservation survey/study-listed districts**
  - **Greenway Planning**
  - **Downtown/Main Street Master Plan and Branding**
  - **Citywide branding/wayfinding plan**
  - Environmental justice issues
  - Erosion/Stormwater/Floodplain issues and solutions
  - Infrastructure – rural internet access
  - Housing issues
  - Future neighborhood studies/small area plans: West End, Whitnel, zoning/access management for the by-pass, Lower Creek Drive
  - Future code amendments/updates: Revised design standards for highway business districts, streetscape/sidewalk requirements based on corridor rather than zoning

- **<u>New Small Area Plan: West End:</u>** We have conducted in-depth GIS analysis on the parcels in West End, and begun reaching out to stakeholders. Our plan to hold community meetings starting in Spring 2020 was delayed by COVID gathering restrictions. We will address some elements of West End as a part of the Comprehensive Plan, and plan to move forward with some of the delinquent and dilapidated properties even if the full community "vision" for redevelopment has not yet been established. We can't wait any longer, so we will have to rely on field research and more informal interactions. We anticipate the plan will focus mainly on housing, the re-use of existing non-residential properties, and infill of vacant lots. Initial analysis revealed a high rate of tax delinquent properties, which will be addressed through the plan recommendations.

- **Minimum Housing Enforcement:** The need for city abatement of dilapidated houses continues to exceed the budgeted amount for demos each year. This need will increase with the in-depth planning efforts in West End. We continue to send properties to tax foreclosure as well as push for owner abatement, and we have essentially cleared the "back log" of cases that built up prior to implementing the Minimum Housing Priority Formula. Planning staff continues to coordinate with the Police Department.

- **Neighborhood and Greenway Signs:** Lenoir, like all cities, is a city of neighborhoods, and many times neighborhoods are more cohesive and inspire more loyalty than the city as a whole. However, the historic names of many neighborhoods are not a part of the collective conscious of many residents, especially as new residents are attracted to the City. Using the recently created neighborhood map and input from the public at the neighborhood map meeting, staff proposes an inexpensive project to add historic neighborhood markers to the street signs around the downtown neighborhoods (at least as a "phase 1". These are little "love notes" that help communicate that these neighborhoods are unique and special places within Lenoir. Now that we have successfully developed a city-wide brand and design concept for vehicular wayfinding, we can use these design concepts to explore smaller off-shoot projects like neighborhood signs and signage on the greenway.

- **Strategic Property Acquisition:** In addition to continuing to use strategic tax foreclosure to get properties back into private hands, staff also has several properties that would be strategic for the City to acquire:
    - Former Knotty Pine Grill property and neighboring property in Freedman (340/342 Finley Avenue) – Currently going through foreclosure for delinquent taxes
    - Current Perez Tire site in Fairfield (two parcels; south of Gibbon's Electric) adjacent to OVT rail trail
    - Former (recently demolished) service station on N. Main adjacent to OVT rail trail (709 N. Main Street)
    - **(new)** Outparcels in front of Lenoir Mall – they cannot be developed due to floodway restrictions, but are strategic connections for our greenway, which we can build at or below the existing grade in compliance with FEMA's restrictions.

- **Business Friendly/Transparency:** Using enhanced online presence, updated websites, interactive maps, and printed materials, Planning Staff would like to increase our ability to provide coordinated information in enhance customer service. Lessons learned from telecommuting and implementation of the iworq permitting software will be applied to enhancing our ability to conduct business virtually, and provide easier ways to disseminate information on common questions.

Outstanding Projects (No Changes)

These are projects that have been lower priority, or have implementation challenges, and have not had progress in several years. They are still good projects, and we intend to work on them as opportunities/needs arise.

- **Watershed Property:** This property, while annexed, still has no city zoning. At one time, we had contemplated a Conditional Zoning district on this property that would basically implement the conditions of the conservation easement as the only zoning standards for the property.

- **Stormwater Utility Fee/Stormwater CIP:** Freese and Nichols has created an inventory of SW needs, a tracking system/database to compile new issues, and provided information on the adoption of a SW utility fee to fund capital needs. This project was completed at the same the City transitioned SW management duties to the WPCOG. However, the City remains responsible for the maintenance of the municipal storm sewer system, as well as the cost for contracting with the WPCOG to handle the administrative tasks (education, outreach, enforcement, permitting) related to compliance with the Clean Water Act. Should the City choose to move forward on the adoption of a Stormwater Utility Fee, the funding could be used to pay for WPCOG services as well as fund capital projects. Next steps for this project (if any) will likely be implemented by the Public Works and/or Finance Departments.

- **Creation of Two National Register Districts:** A high level of community interest in finalizing the two National Register Districts that were study-listed as a result of SHPO's survey in Lenoir. This would make homeowners in two neighborhoods – Fairfield (west of Downtown) and Maehill Park/Oak View (south/east of Downtown) – eligible for historic preservation tax credits. (No changes since 2019 – finding a "champion" for the project has been difficult. We need to do "fundraising" if it is not going to be funded through the City directly, and no one has emerged to lead this effort. We will have to return the $5,000 grant we received to use towards this project if we are unable to complete it.)

Department Budget Requests

- **Historic Preservation Consultant for NR District Nominations:** The estimated cost of preparing the necessary research and reports to finalize these districts is approximately $30,000 – this assumes doing both districts at once to realize efficiencies in consultant travel expenses. Planning staff applied for a grant to help fund this project through the Covington Foundation, and have had some promising conversations with local charitable organizations. The Covington Foundation has given us $5,000 towards this project. A few years ago, some initial conversations with Fairfield Chair, Broyhill, and Bernhardt were favorable in those entities contributing 5,000 each, however the City has since made other requests for higher priority projects and there have been some leadership changes. The project still has a funding gap of about 10,000.
- **Building Demolition/Legal Fees for Foreclosures:** Continue to fund at current levels for demolishing structures as well as legal fees related to foreclosing on abandoned houses that are still salvageable. Consider separate line item for additional funds for West End demolitions; needs estimated at 30,000 to demolish at least 6 structures. Could split over two fiscal years.
- **Neighborhood Branding Signs:** We can do these in-house, with some equipment upgrades. This was ranked as a high priority last year, I'd like to see an actual budget line item for these so that we can determine which neighborhoods we can implement these in first. We've done the neighborhood maps so we are ready now to implement this item if it is funded. (City-wide branding and way-finding sign plan established a brand that we can now use to develop these types of small signs.)
- **Technology Upgrades:** Our large-format printer is considered at it's "end of life" and replacement parts may not longer be available if we have issues with it moving forward. The cost of a large format printer

new is about $15,000, and there are also leasing options available. Right now, IT pays for a service contract on this printer, which covers maintenance and repairs, but the cost of this would go up if we needed to replace the printer and opted for a lease option. Right now, the printer is functional.

CITY OF LENOIR POLICE

1035 West Avenue NW
Lenoir, NC 28645
828-757-2100

Brent Phelps
Chief

Scott Hildebran
City Manager

The following are items for Manager Hildebran's review for the upcoming Council Retreat and budget planning process.

Calendar year 2020 was unlike any year I have ever experienced in my 25 years of Law Enforcement. The year started off very similar to previous years until around mid-March. As the world wide pandemic began to spread across the United States, many of our normal routines began to change. One of the challenges was that no one had ever experienced a pandemic at this level.

I never thought as a Chief, I would be making decisions on how to protect our employees from each other in our own building. Our leadership team focused on our purpose for our community. Many things were implemented to continue our role for the city and provide the safest environment possible for citizens and officers.

After a couple of months into the pandemic, on May 25, 2020, an African American man named George Perry Floyd Jr. died during an encounter with law enforcement in Minneapolis. This incident sparked nation-wide protests. Many of the protests, to include ours, were very peaceful between citizens and police. However this sparked days, weeks, and months of unrest across our nation. Our agency participated and encouraged peaceful interactions between our department and the community. The pandemic made it extremely difficult to create face-to-face, in-person environments to listen and talk with our community members.

Even with all of these events and challenges, I'm proud of the accomplishments of our department. Our officers and employees have continued to diligently work to provide the best services possible in serving our city. Please review the following pages of accomplishments this past year and future obstacles for our agency and the law enforcement profession.

Accomplishments for our Department during 2020

Patral Division:

At the beginning of 2020, our newly selected K-9 handlers began their training with our new K-9's. This is a time consuming process for the handlers and animals as both are adapting to each other and the structured training.

Corporal Brown and K9 Major

MPO Foust and K9 Uwais

The biggest impact on Patrol, as well as everywhere else this year, was from COVID-19 pandemic. This required us to change the way we do things, problem solve, and adapt. Fortunately for us, the officers and employees we work with generally have high aptitudes for problem solving and adapting to situations. We also entered into a Phased response early during the pandemic where we attempted to limit officer exposures as much as possible. Citizens were asked to speak with officers outside whenever possible. Some non-emergency report calls were handled by phone.

Unfortunately, there were many of our annual events which had to be canceled. Department members had to look for creative ways to safely engage with community members.

Officers learned how to still visit and interact with the children while social distancing and wearing masks in our schools.

Officers had to change the traditional school supply drive where they take time to fill back packs for students. This year they instead used a prepared list and purchased individualized supplies for children in need.

During the first quarter of 2020, the department held its 1st annual Minister's Police Academy. This was a workshop developed by Lt. Barlowe to help foster the relationships with leaders from more than 70 churches.

Sgt. Howard and MPO Coffey gave a presentation at the Lenoir Rotary Club on the department's Drone program.

During May and June, we joined the rest of the nation dealing with protests. We were blessed that our protests were peaceful and served as a mechanism for our department to develop relationships and improve on already existing relationships within the community. Community relations have been a priority for the Lenoir Police Department for many decades. This agency will continue to strive for positive open relationships with community members.

Photographs provided by Lenoir News Topic

During May, June, and August, the department invested 884.5 man hours during the protest with an overtime value of $26,656.48. Many of our officers worked 7 and 8 days straight during the peak of our protest. Protests in Lenoir looked a lot different than some other less fortunate jurisdictions.

Every officer with the department received additional training from the Dolan consulting group in the area of De-escalation training. Several supervisors attended various classes in the area of Fair and Impartial Policing, and Equity and Diversity training.

Investigation Division:

In 2020, the Investigations Division worked strongly with Code Enforcement and Planning. These on-going relationships have been very useful in working together between the 2 departments of Police and Planning. Focused efforts resulted in 167 properties being abated to which only 31 properties were abated by the City. The two noted residences below were either cleaned up by the owner or by the City of Lenoir. Both of these residences had a significant impact on community well-being.

One of the city abated problem locations; 1653 Norwood St. Lenoir

710 Ridgecrest Dr. Lenoir was owner abated

During the past year, our Investigations Division has worked diligently with the community and inside our neighborhoods to push out criminal activity. The Investigations Division has investigated 2608 cases in 2020. The investigations division has conducted 146 search warrants and 74 consent searches this past year.

Our investigators, while having to work safely due to the Covid-19 pandemic, have acquired the ability to work remotely as much as feasible with the addition of (10) Surface Pro laptops. This equipment has afforded them the ability to not only work remotely but aided in possessing the current technology in criminal processing, crime scene data collection and the ability to be out in the field while combatting and investigating criminal activity.

The Criminal Investigations Division has also acquired new audio, video and photography equipment in order to properly document crime scenes and aid in gathering information for criminal prosecution. With technology advancing at a rapidly growing pace, much of what Investigators are utilizing for evidentiary purposes is either still pictures and/or video. Much of this media is of various qualities and is received or gathered from businesses, personally owned private devices or City owned equipment. The Division is currently looking into video and photograph enhancement equipment and software to better dissect the many forms of media we receive.

Support Services:

During 2020, the support services division implemented a policy review committee. This committee consisted of several different levels of supervisors. The committee met several different times and presented revisions to the Command Staff. During this process the following policies were reviewed and revised:

400-02 Use of Force
400-15 Search and Seizure
400-25 Firearms
400-33 Body Worn Cameras
200-10 Personal Appearance

The revisions to 400-02 Use of Force and 400-33 Body Worn Cameras were reviewed by the city attorney as well.

The department hired 6 patrol officers and 1 part time dispatcher in 2020. Unfortunately 2 of the 6 left before completing the first phase of field training. Both individuals expressed that after becoming sworn officers they each realized this profession was not suitable for them. In speaking with several other Chiefs for North Carolina, other agencies have experienced this same type of situation.

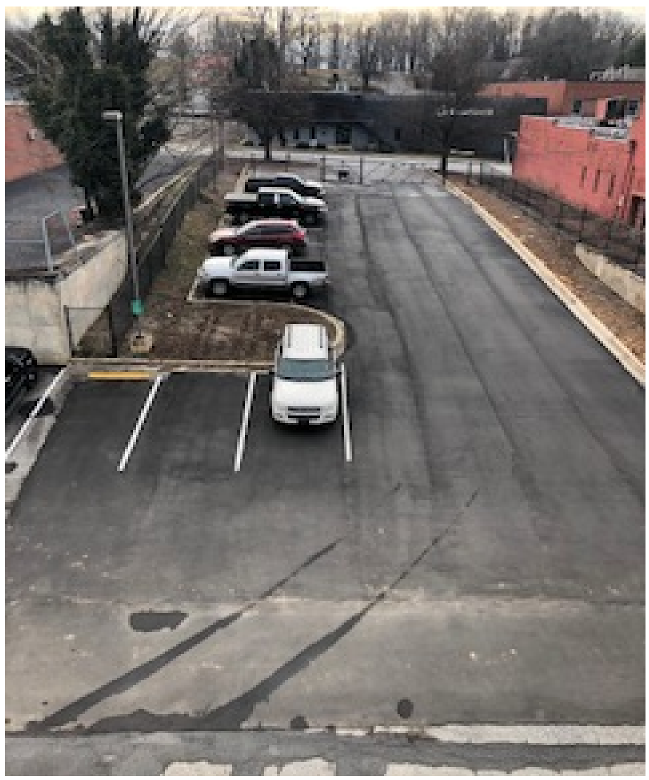
Support services continued to focus on building and facility infrastructure. Various items were replaced this past year. The ice machine and both water fountains were replaced; department members have saved a total of 3297 plastic bottles from this addition. A new roof was installed on the building during this past year and the (2) network copiers were replaced.

Building maintenance staff removed a section of chain link fencing which helped to open up the parking and overhead lighting was replaced with energy efficient LED lights.

With an estimated quote of approximately $80,000 to repave the parking lot of the police department, our department worked with the street department to repair and pave a large section of the parking lot. With the street department utilizing the “hot box”, our department only spent a total of $4,721.04 in asphalt. Our plan is to complete additional sections in coming budget years.

February 2020

January 2021



January 2021

<u>Potential obstacles for the department this year and beyond</u>

<u>Recruitment and Retention of employees:</u>

Recruitment and retention of employees is a problem facing many Law Enforcement agencies across the state. There are a lot of factors that make this unique to every agency. A common theme is that fewer people are choosing to pick this profession. With the increased unrest across our nation this past year, the number of individuals pursuing a career in law enforcement continues to decline. This makes for fewer candidates coming out of BLET; and thus harder to recruit, as all surrounding agencies are working on recruiting the same individuals.

This summer I was meeting with all the shifts individually to communicate items of information about the recent events. In one shift meeting, every officer on the shift admitted they had thought about leaving the profession in the last couple of months. I believe this year more than ever, established officers are looking into other options for employment and different careers. This is a complicated issue to deal with as a law enforcement leader. The national push to defund police agencies is very disheartening and concerning. Society will always need law enforcement officers to respond to traffic crashes, domestic disputes, and to protect human life. The areas in police budgets that would likely be cut are the very things we need more of at this current time (i.e. training, school resource officers, and officers assigned to community resource positions). We need to be finding every possible opportunity to engage with the community when nothing bad is happening. It is impossible to create and build a relationship in the middle of a crisis.

Law Enforcement agencies have to hold officers accountable for intentional acts of misconduct. Leadership has to establish this culture, however officers need to know that agencies will support and stand behind their actions as long as they are following the law and department policies. Focusing on the importance of the officer's job and value in our communities; along with support from our employing agencies, has to be the foundation of this issue. I commend the council and leadership from the manager in the salary increases over the last several years. We realize it is hard for any municipality to make a large salary adjustment in one year's time, but it has to continue to be a focus so we don't lose the ground we have gained.

The professional men and women of the police department and all our departments are our biggest resource.

Code Enforcement concerns:

Since moving the nuisance portion of code enforcement to the police department, it has become an establish part of our response at the Lenoir Police Department. I have said before and still feel that we are doing code enforcement as efficiently as we can with the current resources we have. Finance was able to increase our allotted funding for abatements this past year for police and planning. However we had used more than 50% of that money by the end of August.

With stay at home orders in our community, we have gotten more calls from residents concerning code enforcement issues. Citizens are in their homes and observing things nearby. With one code enforcement officer to follow up on these complaints, it has been over-whelming at times trying to keep up with the demand at our current staffing levels. At the on-set of establishing code enforcement at the police department, Chief Brown informed council there may be a time in the future that additional manpower may be needed in code enforcement. We have tried to work with planning and other supervisors inside the division to manage the work flow of complaints. However, I feel we are at the place within the next several years, council and city leadership will need to decide if this is a top priority and decisions for additional manpower will need to be seriously evaluated. We will continue to strive to make positive impacts in the various neighborhoods throughout our city.

Department evidence room concerns:

The evidence room has been a focus for the department for the last couple of years. This past year, the evidence technician position was restructured from Investigations to Support Services. This is to stream line the chain of command to the support services captain and then directly to the chief.

We have growing concerns with the amount of evidence reaching an overflow point. We have destroyed over 800 pieces of evidence within the last year, but inventory amounts are currently over 44,000 pieces. Space is a concern; however, the bigger issue is evidence destruction. There is a legal process for evidence destruction. Each case has to be researched by the evidence technician to determine if the judge in the case has ruled that the evidence could be destroyed. If the judge didn’t, then a destruction order has to be completed and taken to court to get a judge’s signature in order for us to have legal documentation that the evidence can be destroyed.

The process of gaining legal authority to destroy evidence on a case by case basis is very time consuming. With one fulltime employee focusing on the constant flow into the evidence room, working on the backlog becomes difficult. We have assigned other employees to assist in the evidence room, but they most often are juggling other duties inside the department which makes the process slow.

The department has assigned a back-up tech and this is helping somewhat. But at some point down the road, it is likely we will need a second fulltime position in order to make any headway. We do not have a position that I feel we can efficiently re-classify at this time.

Vehicles for Department:

Our biggest expenditure on a yearly basis is our yearly fleet vehicle cost. This has to remain a matter of expected expenditure in the maintenance of our fleet. We typically need 6-7 vehicles a year to surplus older vehicles before they become unsafe to operate. Vehicle costs continue to rise on a yearly basis which makes it difficult to purchase the number of vehicles and equip them at a professional level. The finance director has been supportive in trying to provide needed amounts for our department, along with meeting the needs of other departments at the same time.

Community Concerns:

Our agency; along with agencies across our nation, will have to continue to look for ways to partner with our community to assist with various community issues we are facing. Some of the community concerns that are not directly a criminal or law enforcement issue are: homelessness, mental health, substance abuse and addiction. We engage with various other organizations and community partners in dealing with these concerns. However, law enforcement does not have resources to resolve these issues for our community members. We cannot arrest our way out of these issues.

Memorandum

To: Mayor, City Council Members and City Manager

From: Radford L. Thomas – Director of Public Utilities

Date: January 25, 2021

Re: Public Utilities Department Projects Update

Water

Water Treatment Plant Rehabilitation Project # 2 – **(Completed)** The Bernhardt Water Treatment Plant Project # 2 began in February 2018. It involves adding two new filters, the construction of a mechanical pre-treatment facility and other appurtenances to facilitate the addition of the two filters and mechanical pre-treatment. These structures have been constructed and the equipment for the facilities is now being installed. The cost of the construction is approximately $8.1 million, with a total project budget of just over $10 million. This project is substantially complete and all of the improvements are currently operating and producing water. We are currently finalizing the final adjusting change order and finishing minor punch list items. The remaining item associated with this project is the completion of the sludge removal from the lagoon located next to the lake. This work will be completed outside of the construction contract (completed). The plant is currently operating at a firm capacity of 12 MGD year-round.

Joyceton Water System – **(No Change)** Inquiries have been received concerning the City acquiring the Joyceton Waterworks distribution system. There are no current discussions underway at this time. We have engaged Joyceton in discussions regarding the City of Lenoir contracting with Joyceton to provide meter reading along with billing and collections services. We will continue evaluation of this arrangement and hopefully be ready to move forward with an agreement during the coming year.

Water Meter Replacement Project –The City awarded the Meter Replacement Project to Mueller Systems for the development an AMI meter reading network and the installation of new residential water meters with remote disconnects and all commercial and industrial water meters. The project is currently underway with the completion of the network and the continued work replacing meters over the next two months. Meter replacements are at approximately 65-70% completion. The new network is functional and city staff has already begun to use the analytical data transmitted from the meters to address customer concerns. In addition, the customer portal WaterSmart being developed is up and running on a trial basis for use by the Council and City department heads as a means to measure functionality and troubleshoot any problems in the development. Full deployment of WaterSmart will be triggered by the full deployment of the smart meters. The project is scheduled for full deployment in 2021.

Finley Area Water System /Pressure Improvements Project – This project was identified and placed in the CIP several years ago. Its purpose is to improve the low pressure concerns in the area around the Finley water tank through system improvements that create a medium pressure zone in the specified area. Preliminary engineering has been completed and the report was used for a funding application that was submitted to the State Revolving Fund in the fall of 2020. We are currently waiting for the acceptance of the application and funding approval from the State SRF program. The end results of this project will provide better water pressure and well as improved fire protection to the identified area.

Collections and Utility Service Policy and Fees Review – With the implementation of the new metering system, staff will begin a review of our current policies and fees related to service applications, cut on and cut off procedures and policies. Billing and collection policies will also be reviewed during this time. The technology in the new smart meters is much more expensive than the analog meters we have traditionally used. Fees for tampering with or damaging a meter will need to be increased to reflect the increased cost of the meters and the transmitters associated with the AMI network. We will also review the current water and sewer tap fees to make sure they are adequately covering our cost for a new service installation. This process is ongoing at this time.

Water Plant Capacity Expansion Study – **(Completed)** There is currently study underway with McGill Associates to evaluate the requirements for expanding the treatment capacity of the water treatment plant. Current capacity is 12 MGD. The study is looking at the construction, permitting and site requirements for expanding to 14 MGD and in the future to up to 18 MGD. The evaluation of permitting requirements for expansion is on-going.

Water Distribution System Evaluation – **(Completed)** This evaluation performed an analysis of the distribution system for improvements that may be needed to accommodate the potential new flow being distributed as a result of the improvements/expansion at the water plant and increased customer demands. The study evaluated pumping capacity, pipe sizes, storage capabilities and potential pressure restrictions/ medium pressure zones. The results have been beneficial in planning future system improvements and provide information that will address projects that are currently on the CIP or may need to be included in future CIP development.

Sewer

Bio-solids System Improvements – This project is currently underway and has made great progress in spite of delays in manufacturing and shipping of certain pieces of equipment due to the pandemic. The City received an SRF loan in the amount of $6.6 million for the design and construction of a new bio-solids treatment process and facility. The interest rate on the loan is 1.53%. Council received a report from McGill Associates recommending the Gryphon Drying system. Council approved the dryer purchase in February of 2019. The notice to proceed with the construction project was issued in January 2020 and the contractor has been on site and project construction is well underway. The dryer unit and belt press are on site and installed. We have just received shipment of the conveyor system that moves the sludge from the belt press to the dryer and installation of this equipment is currently underway.

Smith Crossroads Sewer Line Project – An application was submitted to NC Division of Water Infrastructure in October of 2018 for an SRF loan to fund the sewer line replacement and rehabilitation from the manhole behind Yoke Fellow to the golf course. As we continue to have manholes in this location that will overflow during heavy and extended rain events, this project is a portion of a larger project in the CIP along Harper Avenue. Due to the continued problems, it was decided to move more quickly with a project to address the concerns associated with the overflows. NC DWI approved the loan application in late February 2019. The design of the sewer line relocation or replacement will take into consideration options to accommodate the extension of the greenway through Smith Crossroads towards the golf course. The bridge area brings into question whether or not the line location will complicate being able to extend the path under the bridge or even if the line can be relocated at all due to the bridge structure. NC DWI has approved our loan package in the amount of $2.7 million. The amount was increased due to the addition of additional work to eliminate a sewer line that runs under the major intersection of US 321 and Hwy 18/64 at Smith Crossroads. Design of the project is near completion at this time as we finalize easement maps and minor design changes.

Stormwater Permitting for Lower Creek WWTP and Gunpowder Creek WWTP – The Utilities Department is working in conjunction with the Public Works Department regarding stormwater permitting for several city facilities. Sharing resources will reduce duplicating work and reduce expenses for the development of the permit requirements. (See Jared Wright's information in the Public Works project update).

Water/Sewer

Risk and Resiliency Analysis, Source Water Planning and Emergency Response Plan Development

The Utilities Department entered into a service agreement with Freese and Nichols, Inc. in January 2020 to assist with the compliance requirements for the American Water Infrastructure Act of 2018 (Sec. 2013 Community Water Risk and Resilience) as well as assistance to comply with North Carolina General Statute 130A-320, Source Water Protection Planning (15A NCAC 18C .1305). Their services will be utilized to develop a Drinking Water Risk and Resiliency Assessment, a Source Water Protection Plan and an Emergency Response Plan according to the requirements set forth in the federal and state legislation previously mentioned. The Risk and Resiliency Assessment has been completed and submitted to EPA the last week of December 2020. Work is now beginning on the Emergency Response Plan and the Source Water Protection Plan. The deadline for the completion of this work is June 30, 2021. A copy of the plan must be submitted to the state and EPA by that date. Funds for the implementation of the recommended improvements identified in the RRA were included in the CIP last year. The improvements will enhance security and emergency response capabilities at the facilities in the water treatment and distribution systems.

R-5745 (Taylorsville Rd widening/turn lane plus intersection improvements to US64/NC90/NC18 intersection)

(Completed) This NCDOT project consists of intersection improvements at the intersection of US 64/NC 90/NC 18 (Wilkesboro Boulevard) and US 64/NC 90 (Taylorsville Road). It is proposed as a "complete streets" project, because of the close proximity to the schools, and the opportunities to tie in with existing and planned sidewalk and greenway networks. Water and Sewer line relocation is estimated at $54,294. This project is still under construction. **The utility relocation for this project was completed in November 2018.**

Brownfields/EPA Assessment Grant

The city was awarded an EPA Brownfield Assessment Grant in April of 2018. Work will continue with Greg Icenhour, our consultant with Mid Atlantic Engineering and Environmental Solutions, to implement the grant through the execution of Phase I and Phase II environmental assessments on identified sites. The evaluation of several sites has been completed including the old City Service Cleaners location on Harper Avenue as well as the old Bost Lumber site, the former Norfolk Southern depot and the former Blue Belle building. The City has had continued involvement with the former Blue Belle site assisting with asbestos and lead evaluation. In addition, the grant allowed the city to complete an evaluation of the old Western Auto building in downtown with Phase I and II environmental studies as well as asbestos and lead evaluations. We were also able to assist the new owner of the former Gibbons Electric building with an underground storage tank evaluation. Completed site assessments thus far are the Old City Service Cleaners, Bost Lumber site, old Blue Bell site, former Western Auto site, former Gibbons Electric site (as previously mentioned) as well as the former Jo Jas Service Station and the old Norfolk Southern freight Depot. Current focus is on the old Broyhill site for cleanup and assessment. The purpose of the funding is to conduct environmental assessments on locations that were once manufacturing facilities or properties such as the former dry cleaning service location. The grant will enhance the city's ability to market and reuse some of the existing properties located in Lenoir. This funding is a key strategy to the implementation of the Funkytown/Fairfield South small area plan.
<u>Appalachian Regional Commission Grant for Site Cleanup</u> - In addition, we have been able to leverage the EPA grant and receive ARC funding to assist with the cleanup of the old Broyhill site owned by the city at the corner of Virginia Street and College Avenue. Debris removal is currently underway. RCI Demolition is on site and the project is entering week three of an eight week project timeline. The ARC grant is funding $300,000 of the cleanup with the City contributing $250,000 towards the cleanup. Once the site is cleared of all the debris, a complete Phase 2 environmental analysis funded by the EPA Grant can be conducted. Once the Phase 2 data is available the city can complete the application for a Brownfield agreement for this property. Approximately $40,000 of EPA funds will be used as part of this project to fund the Brownfield Agreement application and cover the cost of the Phase 2 environmental assessment.

Public Works Department

510-B Greer Circle SW
Lenoir, North Carolina 28645

Public Works Director
Jared Wright
(828) 757-2183

Public Works Department – Annual Report for Calendar Year 2020

<u>Engineering Division</u> (2 FTE)

- Worked with the Sanitation Division and WPCOG to complete the automated collection conversion:
  - Finalized procurement of third automated truck
  - Overhauled Sanitation ordinance – presented to Council April, 2020
  - Developed educational material and coordinated printing and distribution
  - Assisted with cart distribution
  - Worked with the public on compliance and account issues
  - Coordinated implementation of new routes and collection procedures with staff and WPCOG

- Facilitated execution of a *Master Services Agreement* with Mattern & Craig for transportation engineering services – presented to Council March, 2020;

- Worked with City Manager, Public Utilities Director, legal counsel, and Bernhardt Inc. to revise a lease arrangement between the City and Bernhardt for property located on the Public Works and Public Utilities Facility campus – presented to Council March 2020 (new agreement effective January, 2021);

- Worked with McGill Associates to finalize street construction design and easement documents for the Linkside connector street, "Hotel Street". The City formally acquired one parcel adjacent to Hibriten Drive in April, 2020. Two remaining parcels have been appraised, but the valuations will be revised to reflect changes in future property use by the City (deeded right-of-way vs. ownership). This project is ongoing;

- Worked with the Street Division to advertise, bid, and award the two-year asphalt resurfacing contract for FY2020-2022 – presented to Council July, 2020;

- Assisted the Street Division and Police Department for an updated on-street parking plan for Norwood Street – presented to Council June, 2020 (implementation complete);

- Worked with McGill Associates and Waterlife Church staff to design and develop easement documents for the greenway trail through the Waterlife Church parcel (ongoing);

- Submitted the "Notice of Intent" and application packet to NCDEQ for the required *Industrial Stormwater Discharge Permit* for the Public Works Facility; received the Certificate of Coverage for permit compliance; began discussions with Mattern & Craig for assistance with drafting the Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) for the facility. **NOTE** The Public Utilities Department filed for similar discharge permits at the Lower Creek and Gunpowder WWTP's. The Public Works and Utilities Departments have shared resources throughout the filing process for each permit;

- Worked with the Street Division to develop a repair plan for Circle Drive in the Lower Creek area. This street is deteriorating due to subgrade failure – presented to Council in October, 2020;

- Coordinated with the Street Division, Parks and Recreation Department, and McGill Associates to design and permit a large culvert replacement on the greenway near US321 – presented to Council September, 2020 (ongoing);

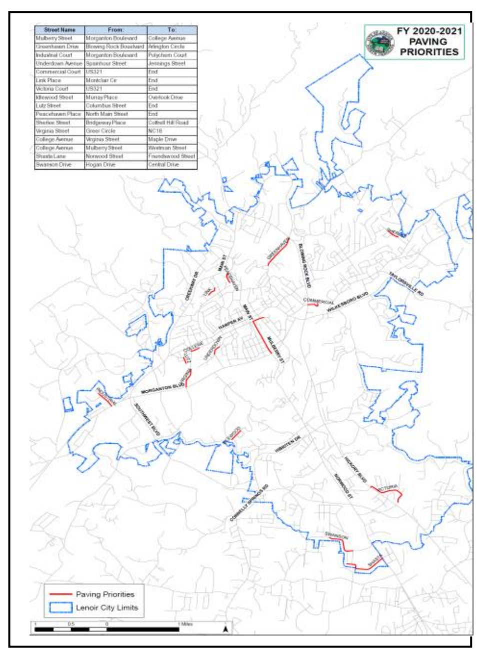
- Worked with the Planning Department and Mattern & Craig to submit a funding application to the NC *Recreational Trails Program.* The application was successful and the City has been awarded a grant for the maximum amount of $250,000.00. This funding will be used to design and construct the OVNHT trail connection from Harper/West Avenue to the former depot south of College Avenue – presented to Council April, 2020 (project ongoing);

- Worked with the Cemeteries Division to develop a bid package for downtown pruning (contracted work completed January, 2021);

- Following NCDOT's authorization to proceed with right-of-way acquisition for the Hospital Avenue Sidewalk project, coordinated with design and property consultants to begin property valuations for the corridor (ongoing).

<u>Street Division</u> (15 FTE)

- Supervised resurfacing of seven (7) streets in the City of Lenoir to complete the 2-year resurfacing contract (throughout FY19-20 a total of 19 streets segments were resurfaced: 12 in 2019 and 7 in 2020);



- Assisted the Engineering Division with development of a bid package for the FY2020-2022 resurfacing contract; solicited bids from six (6) paving contractors, reviewed received bids, and conducted preliminary meeting(s) with the successful bidder; readied streets for resurfacing;

- Performed sidewalk and curb & gutter repairs on Mulberry Street prior to resurfacing;

- Performed full-depth removal and replacement of asphalt patches on Greenhaven Drive and Industrial Court prior to resurfacing. **These were extensive repairs and required removal of existing material down to the stone subgrade**;

- Mulberry Street and Greenhaven Drive were identified as **strategic paving priorities** in CY2019. These streets were prioritized for improvements based on the completion of significant private improvements (Mulberry Street), and rapid degradation of a primary entrance to downtown (Greenhaven Drive). Strategic paving initiatives for CY2021 will include Hospital Avenue, following completion of the *Hospital Avenue Sidewalk Project*, and streets serving Parkview Estates (further details on page 11). Strategic resurfacing offers staff administrative latitude to make necessary improvements to streets, on a limited basis, outside of the predetermined resurfacing schedule dictated by the current pavement condition assessment (2017). Street conditions, economic factors, or development pressures may influence prioritization for certain street resurfacing through the strategic approach without significantly deviating from the larger resurfacing schedule.

- Assisted the Engineering Division and Police Department with a parking study on the one-way section of Norwood Street; repainted parking spaces in accordance with study findings; installed new signage indicating parking restrictions;

- Repaired, resurfaced, and restriped the rear parking lot of the Police Department. **This item was identified in the 2019 summary and outlook as a much-needed facility repair**;

- Constructed paved walking trails at Optimist Park, including grading, stone subgrade placement, and asphalt paving;

- Constructed the upper loop connection paved trail at Wilson Park, including grading, stone subgrade placement, and asphalt paving;

- Assisted the Fire Department with two (2) emergency operations: demolishing a structure on Virginia Street that was collapsing due to water damage; sorting through a burnt structure on College Avenue searching for possible victims;

- Standard operations included the following:
  - Completed 2,346 work orders
  - Hauled 885 loads of brush **(approximately 18,000 cubic yards of debris)**
  - 90 uses of “Hot Box” asphalt recycling equipment
    - 62 potholes and 85 utility cuts patched
  - Completed 47 work orders for other City departments

<u>Sanitation Division</u> (13 FTE)

- Completed the transition to *Automated Refuse Collection*. The conversion process began in late 2019 and included the following:
  - Procurement of three (3) automated refuse trucks
  - Procurement of approximately 9,000 95 gallon rollout carts
  - Wholesale revision of the Solid Waste Collection Ordinance
  - Wholesale revision of Monday – Friday collection routes
  - Customer education, cart distribution, ordinance and route implementation, driver training

- Administered the roll-off dumpster rental program from February through October
  - 54 dumpster rentals

- Performed seasonal loose leaf collection from later October through January, 2021. ****NOTE**** Prior to the conversion to automated collection, the division relied on seasonal labor to staff leaf collection crews. Over the past several years, seasonal staff has been difficult to hire and retain. During the 2020-2021 leaf collection season the division performed this service only using current, full time staff. The staffing reorganization that resulted from the automated conversion allowed the use of current employees;

- ****NOTE** The Sanitation Division experienced seven (7) staffing changes during CY2020. Two of these positions were automated truck drivers.**

<u>Building Maintenance Division</u> (6 FTE)

- Completed the renovation of City Hall's first floor: this project included demolition and removal of existing wall partitions and collections counter, new wall framing and finishing, floor coverings, painting, installation of a new collections counter, and ADA accessible entrance improvements;

- Installed LED lighting at City facilities; this is an ongoing project with more facilities planned for installation during CY2021. A summary of completed facilities and installed light fixtures is included:

Facility	QTY (Total Lights Replaced)
City Hall	140
Public Works	195
PW Garage	125
LFD 1 - Headquarters	220
LFD 2	225
PD	344
TOTAL	**1249**

- Installed pole lights and assisted the IT Division with camera installation at Unity Park Community Garden;
- Installed touchless water fountains at City Hall and Public Works (additional installations ongoing);
- Assisted the Public Works Sanitation Division with seasonal leaf collection and new garbage cart distribution;
- Standard operations included the following:
  - Completed 135 work orders
  - Performed monthly inspections of City buildings (exit signage, plumbing, lighting, and HVAC systems)
  - Performed maintenance and repairs on City-owned traffic signals (downtown area)
  - Installed and removed downtown Christmas decorations and large Christmas tree

<u>Cemeteries Division</u> (6 FTE)

- Assisted the Engineering Division with assembling a bid packet for downtown pruning; solicited bids from nine (9) contractors; provided project management and coordination for the pruning project;

- Hosted the annual Luminary Display at Blue Ridge Memorial Park (approximately 8,000 bags). **NOTE** The Luminary Display typically requires 70-100 volunteers to assist with candle lighting. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, use of volunteers was not possible in 2020. In an effort to hold the event as planned, we attempted to use LED tea-light candles in place of traditional candles. Preliminary tests under controlled conditions (dark room, indoors) yielded acceptable results, however the actual event was not successful. LED will NOT be used again;

- Performed custodial services for City Hall;

- Performed cleaning and sanitizing at City Hall and Public Works;

- Standard operations included the following:
    - Seasonal maintenance of City cemeteries (Blue Ridge, Bellview, Fairfield – approximately 30 acres total), managed grave site and monument sales, performed regular Downtown grounds maintenance, street and sidewalk cleaning, tree and shrub pruning, and refuse removal
    - Conducted gravesite sales – 109
    - Conducted marker, scroll plate, and vase sales – 61
    - Accepted full payment and recorded deeds for lots – 87
    - Assisted with grave layout for burials – 174

<u>Vehicle Services Division</u> (4 FTE)

- Continued implementation of a more structured preventative maintenance plan for all City-owned equipment and vehicles. Off-site service call trending reflects the success of this initiative:
    - 2016 – 111 calls; 2017 – 72 calls; 2018 – 47 calls; 2019 – 42 calls, **2020 – 35 calls**

- Continued with updating and refining processes for inventory control:
    - Assembled service "kits" for common and larger vehicles consisting of required filters and other maintenance items. These kits can be pulled from the shelf ready to use, which increases efficiency and decreases down time for service or repairs
    - Negotiated a parts swap with a local parts supplier to exchange obsolete inventory for store credit or inventory that fits current fleet vehicles

- Rebuilt the lithium ion battery pack for a hybrid fleet vehicle. The core was provided free of charge, with battery cells being swapped and individually charged over the course of several days. The cost for a new Li-ion battery was $9,500.00. **Staff only had labor/shop time in rebuilding the replacement battery;**

- Performed engine swap for a rear-loader garbage truck (underway): This truck suffered a catastrophic engine failure in 2020, but otherwise is one of the better rear loader trucks in the fleet. Sanitation staff desperately wanted to keep the truck for future use. Replacement engines ranged from $7000.00 (rebuilt) to $30,000.00 (factory – new). With any of these options being cost prohibitive, Vehicle Services staff located a bus with the same engine in a nearby municipality and successfully bid on the bus through auction. The engine swap required transfer of parts (turbo, wiring harness, etc.) and software programming, but the total cost of the swap is approximately **$2,500.00** (including bus and small parts). Vehicle Services staff also salvaged other parts from the bus chassis that will be used on fleet vehicles. The total value of salvaged parts is **$3,800.00**;

- Removed, straightened, and rebuilt boom on mini-excavator: Replacement costs would have exceeded $5,000.00. The total cost to perform the repair was **$1,500.00**;

- Standard operations included the following:
    - Completed 1,434 work orders
    - During CY2020 the Vehicle Services Division had <u>zero (0)</u> lost-time accidents. **This is the second consecutive year with no lost-time accidents.**

Public Works Department – Calendar Year 2020 Concerns and considerations (update), and Calendar Year 2021 outlook:

- <u>Implementation of Automated Refuse Collection (update):</u>

  The conversion to automated solid waste collection began in Q4, 2019, with procurement of automated collection trucks and the hiring of WPCOG to assist with route re-design, ordinance revision, and development of educational material. An additional truck was purchased in March, 2020, and ordinance revisions were adopted in April, 2020. Rollout cart purchase and delivery commenced in Q2, 2020, with deliveries to customers beginning in early May. Due to issues with addressing and correct solid waste fee assessment, the process of delivering carts to customers was ongoing through July. We also began operating under the new ordinance procedures in July, including scheduled bulk collection and specific cart requirements for collection. New routes were finalized in August and implemented during the first week of September. Driver training (placing a navigator in the vehicle to call out turns, etc.) was conducted from September through November. Automated collection, including new routes and collection procedures, has been fully operational since November, 2020.

  The conversion process brought to light a number of challenges. The first and perhaps most difficult to address was solid waste fee accounting and correct fee assessment. The cart delivery process was based on an address list developed from a combination of postal service addresses, tax map addresses, and utility account holders. Using these criteria to create the distribution list appeared to be reasonably accurate, but we soon discovered issues with address points, numerous customers that received collection service with fee assessment, and/or multiple units receiving service under one fee assessment (multi-family). Throughout the summer months Public Works administrative staff conducted a city-wide audit of accounts on a street-by-street basis. Letters were delivered to customers without accounts, notifying them of suspension of service, or in the case of multi-unit customers with a single account, the assessment of additional fees for each serviceable unit. Staff also coordinated cart deliveries to customers who were originally missed and customers wishing to lease additional carts. Statistics for the account audit, with ongoing updates, are presented below:

- **864 containers** delivered by staff after initial deliveries were completed by contract crews (these reflect the addressing issues noted above);
- **628 "additional containers"** delivered to customers; each additional container costs $5/month (billed with solid waste fee); Total additional container charges are **$3,140.00/month**;
- **20** customers were receiving service beyond the City limits (service suspended);
- **280** customers were discovered to have been receiving service with no solid waste or utility account in-place; **89** customers have established accounts since being notified;
- **300** customers were discovered to have utility accounts but no provisions for solid waste fees; solid waste fees have been added to these existing accounts; Total new solid waste fees for 89 new customers and 300 existing customers (389 total) are **$3,890.00/month**;
- **58** "special pick-ups" (backdoor service, physician's note required) have been added, for a total of **74 special pick-ups**.

The automated conversion process also required a change to yard waste collection procedures. "Brush" is collected by the Street Division using a grapple or "knuckle-boom" truck. Smaller piles of leafy debris, grass clippings, pruning debris, or other organics have been manually collected by Sanitation Division staff on Wednesdays and Thursdays. During ordinance revision, we sought to allow customers to continue using green rollout carts previously purchased from the City for yard waste. These carts would not be allowed for household garbage, but using them for yard waste accomplished two goals: allowing customers a use for a cart they purchased prior to the conversion; and containing small debris piles in a bin that is mechanically dumped (instead of requiring manual handling of the pile or container), thus benefitting staff. We anticipated continuing to collect yard waste on Wednesdays, along with newly scheduled collection of bulk items. We did not, however, anticipate the demand for yard waste collection service in the green, rollout carts. Due to high demand, it became apparent that the entire, city-wide route for yard waste collection could not be completed in the given two-day time. After the initial cart delivery issues were addressed during the summer months, call/compliant volume for missed yard waste collection has far outpaced standard, missed garbage pick-up calls. This has prompted staff to plan for changing the yard waste collection schedule from Wednesday/Thursday to collection on the same day as household garbage pick-up. This change will occur after concluding loose leaf collections season (November, 2020 thru January, 2021) since the same staff members will be used to perform both of these services.

A final issue worth noting is customer compliance with bulk item collections. While many customers are using the online scheduling tool or calling to schedule a bulk pick-up, we also consistently encounter piles of refuse that have been placed curbside without proper scheduling. When all other garbage is placed in rollout carts, these piles that are not collected and remain at the street negatively impact the appearance of the City in general. We do have a tagging system in place for customer notification of issues, and certified letters have been delivered to frequent offenders, but this is a persistent issue that will require a more dedicated approach to enforcement. The revised ordinance contained provisions for increasing fines for solid waste violations. Fines for non-compliance, in accordance with the escalating fine schedule found in the ordinance, may be necessary in the current year and beyond.

- Capital Improvements – Vehicle/Equipment Needs (update):

In an effort to assemble a comprehensive list of capital/equipment needs, each Division superintendent supplied a list of vehicle and equipment replacements to be entered into the CIP. These have been ranked based on priority.

Division	Equipment Description	Comment	Cost ($)	Priority
Streets	Single Axle Dump Truck	Replacement for MY1997 Truck	$125,000.00	High
Streets	Single Axle Dump Truck	Replacement for MY1998 Truck	$125,000.00	High
Streets	Single Axle Dump Truck	Replacement for MY 2000 Truck	$125,000.00	Mod.
Streets	Single Axle Dump Truck	Replacement for MY 2005 Truck	$125,000.00	Mod.
Streets	1-Ton Service Truck	Replacement for MY 2004 Truck	$60,000.00	High
Streets	Asphalt Tack Truck	Replacement for MY1987 Truck	$250,000.00	Mod.
Streets	Motor Grader	Replacement for MY1991 Equip.	$275,000.00	Mod.
Streets	Wheeled Loader	Replacement for MY1991 Equip.	$210,000.00	Mod.
Streets	Skid Steer Loader	Replacement for MY2008 Equip.	$85,000.00	Mod.
STREETS TOTAL			**$1,380,000.00**	
Sanitation	Automated Garbage Truck	Replacement for MY2009 Truck	$330,000.00	Mod.
Sanitation	Automated Leaf Collection Truck	Replacement for Pull-Behind Vac.	$275,000.00	High
Sanitation	Pak-Rat Small Garbage Truck	Replacement for MY2000 Truck	$120,000.00	High
SANITATION TOTAL			**$725,000.00**	
Building Maintenance	Light Duty Truck - 1/2 ton 4WD	Replacement for MY2002 Truck	$30,000.00	High
BM TOTAL			**$30,000.00**	
Vehicle Services	Above-Ground 2 Post Lift	Replacement of Existing Lift	$20,000.00	High
VS TOTAL			**$20,000.00**	
Cemeteries	Light Duty Truck - 1/2 ton 4WD	Replacement for MY2005 Truck	$30,000.00	High
Cemeteries	Zero-Turn Mower 60"	Replacement for MY2012 Mower	$13,000.00	Mod.
CEMETERIES TOTAL			**$43,000.00**	

- Capital Improvements – Facilities (update):

In FY2019-2020 we began discussing the need for a City-wide *Asset Inventory and Assessment* specifically for City facilities. A primary goal of this effort was to assemble documentation about the architectural and structural integrity of each building or facility, including details about building system components: structural – foundations, walls, and roof covering conditions, MEP – mechanical systems including HVAC, electrical, and plumbing systems, and civil/site features – pavements, sidewalks, and drainage systems. This documentation for each facility, which will include building dates, equipment installation details, dates, and warranties, will be used to forecast scheduled building improvements and direct programming for recurring capital improvements.

In late 2019-early 2020 we completed roof replacements on four (4) facilities. Additionally, during these calendar years we've also replaced a number of HVAC units at various facilities. Projects of this type will be entered into the assessment of each facility.

The Building Maintenance Division will lead the assessment project. Their historical knowledge of the facilities and trade expertise will be invaluable to this large project. We anticipate completing facility assessments in CY2021. The final document or data set will be a living document, to be updated as projects are identified and completed.

A list of short term facility needs, based on staff recommendation, is included below:

Facility	Project Description	Comment	Priority
City Hall	Stucco/Plaster Exterior	Small areas of cracking/deter.	High
Clock Tower	Stucco/Plaster Exterior	Significant cracking	High
MLK Center	Roof Replacement	Met with Contractor	High
LAFC	Roof Replacement	Met with Contractor	High
LAFC	Ceiling Replacement	May require asbestos abatement	High
LAFC	Lighting	To follow ceiling improvements	High
LAFC	HVAC (1 unit)	Increasing repair frequency	Mod.
MLK Center	HVAC (1 unit) - multipurpose rm.	Increasing repair frequency	Mod.
MLK Center	Entrance Awning(s)		High
PU Shed	Vactor Shed Roof Replacement		High

- Capital Improvements – Projects (current and future):

  - **Hospital Avenue Sidewalk Project:** After more than one year of delays due to project funding beyond the control of the City, this project has resumed with right-of-way acquisition ongoing, Q1 2021. The City has committed a **$200,000.00** funding match to the $800,000.00 grant funding to complete the project. Construction authorization should follow right-of-way certification in 2021.

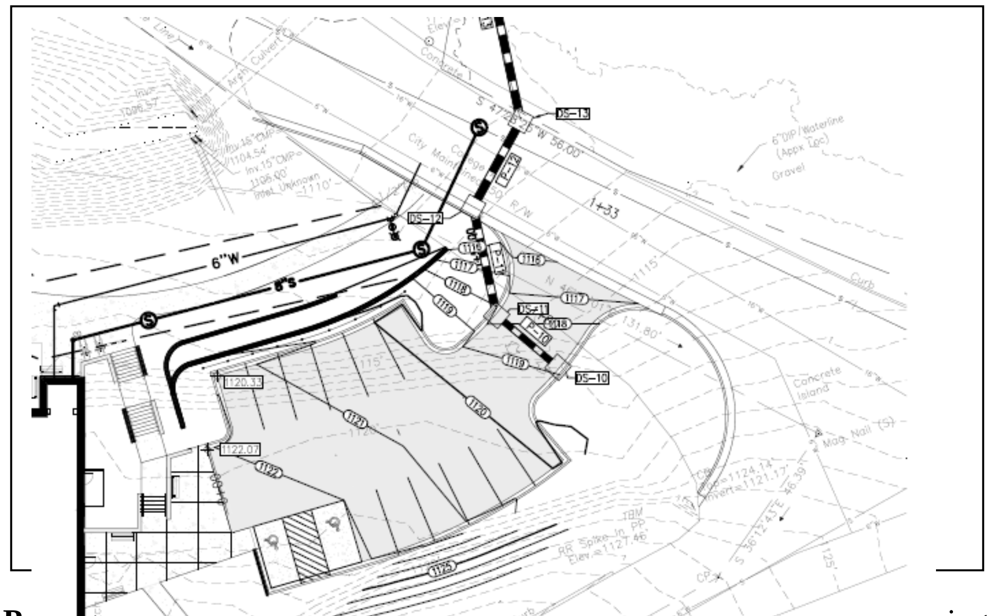
  - **Hotel Street (Linkside Connector)**: Updated design drawings for this project were completed in early 2020. Also in 2020, the City acquired one (1) parcel outright to prepare for completion of the roadway. Two (2) remaining parcels are currently being re-appraised to prepare for City acquisition. A preliminary budget of **$100,000.00** has been established for this project.

  - **Harper/West Avenue Two-Way Street Conversion:** Following the 2018 study completed by transportation engineer Ramey, Kemp & Associates, this large project was divided into potential phases should the City decide to move forward with converting the one-way streets of Harper and West Avenue to two-way. The first phase, 1A, which included the public closure of Steel Street, has been completed appurtenant to the ongoing historic mill redevelopment projects. Phase 1B includes geometric revisions to the Harper and West Avenue intersection (western end). Completion of this phase will complement development of the OVNHT trail connection from West Avenue to College Avenue. The trail connection, noted below, has received grant funding to assist with design and construction. Field survey work related to the trail was also targeted to include this intersection, in anticipation of the larger goal of intersection improvements in order to facilitate the trail crossing.

  - **RTP Trail Grant:** Beginning in April, 2020, City staff partnered with Mattern & Craig to submit a funding application to the state's *Recreational Trails Program*. The scope of the application included securing funding to complete the OVNHT trail connection between Harper/West Avenue and the former depot site south of College Avenue. During previous planning for the construction of OVNHT, staff had identified the complexity of street crossings(s) in these locations. With the trail largely following the existing rail bed, and the rail bed's crossing angles of Harper and College Avenue, the geometry of these crossings presented significant challenges to maintaining pedestrian safety. With these issues in mind, the RTP funding application was developed to include an engineered study, design, and construction of the connection between these points.

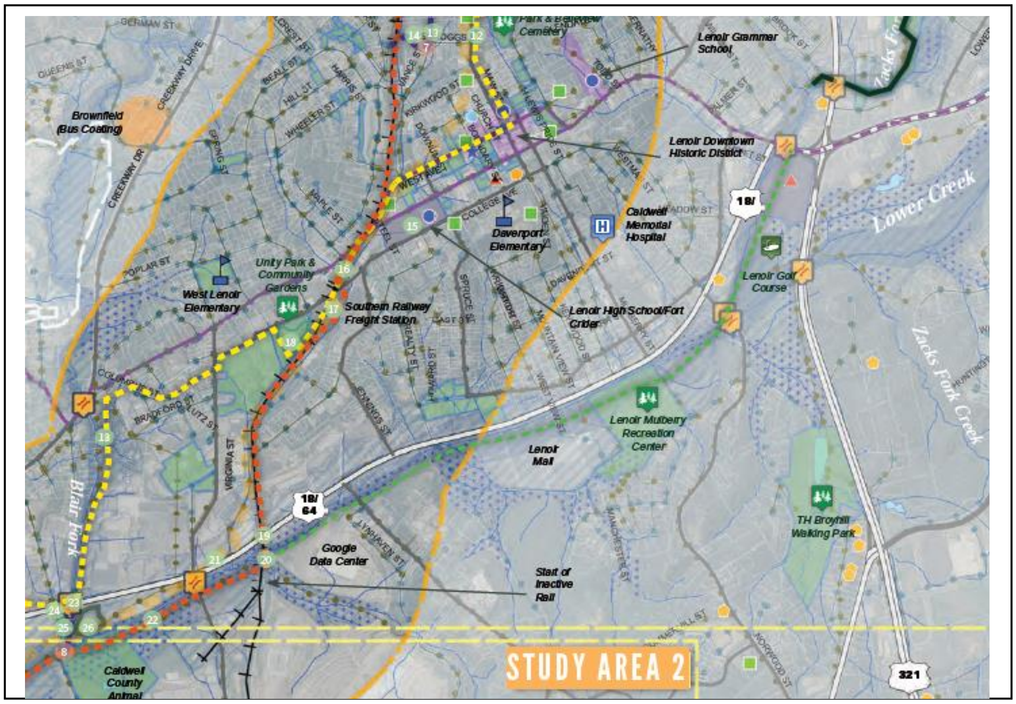
In December, 2020, City staff was notified that the funding application was successful, and we were awarded a grant for the maximum amount of **$250,000.00.** The City's matching contribution for this funding is **$62,500.00**. Survey work in this area has been completed. As formal agreements are being recorded in the immediate future, a project timeline will be developed and work is set to continue.

- **College Avenue Infrastructure Improvements:** As part of the much anticipated private redevelopment of historic mill buildings (Blue Bell, Steel) west of downtown, the City agreed to perform specific infrastructure improvements within the public right-of-way in the vicinity of these projects. These improvements are targeted to facilitate parking and driveway, pedestrian, and utility connections from the private development(s) to existing City infrastructure. The total City-borne cost for improvements has been estimated to be **$62,732.00**. An excerpt from the civil plans is included below:



- **Parkview Estates Improvements:** In early 2020 City staff began discussing possible single-family home construction in an existing subdivision, Parkview Estates. Development in this area had been largely stagnant in recent years, and many of the existing lots were in delinquency. In an effort to provide public improvements in this area and incentivize a potential, significant private investment in housing development, the City considered roadway improvements on Ebel Place, a narrow City street that connects the Parkview subdivision to Powell Road, and a greenway connection from a proposed trailhead on Ebel Place to the existing trail near the Zack's Fork Soccer Complex. Roadway improvements may include a partial widening and resurfacing of Ebel Place, and the greenway connection is planned to follow the former Zack's Fork road right-of-way south of the subdivision. Budgets for these projects are in development.

- **Greenway Expansion – Gaps and Connections:** With the continual expansion of the City's greenway trail and multiuse path network, we've made great strides in constructing additional trail sections in recent years. These expansion projects include the Wilson Field loop, segments of the OVNHT from North Main Street to Morganton Boulevard (excluding the RTP grant funded section), the Optimist Park paths, and the Harrisburg Drive connector constructed by Google. There are several other partially completed sections that are planned for completion in the current fiscal year: Sherlee Street to Severt Circle and through the Mulberry Recreation Center Complex. As new trail sections are completed, we've had the opportunity to highlight gaps in the network and begin focusing on projects to connect existing and new trail sections. Two important connections that are already being planned include a segment through the former Lenoir Mall parking lot (including the Waterlife Church easement), and the Morganton Boulevard crossing poised to connect OVNHT to a future expansion of the Harrisburg Drive/Google project. We anticipate continuing to work with Mattern & Craig to formally identify gaps in the network and actively seek funding opportunities to complement general fund allocations for future trail construction.



OVNHT Master Plan Excerpt

- **Arrowood Street Bridge Replacement:** This project was considered for inclusion in the CIP in early 2019 and remains a priority project for the Public Works Department. This structure is comprised of a timber pile substructure, I-beam spans, and timber-framed end walls and decking. The timber decking is capped with asphalt. Following the 2018 inspection by an NCDOT sub-consultant, this bridge was subject to a significant decrease in load rating (vehicle weight limit) due to recent changes in rating criteria. The resultant load rating excluded safe passage of garbage trucks, emergency vehicles, and school buses. Public Works staff worked closely with the NCDOT and the sub-consultant to revise the rating, with the understanding that replacement of the bridge structure would be necessary in the future.

The 2020 inspection did not affect the load rating, and no significant issues or repairs were noted. Public Works Street Division staff continues to perform regular maintenance on the asphalt surface, which deteriorates due to movement of the timber floor.

Working with Mattern & Craig, a preliminary engineering report (PER) based on the 2018 and 2020 inspections, as well as field reconnaissance by staff has been developed. Should a funding opportunity be identified for this project, the PER should position the City to submit any required application(s) or justification for funding assistance.

- **ADA Transition Plan:** Updates to the City's ADA Transition Plan are underway. This is a combined effort among several departments being led by the City's Risk Manager. The updates are comprehensive and will include identification of compliance barriers in public spaces (facilities and sidewalks), and programming for necessary repairs and upgrades to achieve compliance. Project types will include accessible sidewalk ramps (complete with tactile markings) at street intersections, and facility improvements (ingress and egress paths, door-pulls, signage and visibility improvements, etc.).

- **Blue Ridge Memorial Park Expansion:** In 2019, the Public Works Cemeteries Division staff contracted to survey and layout the last remaining developable section of Blue Ridge Memorial Park. This work added several hundred additional gravesites to the existing 8,000+ sites in the park. While this addition should meet the City's needs for 4-5 years, a cemetery master plan focusing on design and preliminary development of the remaining 15 acres is still a priority for the Cemeteries Division.

  In addition to a master plan for remaining cemetery acreage, construction of additional columbarium niche space continues to be a high priority. We are currently at 100% occupancy of columbarium space, and requests for internments of this type are increasing each year. We currently offer burial of cremated remains in traditional gravesites as an accommodation, but dedicated columbarium space is preferred. 2018-2019 costs for columbarium construction range from **$20,000.00 - $25,000.00**.

Submitted by:

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