

Lenoir Planning Retreat Agenda – Friday, February 23, 2024

J.E. Broyhill Civic Center, Room #215

8:00 a.m.-11:45 a.m.

Breakfast [8:00am]

Call to Order, Introductions & Opening Remarks - Mayor Joe Gibbons/Anthony Starr [8:30am]

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

Customer Service Team Update - Autumn Moffett/Joshua Harris [8:45am]

State of the City “2023 Review” Presentation - Scott Hildebran/Mayor Gibbons [9:00am]

Break [10:00am]

Presentations [10:15am]

- ***Lenoir Retail Update*** - Matt Jaeger, Senior Portfolio Director, Retail Strategies [30 minutes]
- ***Brownfield Program Update*** - Greg Icenhour, VP/Charlotte Branch Manager, MidAtlantic Associates [15 min.]
- ***Homeless Response Team Program Update*** - Ben Willis, Community & Economic Development Director, Western Piedmont Council of Governments [30 min.]
- ***Population, Housing & Employment Update*** - WPCOG [20 min.]

Review of 2023-24 Strategic Priorities - Scott Hildebran [11:50am]

Questions/Comments - Anthony Starr [12:10pm]

Break - Lunch [12:15pm]

12:45 p.m.-3:00 p.m.

Presentation [12:45pm]

Grant Funding/Projects Review - Scott Hildebran/Donna Bean [60 minutes]

Facilitated Discussion - Priorities - Anthony Starr [1:45pm]

- A. What current issues/projects should be continued as strategic priorities for 2024-25 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 2024-25?
- C. Ranking Exercise

Wrap Up: Questions/Comments - Anthony Starr [2:30pm]

Adjournment [3:00pm]

Budget Planning Retreat – Tuesday, March 26, 2024, 8:30 a.m.

Enclosures

- City of Lenoir Mission/Vision Statement
- 2023 Customer Service Team Update
- Customer Service Keys
- 2023-24 Strategic Priorities
- 2023 Department Updates/2024 Department Focus Areas
 - Communications
 - Finance/Administration
 - Fire Department
 - Main Street
 - Parks & Recreation
 - Planning & Community Development
 - Police Department
 - Public Services (PS)
 - PS - Public Utilities
 - PS - Public Works

Items to be distributed at meeting (February 23)

- State of City 2023 Slide Show
- Presentations – Slides
 - *Lenoir Retail Update*
 - *Brownfield Program Update*
 - *Homeless Response Team Program Update*
 - *Population, Housing & Employment Update*
- Projects Review/Grants

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 and equitable manner.
- to identify, prioritize, plan, and act on opportunities for preserving and improving the quality of life of all of our citizens and community.

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 and equitable*
- *innovative and collaborative*
- *transparent*
- *fiscally responsible*



Customer Service Team 2023 Report

By Autumn Moffett and Josh Harris, Co-Chairs | Jan. 30, 2024

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, visitors, and each other, and to motivate our coworkers through support and recognition of a job well done.

The Customer Service Team continued their efforts in 2023 to provide resources to city staff so that we can all deliver “Service Beyond Measure” to the residents of Lenoir.



MEETINGS

- The Customer Service Team (CST) met monthly throughout the year to plan employee appreciation events, host new hire orientations, create current employee training materials, and to discuss and share citywide service stories.

TRAINING

- CST held 10 new hire customer service orientations throughout the year for both full-time and part-time staff. During each orientation, CST members give an overview of city departments and services, introduce the customer service keys, and set expectations for new employees.
- In 2023, CST continued working on current employee training videos, and was able to complete the Customer Service Key 4 Professionalism skit. Each video highlights a service key, demonstrates good customer service, and is then distributed to each department to watch and discuss. The CST Customer Service Key Videos are on YouTube at:
 - Customer Service Key 1 Personable Skit, <https://youtu.be/xQE1XuhH54c>
 - Customer Service Key 2 Pro-Active Skit, https://youtu.be/LjqNc6_NliM
 - Customer Service Key 3 Effective Communication Skit, <https://youtu.be/n4H5zArYLHY>
 - Customer Service Key 4 Professionalism, <https://youtu.be/HFx998bVCAA>



RESOURCES

- Staff published two Team Talk employee newsletters with the help and input of the CST.
- In 2023, CST continued hosting a city tent at local festivals. The city tent serves as place where citizens can learn more information about the city, the services offered, job opportunities, activities available, and general information about the festivals.

EMPLOYEE APPRECIATION

- CST hosted the Bo's Employee Appreciation event in August. Employees were invited to come out to Bo's for the evening and enjoy loads of fun, free food, and good company.
- CST hosted another Merry Christmas Drawing in December. Employee's names were placed in a drawing for various items, which included a Bluetooth speaker and headphones, family board games, 8 hours off with pay, and much more.
- CST took a break from Take a Break on Us in 2023, but has been making plans for a new and exciting way to implement this program in the spring of 2024.



GOLDEN TICKETS

- In 2023, City employees gave out nearly 30 Golden Ticket nominations to their coworkers. Golden Tickets are given to employees who go above and beyond to provide service beyond measure. CST will be announcing the 2023 Annual Golden Ticket Winner in March.



COMMUNITY EVENTS

- In December, CST organized an employee cereal box food drive. A raffle competition was planned for the drive. For each box of cereal that employees donated, they were entered in to win 8 hours vacation time. Supplies were then donated to Yokefellow to help those in need.



GOALS FOR 2024

- Continue current employee appreciation programs
- Create at least two more Customer Service Key training videos
- Assist with at least two local community fundraiser events such as the School Tools Drive and food donations.

CUSTOMER SERVICE TEAM

- **Autumn Moffett**, Parks & Recreation, Co-Chair
- **Joshua Harris**, Administration, Co-Chair
- **Robert Swanson**, IT
- **Juliana Tripician**, Parks & Recreation
- **Garrett Williams**, Public Works
- **Gary Leonhardt**, Public Works
- **Jeff Church**, Public Utilities
- **Scott Lingle**, Public Utilities
- **Rhonda Hollowell**, Police
- **Crystal McCurry**, Police
- **Keith Owens**, Fire
- **Josh Hollar**, Fire
- **Shane Bowman**, Fire

CUSTOMER SERVICE KEYS

- Key 1 - Personable
- Key 2 - Pro-Active
- Key 3 - Effective Communication
- Key 4 - Professionalism
- Key 5 - Timely and Efficient
- Key 6 - Teamwork
- Key 7 - Equitable Service
- Key 8 - Successful Service Recovery

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



2023 City Council Priorities

1. Continue Efforts to Offer Competitive Compensation and Benefits for Employees
2. Develop a new Comprehensive Plan (which will include a focus on neighborhood planning including West End, Whitnel, and other neighborhoods) and Parks & Recreation Master Plan
3. Continue to develop Strategies to Support Affordable, Workforce, and Market-Rate Housing
4. Continue to Fund & Support Water/Sewer Capital Improvements Plan
5. Continue to Support Minimum Housing and Code Enforcement
6. Continue to evaluate organizational staffing needs, and encourage succession planning and professional development.

COMMUNICATION & PUBLIC INFO REPORT FOR 2023

Joshua Harris, Communication & Public Information Director, Jan. 29, 2024



Accomplishments in 2023

CONTENT

- **82** news releases
- **3,852** photos
- **40** videos that received **17,262** views
- **1,895** website updates
- **3** radio interviews/PSAs
- **475** alerts
- **377** questions & answers
- **1,324** form requests via the website
- **53** messages on the electronic sign at the LFD Station 1
- **38** items for Mayor and Council (*resolutions, speeches, etc.*)
- **46** items for Committees (*Customer Service Team & Wellness Committee*)
- **2** employee newsletters

WEBSITE

Staff created and updated a few new pages on the website last year including:

- [Water Shortage Response Plan](#)
- [Alerts & Notifications](#)
- [Downtown Lenoir Social District](#)

The **Top Pages** for the year excluding the home page were:

#	Page	Views
1	Payment Options	38,203
2	Police	14,526
3	Lenoir Aquatic & Fitness Center	13,678
4	Water & Sewer Service	13,090
5	Jobs	12,371
6	Annual Events	5,852
7	Parks & Recreation	5,386
8	Mulberry Recreation Center	4,916
9	Garbage Collection	4,129
10	Concession Attendants, Scorekeepers, Umpires/Referees (Part-Time)	3,562

TOP NEWS RELEASES:

1. Boil water advisory for southwest portions of Lenoir and Caldwell County, *June 24, 2023*
2. Downtown Lenoir wins Main Street Award, Liquid Roots owners honored as Main Street Champions, *March 23, 2023*
3. Staines hired as next Fire Chief in Lenoir, *May 8, 2023*
4. Halloween events coming up in Lenoir, *Oct. 24, 2023*
5. Starry Night Christmas Parade this Friday, rain or shine!, *Nov. 29, 2023*
6. Light up Lenoir tomorrow in downtown!, *Nov. 15, 2023*
7. Swim lessons still available at the Lenoir Aquatic & Fitness Center, *June 12, 2023*
8. Police dept. brings back second-in-command, promotes new captains, *April 6, 2023*
9. Make your mark on Lenoir's new clock tower, *July 12, 2023*
10. North Carolina Blackberry Festival next weekend in Downtown Lenoir, *July 7, 2023*



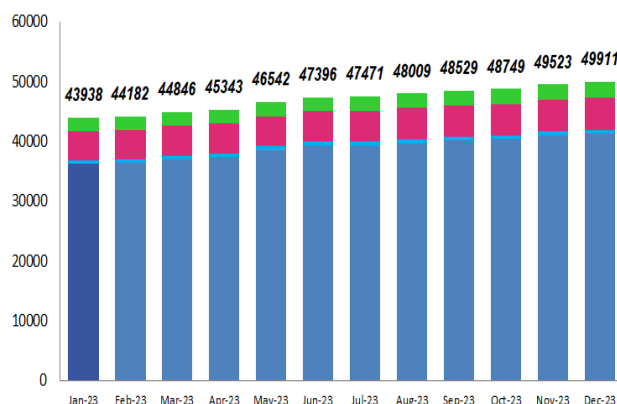
MEDIA COVERAGE

City news releases appeared nearly **300 times** in the local newspaper and on various websites in 2023. Articles appeared **98 times in the local paper**, and **199 times online**.

FOLLOWERS

City followers increased from 44,188 at the start of the year to 49,991 at the end of 2023. That's just over 5,800 new followers, which is a 13.1% increase.

Followers are people on social media who follow our various City pages on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Nextdoor, as well as people who subscribe to our website notifications.



QUESTIONS & REQUESTS

Residents continued to use the Contact Us form and Sanitation request forms last year.

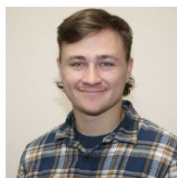
	2023	2022	2021
Questions	377	332	303
Forms	1324	1230	1271



CITYLINK & TEAM TALK

Staff managed the CITYLINK employee intranet. CITYLINK includes the Employee Handbook, Forms, Golden Ticket information, Insurance & Benefits information, Personnel Resolution & Policies, Team Talk, How To videos, and an IT Portal - more than 60 pages of content.

Staff added more than 50 employees to the Staff Directory on the site. The directory includes the employee's name, position, department, phone, email, and start date.



Bryson Avery

Firefighter
Fire
757-2190
Bryson.Avery
@cityoflenoir.com
11/13/2023



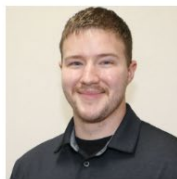
Carmella Tucker

Biosolids Operator
Public Utilities
Public Services
carmella.tucker
@cityoflenoir.com
Lower Creek &
Gunpowder Creek
Wastewater Treatment Plant
7/12/2023



Chloe Tompkins

Lifeguard
Parks and Recreation
chloe.tompkins
@cityoflenoir.com
Lenoir Aquatic & Fitness
Center
6/1/2023



Colton Rich

IT Specialist Assistant
Finance
colton.rich
@ci.lenoir.nc.us
City Hall, Basement
6/9/2023



Crystal McCurry

Telecommunicator
Police
757-2100
@cityoflenoir.com
Police HQ
8/14/2023



Crystal Smith

Human Resources Manager
Finance
ext. 3003
757-2202
ctsmith@ci.lenoir.nc.us
City Hall, 2nd Floor
6/21/1999

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

We held two Employee Litter Sweeps in 2023, one on April 26 and the second on Sept. 27. About 60 City of Lenoir staff picked up 40 bags of trash in April and about 50 employees collected dozens of bags in the fall. The next North Carolina Litter Sweep is set for April 13-27, 2024.



STATE OF THE CITY VIDEO

Last year, after requests from Council, staff asked Caldwell County to record Mayor Joe Gibbons' and City Manager Scott Hildebran's State of the City Presentation. We combined the video with the State of the City presentation to create a video that could be shared and watched online all year.

City of Lenoir 2022 In Review, Feb. 24, 2023 received **795 views on Facebook** and **40 views on YouTube**. The video also played on the Caldwell County Government Channel, Charter Ch. 190.

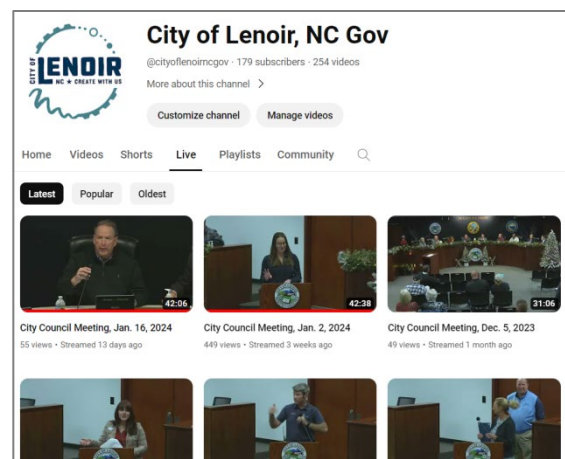


COUNCIL MEETING LIVESTREAMS

Staff started livestreaming Council meetings in 2023. The first Council meeting livestream was Sept. 5, 2023.

In the past, the only way to watch the meeting live was to come in person, or watch the Caldwell County Government Channel on Spectrum. Staff generally posted the Council meetings to YouTube by the end of the week of the meeting.

Now, Council meetings are available to the public as soon as we go live. The meetings automatically show up in the Council Meetings playlist on the YouTube Channel as well as the Council Meetings page on the City website.



GOALS FOR 2024

- Complete an Emergency Communication Plan
- Continue to build the Staff Directory on the CITYLINK Intranet
- Continue State of the City video
- Increase video production by partnering with County studio staff
- Continue growth of followers on social media
- Complete the UNC School of Government Municipal and County Administration Course

TOP FACEBOOK POSTS FOR 2023

City of Lenoir

	If you haven't heard, Nara Express is bac... City of Lenoir, NC Government	Boost post	...	36.6K Reach	44.6K Impressions	1.9K Reactions/Likes, comm...	46 Comments	617 Reactions
	You've probably seen the construction o... City of Lenoir, NC Government	Boost post	...	32.1K Reach	36.6K Impressions	828 Reactions/Likes, comm...	130 Comments	137 Reactions
	The City of Lenoir will be getting a new ... City of Lenoir, NC Government	Boost post	...	31.5K Reach	34.8K Impressions	1.4K Reactions/Likes, comm...	166 Comments	455 Reactions
	Drive-Thru Turkey Tuesday is tomorrow,... City of Lenoir, NC Government	Boost post	...	31.5K Reach	35.3K Impressions	973 Reactions/Likes, comm...	7 Comments	169 Reactions
	Congratulations to Frankie's Pizza on th... City of Lenoir, NC Government	Boost post	...	25.3K Reach	31.3K Impressions	1.2K Reactions/Likes, comm...	17 Comments	320 Reactions

Downtown Lenoir

	Santa Claus is coming to town.... Come ... Downtown Lenoir	Boost post	...	10.9K Reach	12.9K Impressions	327 Reactions/Likes, comm...	8 Comments	37 Reactions
	Carriage Ride tickets are available. 🎁 T... Downtown Lenoir	Boost post	...	10.2K Reach	12K Impressions	329 Reactions/Likes, comm...	9 Comments	70 Reactions
	The 2023 North Carolina Gravity Games ... Downtown Lenoir	Boost post	...	9.5K Reach	11K Impressions	217 Reactions/Likes, comm...	4 Comments	36 Reactions
	Christmas is just around the corner. Join... Downtown Lenoir	Boost post	...	9.5K Reach	12K Impressions	351 Reactions/Likes, comm...	6 Comments	50 Reactions
	Support Local, Shop Small! 🌟... Downtown Lenoir	Boost post	...	8.5K Reach	9.8K Impressions	469 Reactions/Likes, comm...	1 Comments	61 Reactions

Parks & Recreation

	Join us for our Halloween themed run i... Lenoir Parks and Recreation	Boost again	...	31K Reach	137.7K Impressions	650 Reactions/Likes, comm...	64 Comments	296 Reactions
	For more information visit - Lenoir Parks and Recreation	Boost again	...	26.6K Reach	85.1K Impressions	243 Reactions/Likes, comm...	10 Comments	120 Reactions
	What a fantastic week it's been at... Lenoir Parks and Recreation	Boost post	...	4.9K Reach	5.9K Impressions	147 Reactions/Likes, comm...	9 Comments	45 Reactions
	October is here and that means some gr... Lenoir Parks and Recreation	Boost post	...	4.5K Reach	5.5K Impressions	93 Reactions/Likes, comm...	0 Comments	18 Reactions
	Join us for the final music night of the s... Lenoir Parks and Recreation	Boost post	...	4.4K Reach	5K Impressions	71 Reactions/Likes, comm...	1 Comments	4 Reactions

Police Department

	Fentanyl Awareness • Illicit fentanyl is b... City of Lenoir Police Department	Boost post	...	25.4K Reach	30.8K Impressions	1.2K Reactions/Likes, comm...	27 Comments	124 Reactions
	Investigators with the City of Lenoir (NC... City of Lenoir Police Department	Boost post	...	24.4K Reach	32.9K Impressions	264 Reactions/Likes, comm...	7 Comments	27 Reactions
	Downtown Streets in Lenoir will be close... City of Lenoir Police Department	Boost post	...	18.3K Reach	22.8K Impressions	337 Reactions/Likes, comm...	9 Comments	22 Reactions
	Join us at Chick-fil-A at Smith's Crossroa... City of Lenoir Police Department	Boost post	...	17.7K Reach	19.7K Impressions	202 Reactions/Likes, comm...	8 Comments	55 Reactions
	Update 5/12/2023: Subject has been ide... City of Lenoir Police Department	Boost post	...	16.6K Reach	19.7K Impressions	247 Reactions/Likes, comm...	11 Comments	31 Reactions

Fire Department

	PLEASE USE CAUTION!!! Lenoir Fire Dep... City of Lenoir Fire Department	Boost post	...	23.9K Reach	26.2K Impressions	230 Reactions/Likes, comm...	7 Comments	122 Reactions
	Lenoir Fire Department had the pleasur... City of Lenoir Fire Department	Boost post	...	19.5K Reach	21.3K Impressions	463 Reactions/Likes, comm...	17 Comments	304 Reactions
	Welcome Home! Lenoir Fire takes delive... City of Lenoir Fire Department	Boost post	...	14.8K Reach	17K Impressions	882 Reactions/Likes, comm...	18 Comments	305 Reactions
	2/19/2023 Lenoir Fire was dispatched to... City of Lenoir Fire Department	Boost post	...	11.1K Reach	12.2K Impressions	376 Reactions/Likes, comm...	16 Comments	181 Reactions
	Happy National Firefighters Day from Le... City of Lenoir Fire Department	Boost post	...	9.4K Reach	12.1K Impressions	755 Reactions/Likes, comm...	36 Comments	293 Reactions

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](#)
-  [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 2023:

- During 2023, the Collections Department processed over 116,000 transactions totaling over \$29,540,000. The number of transactions was up 7% compared to the prior year and the amount collected was up 6%. The largest percentage of the transactions was water and tax payments. The majority of the transactions were in the form of checks (88%) with cash making up 2% and credit cards being 10%.
- The Finance Department also processed the following:
 - 5,724 vendor checks totaling over \$29,577,000
 - 27,350 utility bills totaling over \$10,070,200
 - \$16,332,280 in property taxes levies
 - 8,210 Payroll Checks/Deposits processed totaling \$13,166,635
 - 395 W-2 Wage Statements
 - 293 job applications
 - 54 new water accounts
 - 11 Worker Compensation claims filed
 - 25 Property and Liability claims filed
 - 186 POs generated
 - 1,128 IT work orders completed
 - 2,823 total phone calls to IT support staff extensions
 - 104 email accounts created or deleted
 - 140 security cameras maintained
 - 20+ door access systems maintained
 - 16+ Unifi Servers maintained (for cameras and door access devices)
 - 185 VOIP phones maintained
 - 450 email addresses maintained
 - 257 desktops/laptops maintained
 - 169 network related pieces of equipment maintained
- The Revenue Collector continued working with Metersys, Fortiline, and Mueller vendors to improve the meter reading billing process. During the past year, the team continued troubleshooting issues to make sure the data in all systems is up-to-date and meters are working properly. The Revenue Collector has worked with meter reading staff verifying meter reads to ensure bills continue to be accurate and on schedule. The new system provides those customers who utilize it a robust platform for bill management. At the end of 2023, approximately 8.8% of customers have created accounts in the new system. Approximately 1/3 of the accounts were created in the past 90 days.

- Finance Staff transitioned to a new compliance auditor for YE 2022. The transition is still going well.
- Strategic Foreclosures have become an important tool for tax collections and code enforcement. Over the past year, 20 new cases were filed and \$74,169 was collected due to foreclosure proceedings. A total of \$267,678 has been collected since 2017 and 126 cases have been referred during that same period. These foreclosures have also assisted in several nuisance properties being clean up.
- The City of Lenoir was awarded the GFOA Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting for the 32nd year.
- The Risk Manager and the newly created position of Safety Coordinator have worked together to spearheaded a targeted focus on safety training and awareness. They have begun auditing each facility to identify safety concerns and have been able to correct several safety issues as well as develop preparedness plans. Some of their accomplishments are as follows:
 - Safety Coordinator completed an update of all Safety Data Sheet books at City facilities
 - Implemented new hire safety check list for supervisors
 - Organized departments to take hazardous materials to county waste day to clean out old hazardous materials
 - Organized hazardous chemical clean up at water and wastewater facilities
 - Coordinated pre-planning walk through with fire departments at the Wastewater and Water Treatment Plants
 - Distributed new hard hats and safety glasses to all departments that require them
 - Implemented eyewash and AED check sheets
 - Completed City wide fire extinguisher inspections
 - Completed Emergency Action Plans (EAP) for Public Works, Water Treatment Plant, and Wastewater Plants
 - Implemented Off-Highway Vehicle driver training program for side by side vehicles
 - Implemented IWORQ pre-trip vehicle inspections for all city vehicles
 - Coordinated Confined Space/Lockout Tagout training for Building
 - Safety Coordinator completed OSHA General Industry instructor course, Confined Space Competent Person training, and Forklift instructor training which will allow him to train City employees.
 - Coordinated CDL training for 2 employees to complete training and obtain their CDLs
 - Coordinated training for Trenching Competent Person for Street Department through Local Technical Assistance Program (LTAP) Road Scholar Program
 - 13 employees received their Forklift Certifications
 - Completed NIMS ICS 100 class
 - Coordinated training for Work Zone installer for Building Maintenance Department through LTAP Road Scholar Program

- The IT Department continued installing security cameras throughout the city. The installation of cameras has increased security for our facilities and has proven beneficial in identifying and resolving various problems and crimes. Some of the major projects were the Water and Wastewater Treatment Plants, T.H. Broyhill Walking Parks and on the greenway.
- The need to evaluate IT security is constant and the IT Manager continually looks for new ways to improve our systems as 2023 continued the trend of cyber threats for all municipal governments. Fortunately, due to measures already in place, the City was able to remain secure. Daily, the City gets an average of twenty serious virus threats and an average of 1,000+ phishing attempts. To make users more aware of potential phishing attempts and security issues, IT established baseline Phishing security tools and continued contracting with a vendor for online training. The vendor trains and interacts with users to determine if they are able to identify and avoid phishing attempts. To combat external security threats, IT staff continues to enable multi-factor authentication on critical accounts.
- IT continued evaluating the current infrastructure and installed network mapping and discovery tools. By having a more organized map of the IT environment, bottlenecks and security concerns are more easily identified. When reviewing the map, single points of failure were identified which assisted in planning network improvements.
- IT staff completed 1,128 work orders in 2023. This does not account for work orders that required Tier 3 support from the IT manager or external work orders that are sometimes necessary to resolve issues. This also does not reflect “hey you” encounters where work orders were not recorded or people have called after hours and remote support has been administered but not entered into iWorQ.
- The workflow for IT is routinely evaluated with the goal of identifying opportunities to streamline the department. One opportunity identified last year was to increase the utilization of the order system iWorQ that was launched to trace and prioritize work orders. The Help Desk support normally prioritized work orders on a first come, first serve basis. To help with organization and response time, IT restricted their workflow to allow for one staff member to have the primary responsibility of work orders. This has provided IT with a much more efficient way of handling incoming support calls. The support staff enters the work orders into iWorQ where they are ranked in order of urgency. As evaluations of the workflow continued this year, IT developed a Troubleshooting Guide to help users arm themselves with knowledge and possibly fix their own issues. It works comparable to a triage for IT. To continue the improvements to this process, IT combined several platforms and utilize a new tool – Ninja One for work orders. Over the past several weeks, the IT Department began transitioning to Ninja One which is a remote management and monitoring help desk platform. This new systems allows for Help Desk tickets to be created straight from an icon on staff’s computers. Help Desk tickets can be generated from an email to colit@ci.lenoir.nc.us or by using voicemail to text translation. This system replaced several different tools that IT uses to manage different systems and allow IT to be more efficient in verifying everyone has the latest software and security updates installed on their equipment. The software has the capability to identify potential problems before they start and recover more quickly in the event of a total hardware failure.

- The upgrade utilizing ARP Funding for cybersecurity is a monumental task that is still a work in progress. New firewalls and a Continuity of Operations (or Business Disaster Recovery) Plan, the City is entering into a new era of having multiple redundancies for system failures and outages. The goal is to make systems that can be quickly or easily replaced to minimize the down time and ensure the City remains operational in a time of extreme circumstances.
- The City's IT department continues working to collaborate with the county for IT related issues. Some decades old practices that led to confusion on who is responsible and corrected the issues. The goal is a clear path forward with open dialogue. The County is upgrading their systems and in the coming months, the goal is to upgrade all of the City systems as well. The future enhance this relationship, both the City and County have contracted with Business Data Solutions to help with intertwined system's migrations. Fiber handoff negotiations with the County are ongoing for abandoned fiber down Harper Avenue. IT is also working with Caldwell County and Business Data Solutions on an E911 migration and LPD Domain Set-up (working on SQL queries which the county does not use, but LPD needs for reporting).
- The Accounts Payable Tech retired in May of 2023 and the Collections Clerk was promoted to the position. The Finance Department was then restructured to utilize the vacant Collections Clerk position as a Network Specialist position to allow for additional focus on the network and to provide a back-up for the IT Manager.
- The server infrastructure is being upgraded with newer, more powerful systems. Due to the growing issues with Microsoft's Hyper-V platform, the City is moving towards a ProxMox VE (Virtual Environment) which is an Open-Source, Supported, Linux-based infrastructure. This will lead to a faster, more stable network and shared resources in the near future. The other benefit will be the ability to upgrade without being vendor-locked (if another technology becomes available, we will be adaptable)
- The IT Manager and staff completed network diagram for new Unifi based network and upgraded legacy network Unifi AP Controller to dedicated hardware server.
- Several infrastructure upgrades were completed to include:
 - Set-up test dish at Public Works to finalize the back-up point to multipoint network on top of Hibriten.
 - Installed a total of 80 cameras located at the Lower Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant, Broyhill Walking Park, Gunpowder Wastewater Treatment Plant, 321 Greenway Underpass (with Solar power) and repaired cameras at Public Works MLK Center, Mulberry Recreation Center, Aquatic Center and City Hall. Maintaining the cameras also requires maintaining the wireless access to the cameras.
 - Installed Lenoir Fire Department fiber.
 - Constructed a network rack at the Lenoir Police Department.
 - Installed a WI-FI Mesh which will broadcast WI-FI signal from multiple access points throughout the campus and cameras at the LHS campus.
 - Work with the vendor to install SONOS Street Sounds wireless sound system.
 - FreePBX, which we have licensing for that does not expire, was install for the VOIP phones.
 - Assisted in media setup and networking for LPD Training Room

- The IT staff is working with the NC National Guard to perform a Pen Test on our system. A Pen Test is a security exercise where a cyber-security expert attempts to find and exploit vulnerabilities in a computer system. Preliminary meetings for scoping have been held and the test should take place in 2024.
- The Risk Manager/Purchasing Agent assisted in multiple building maintenance projects over the past year. One project was the renovations of City Hall. The improvements for City Hall continue. The windows were completed in late 2023 and the outside painting was completed in early 2024. City Hall has received funding from the state for exterior repairs and window replacements in the amount of \$200,000. No significant exterior work had been done since 1982 (41 years ago) when the building was remodeled. The exact date of construction of the building is unknown however, a study by Carter and Burgess dated February 2003, estimates the building is 80 to 114 years old based on the design features. Painting the inside of City Hall as well as flooring replacements are currently underway in City Hall and will be followed by bathroom remodels.

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

- IT plans to continue evaluating 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 be 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 and improve internet speed and reliability.
- IT will continue to 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.
- IT plans to begin transitioning all email accounts over the lenoirnc.gov domain and move accounts to the more secure Microsoft 365 platform.
- The IT Infrastructure/Cybersecurity and Financial software used by the City of Lenoir is in the process being upgraded. The Infrastructure upgrades will include network and firewall upgrades as well as optimizing the data flow to add additional layers of security for the systems and avoid bottlenecks with data flow. By reconfiguring the entry point, virtualizing some storage and restructuring IP addresses, our systems will be even stronger and be able to defend in depth against attempts to gain access to internal systems by blocking unwanted incoming traffic from unrecognized sources. Due to the implementation of the new electronic meter reading system, plans to upgrade the financial software were postponed until after the new meter system was completed. The financial software upgrade date has been moved due to some technical issues with the vendor. The new date is targeted for Summer/Fall 2024 and will take place along with cybersecurity upgrades utilizing American Recovery Plan Act Funding.
- Council and the City Manager have ranked salaries as a priority for several years and again, compensation remains a priority. The COLAs and new pay plan the past few

years have made some progress toward closing the pay gap however; there is still work to be done. 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 eight years and the COLA percentages 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 to become more competitive while staying within the framework of the current pay plan.

- Inflation and current economic times are concerning as budget planning begins.
- Staff will work to maintain information regarding the 40+ projects identified that the City is working on currently. This number has more than doubled in the few past years.



Lenoir Fire Department

602 Harper Avenue, N.W.
Lenoir, North Carolina 28645



Fire Chief
Norman S. Staines
(828) 757-2191
(828) 394-1206 Fax
norman.staines@ci.lenoir.nc.us

Deputy Fire Chief
Kenneth D. Nelson
(828) 757-2192
(828) 394-1206 Fax
knelson@ci.lenoir.nc.us

Calendar year 2023 was a year of change and accomplishments for the Lenoir Fire Department. Chief Kenneth Hair retired on February 1st and during the transition Deputy Chief Kenneth Nelson served as Interim Fire Chief. I began as Fire Chief of Lenoir Fire Department on June 19th. Since my appointment I have spent time learning and evaluating the operations of the department. I have challenged staff to introduce innovative ideas and continue to encourage them to be forward thinking.

2023 was the busiest year for Lenoir Fire Department for calls for service in its 146 year history. Lenoir Fire Department responded to 3,386 calls for service which is a 12.8% increase from 2022. This included 107 fires with 43 of them being structure fires. The estimated value of property and contents pre-fire was \$129,694,075. The estimated value of fire loss of this property and content is \$918,510 which resulted in an estimated potential property and content value savings of \$128,775,565.

The following pages will outline the many accomplishments for the department.

- The new Rescue Pumper Truck arrived in August and is in service. The truck was purchased through HGAG which is a group purchasing organization and is being helped funded through the ARP available funds. The purchase of this truck allows Station 2 to become independent on most motor vehicle accidents. The truck also has 1,000 gallons of water instead of the 750 current Pumper Trucks at Lenoir carry which will aid in fire protection. The truck was equipped with new equipment that included a new set of 10,000 psi extrication tools which allows crews the ability to better extricate patients in newer vehicles. New high combat fire hose and low pressure nozzles which allows an increase in gallons per minute from current nozzles at a reduced pump pressure which in turn provides greater firefighter safety and quicker fire extinguishment. A new Thermal Imaging Camera that has greater capabilities than our current cameras to enhance firefighter safety. **NOTE:** the cost associated with the purchase of this new apparatus is just over \$645,000. The new equipment costs approximately \$90,000.



- We had several members participate in the City’s two “Litter Sweep” events this year. During April’s event, we had fifteen staff members participate and they collected thirteen bags of trash. During September’s event, we had twenty-one staff members participated and they collected twenty bags of trash.
- Parking lot repairs were complete by City of Lenoir Street Department staff. This was to correct a trip hazard that had been located in the parking area in the rear of the station. They were able to use their hot box to patch the area and eliminate the safety concern.
- In May 2023 repairs were made to the creek bank at Station 2. This was completed to help correct erosion issues that had developed. City staff were able to complete these repairs at fraction of the cost.



- We were able to have three new HVAC units installed at Station 1. These replaced the three units that had been having issues. As part of the project, new programmable thermostats were installed to maintain a more constant temperature among the various shifts. **NOTE:** the cost associated with the purchase and installation of these units was \$16,689.
- Four new SCOTT SCBAs were purchased. The SCBAs have been placed into service as part of the replacement plan for SCBA to ensure we maintain SCBA that are with NFPA recommendations for service. **NOTE:** the cost associated with the purchase of the SCBA was \$41,730.71.
- We were able to purchase thirty-two Cairns – 1044 fire helmets and seven sets of turnout gear. The purchase of the helmets and gear allowed the department to have all firefighters in a helmet and turnout gear that is within ten years of its manufactured date as recommended by NFPA. **NOTE:** the cost associated with the purchase of these new helmets and turnout gear is just over \$38,000.
- We were able to purchase a new set of extrication tools to be utilized on an apparatus at Station 1. These 10,000 psi tools will replace an old set of 5,000 psi tools that were approximately twenty-five years old. A set of Hurst tools including a spreader, cutter, ram, and spare batteries were purchased. The importance of the increase in psi capabilities is due to the new vehicle

manufacturing materials and the ability to efficiently extricate a patient in these vehicles. **NOTE:** the cost associated with the purchase of these new tools was \$31,640.70.

- We were able to receive a grant opportunity with the North Carolina League of Municipalities (NCLM). The grant was for Safety and Liability, and we received an Anhydrous Ammonia gas detector and necessary accessories. The cost of the detector and accessories was \$3,474.35 which made our portion \$1,737.17. The gas detector placed on Engine 2 and will give firefighters the ability to detect an anhydrous ammonia leak.
- We began the transition of maintenance and repairs of the large fire apparatus to All Pro. All Pro is an external vendor who has an expertise in fire apparatus and can work on all components of fire apparatus. They were able to offer an expertise that internally we could not match. They offer in-station repairs and maintenance as well as in-shop repair options if needed. Proper preventative maintenance is key to the longevity of our apparatus and All Pro offers a service we cannot match. This transition was completed with the assistance of the Finance Director and Public Works Operations Manager.
- Carcinogens and cancer prevention is an everyday issue within the fire service. With the assistance of Public Works, “Employee Only” and “No Bunker Gear Past This Point” signs were placed in all stations. This is an effort to reduce the cancer-causing carcinogens in the living quarters at all stations. Also, the signs inform visitors of the potential exposure to these potential carcinogens that may be trapped in the carpet.

A second protective hood was issued to all staff to allow them the ability to ensure they always have a clean hood after fires. This encourages staff to clean all protective clothing after fires.

- The clock on Station 1 was repaired. These repairs were a collaboration of building maintenance, safety staff and fire department personnel. As part of the repairs the gears, stems and hand were replaced. The previous clock was placed on the building in 1973 according to departmental records.
- Community engagement is vital to the services we provide. During the year our department conducted 52 classes / presentations to 4,898 citizens. These topics varied from fire safety to CPR. As part of community engagement staff were encouraged to attend City events regardless if our assistance had been requested. They are encouraged to interact with our citizens at these events. Eighty smoke detectors were installed in residences within the Lenoir.



- Collaboration between departments and agencies was a focus during the year. During the planning for events such as Blackberry Festival and the Lenoir Christmas Parade Caldwell County Emergency Services was invited to participate during all planning meetings. In turn, Caldwell County Emergency Services provided staff and equipment to aid in these events. They assisted with located valuable equipment from other counties.
- Training is a daily occurrence for staff at Lenoir Fire Department. Depending upon the position of an employee Lenoir Fire Department training requirements vary. During the year staff completed 19,610 training hours. This number averages to 338 hours per staff member. Topics include EMT in service, firefighter, rescue, fire cause determination and hazardous materials.

Below is a list of concerns and impacts Lenoir Fire Department that may incur in the physical year 2024-25 and beyond. This list has items that were included last year, in addition to added items that have been identified. The staff is designing a more definitive replacement plan to help with future budget planning. Each of these projects are important to the safety and operations of the fire department, but staff understands the need for prioritizing the projects over multiple years:

- We continued to be concerned with the sink hole at Station 1. Public Works continues to move forward with the necessary work to have the repairs completed in 2024. The department continues to work on an operational plan while the repairs are being completed. Currently, we are examining operations and making plans to not have access to the rear parking lot during the repairs.
- By July 1, 2025, all VIPER radios must have software updated to P-25 compliant and older radios will have to be replaced. This project will include replacing eight (8) single head mobile radios, one (1) dual head mobile radio, two (2) base radios and reprogramming thirty-one (31) radios. The estimated cost of this project is \$60,000.
- In August 2023 City of Lenoir Maintenance Staff noticed issues with the roof at Station 1. Screws under the roof membrane are coming loose and causing the membrane to loosen. At that time staff were concerned over time the screws would cause damage to the membrane and in turn cause leaks. During heavy rains in December 2023 three water leaks were located inside the station. Maintenance staff came by after the rain and advised they would help locate the leaks, but the roof would need to be replaced. The roof was installed in 2011, so the company who installed the roof was contacted to come advised options of both temporary and long-term repairs (As of this submission we are still waiting on the company who installed roof to make recommendations).
- A Battalion Chief retired on February 1, 2024. The Deputy Chief, an Assistant Chief, and a Captain could all retire at any time. Each of them has met the years of service requirement for retirement or will this year. In addition, the department has several other officers who will be eligible in the next couple of years. The department will have to focus on leadership development and place more focus on training our newer firefighters to move to the next level. This focus will involve more support of necessary training to ensure we are prepared for these retirements. The training will include all areas of our response capabilities as daily staffing levels, COVID, instructor availability and staff tenure has affected the ability to train staff as we need them to be trained to fully provide all fire, EMS, and rescue services. Examples of staff training deficiencies

include both confined space and trench, which are extremely important due to the facilities we respond to within the City and the unknown of the sinkhole repairs at Station 1.

- NFPA makes recommendations on apparatus replacement based on age of and mileage on apparatus. These recommendations are based upon not only the normal wear and tear on the apparatus, but the enhanced safety features that are installed on the new apparatus. Simple examples are technology in lights from halogen to LED, engine noise level of apparatus and seat belt warning systems. Our fleet continues to get older and with this we are witnessing increased maintenance costs along with inflation increasing cost associated with response. Also, we are starting to have issues with finding replacement parts on some of our older apparatus as vendors are no longer producing and stocking certain parts. Apparatus manufacturers now have delivery dates up to 45 months for custom trucks. Demo trucks are being sold within minutes of being placed for sale. In November, our 1995 Pumper (Engine 1) was determined to be unsafe to drive due to mechanical wear. The purchase of a new Rescue Pumper to be placed at Station 1 would allow equipment to be combined between Engine 1 and Rescue 1 to limit switching between apparatus and ensure they have equipment needed on all calls. This apparatus would replace a 2000 Pumper and a 2004 Rescue truck. The pumper would be moved to a reserve truck to be used while other apparatuses are having maintenance completed and would count as additional credit during our next ISO Response Rating. The rescue truck would be repurposed as a support truck and utilized only on special calls. It would be used to carry fire investigation equipment, large quantities of hy-dry for motor vehicle accidents and similar specialized equipment we must be able to respond to calls, but not often utilized.
- The cancer concern in the fire service continues to be brought to the forefront. It is important for the City to be progressive in helping protect our employees from carcinogens. New signage was installed in 2023 to remind staff to not wear turnout gear on the carpeted areas in the stations. In late 2023 our Fire Investigators were fitted for respirators to be worn during fire investigations to limit exposure to carcinogens. The masks have been ordered and once they arrive investigators will be required to wear these during all fire investigations. As part of being progressive it is necessary to remove all the carpet from Station 1 and Station 2. Carpet may provide more warmth and comfort, but it is more prone to absorbing contaminants. As part of the project wood paneling would be removed from the stations and replaced with sheet rock. This would limit absorption of carcinogens in the wall covering. These wall coverings have been absorbing carcinogens since 1969 at Station 1 and 1974 at Station 2. Bedframes would be replaced at Station 1 and 2 along with some of the furnishings that are worn-out. The bedframes at Station 1 are the original bed frames from 1969 and some have been “patched up” with some being past the point of repair. (Potential funding to complete a portion of this project at Station 1 could be the Lowe’s Hometowns Grant.)
- In 2024-25 COVID is still an issue we face daily. During late 2023 the department internally saw staff testing positive for not only COVID, but RSV and the flu. We continue to encourage staff to be proactive in not spreading the virus in the station and to be aware of their surroundings while off duty. Medical Control is no longer limiting responses to calls as was done during the height of the pandemic. As these sickness cycle through our community, we may be required to purchase additional PPE and cleaning supplies to ensure our staff’s health and safety.
- Employee recruitment and retention is a major concern for our organization. In 2023 we had eight employees resign from the department. The City has been able to make great progress in this area,

but as other fire departments have vacancies they are making similar adjustments to compensation and benefits. Also, we are seeing other departments adding additional positions, which increases opportunities for those seeking a job within the fire service. Turnover is a national issue within the fire service. Surrounding departments are now offering increased benefits such as contributing to 401k, longevity pay, paying for NC Firefighter and Rescue Squad Workers Pension Fund and / or paying for retiree insurance.

- Due to the extreme nature of the fire service and use of tools natural wear and tear occurs. This wear and tear can affect the operations of equipment and can lead to equipment not fully functioning as designed. Safety and technology upgrades on equipment are being constantly made that can increase firefighter safety in utilizing upgraded equipment. Equipment is continuing to be evaluated for future replacement to enhance operations and safety. An example is the Rapid Intervention bag that is currently in use at Lenoir compared to what is now being utilized by the fire service. Current RIT packs allow firefighters to connect their face piece to the RIT pack, but the ones we currently have only allow bottle filling. RIT packs are utilized by firefighters as emergency air supply when they are in trouble within a structure and are having to be rescued by other firefighters. Other examples include, but not limited to ladder belts that are greater than twenty-five (25) years old (NFPA recommends replacement at ten (10) years from manufacture date), rescue harnesses that have been repaired and are outside of NFPA recommended service life of ten (10) years, and ballistic vests that are more than twenty (20) years old. Other power equipment has been maintained, but age is beginning to affect their operations. A recommendation is to make this a multi-year project to replace safety-related equipment initially and then replace other equipment.
- In 2022 Lenoir Fire Department was able to obtain an ISO Class 2 Insurance Rating. Of the possible 105.5 points, Lenoir Fire received an 81.56. The range for a Class 2 is 80.00 to 89.99, so the department must be vigilant to ensure we do not revert to a Class 3 and ideally, we would have a long-term goal on achieving a Class 1. The rating looks at many aspects of a fire department and some such as communications are outside of our control. A review of the documentation from that reviews outlines how points were distributed. Long-term to achieve a Class 1 and ensure we maintain a Class 2 a plan will be developed for location of Station 4, additional personnel, and ability to obtain training by all staff at an approved training facility. Some areas such as pre-fire planning are currently being upgraded internally, which will help in obtaining some additional credit. Current Public Works projects, such as the Finley Water Project, should help with some of the areas of water concern. Initial conversations have been had with Caldwell County to implement Emergency Fire Dispatch (EFD) into fire dispatch to allow for maximum credit on communications.
- The Fire Department has a 2014 Benriche UTV that is operated on various types of events within the City. The current UTV is not highway use approved based upon the North Carolina law that went into effect on October 1, 2021, but in the past has been used on roadway during events such as 5Ks in the downtown district. A new highway approved UTV would allow staff the ability to legally operate it on the highway during both emergency and nonemergency calls for service. The UTV is utilized in both downtown events along with calls for service in areas such as the greenway. (Estimated cost of this project is \$30,000.)



Thank you for your reviewing this report. Our staff appreciates your support and we look forward to continuing to serve the citizens of the City of Lenoir.

Norman S. Staines
Fire Chief, City of Lenoir



Downtown Lenoir & Main Street Revitalization

Below please find a list of goals and objectives for the

City of Lenoir Main Street Program (LMStP)

and Economic Development Department was able to accomplish in 2023.

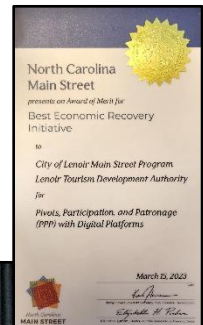
Presented by Kaylynn Horn, Economic Development Main Street Director



As always, before describing the following initiatives of 2023, 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 for their efforts in 2023. Team Lenoir continues to keep 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 that once again **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.**

Downtown Lenoir & Main Street Program Development and Revitalization

- During 2023, 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. The Downtown Lenoir Main Street Program continues to be highlighted during several NC Main Street trainings for employing best practices with regard to program development. During the 2023 NC Main Street Conference, we celebrated the recognition of the following **NC Dept. of Commerce Main Street State Recognition: Best Economic Recovery Initiative ~ Pivots, Participation & Patronage (PPP) of Digital Platforms.**



- Downtown Lenoir NC Main Street Champions** were Downtown property and business owners, Katie and Tyler Brummett & Jamie and Tommy Brubaker. These 2022 Champions were honored during the NC Main Street Conference in March of 2023. The Brummetts and Brubakers are also the recipients of the Gibbons award. Plans are underway to hold a gathering to honor all previous award winners.



- The DLR Group was selected to implement **Lenoir's first Downtown Master Plan**. The DLR Group consulting firm continued their engagement plan during the first quarter of 2023 with the final plan scheduled for adoption in February 2024. The goal of strategic Downtown master planning is to assist the local Municipality, Main Street, Downtown, Economic Development, or planning organization in developing and refining the community's vision for their area of responsibility, the organization's role in making that vision a reality, set several key organizational goals for the coming years and create an implementation plan to achieve the goals. This plan engaged local organizations, community, and appropriate state and regional level partners and stakeholders. Having a Downtown Master Plan in place also helps to clearly communicate to potential grant funders the goals and direction of the Municipality's program and commitment.



- On a national level, the Lenoir Main Street Program (LMStP) continues to work with the **National Park Service / National Main Street Center Façade Improvement Grant**. The Lenoir Main Street Program was honored to be **one of 12 communities from across the country** selected to be a recipient. 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. Jesse Plaster was the first recipient of the funding for an \$18,000 award for the 814 Harper Ave Project (Wolf Moon Salt Cave), Ralph "Chip" Duckett a \$15K award for the 914 West Ave Project (Service League Store), and \$15K award for Debbie Burns for the 128 N Main St Project (Pour House).



- TIME WELL SPENT Clock Tower Sculpture**
"Time Well Spent" ~ **The Lenoir Historic Clock Tower Sculpture** is a project where the celebration of a creative spirit meets a desire to preserve our historic treasures. The O.B. McClintock Co. historic clock has been part of the Downtown Lenoir landscape for more than 100 years. So, when the previous clock tower was showing signs of severe deterioration, creative gears began to spin on what to put in its place. Lenoir and Caldwell County are home to more than 80 pieces of publicly displayed sculpture, and the Western North Carolina Sculpture Center (WNCSC) is just up the road from the city. **This project speaks to the community's appreciation for outdoor sculpture, is unique, and showcases the historic clock and captures our creative spirit.** WNCSC Executive



Director Joe Bigley is producing "Time Well Spent" which will be a 25-foot tall, three-column sculpture that will support the historic City clock. Most of the sculpture will be made of weathering steel, but there will be touches of stained glass and lighting. More importantly, there will be space on the piece for 224 cast-iron tiles that will be created by the public. **"One of the most intriguing aspects of this project is that the community is being invited to take part in the design and creation of this sculpture," Joe Bigley.** "Hundreds of people can create cast iron tiles that will be a permanent part of this sculpture and enjoyed for decades." Project funding sources include: \$60K in private funding, \$5K in tile sales and donations, \$5K in-kind City funds for clock restoration and sculpture foundation.

- **The Downtown Lenoir Development Alliance** nonprofit board serves in advisory capacity roles, such as participation in the engagement plan, for the Downtown Master Plan and Entrepreneur Eco-Systems project, participate in Main Street event promotion; etc. In 2023, the DLDA took the production of the **Blackberry Festival in 2023 and the WOOD.FIRE.SMOKE. Artisan Festival.** The Board is actively pursuing and developing a **loyalty program** and a business passport program which will be launched in 2024.



- **The Lenoir Main Street Program, like all organizations in 2023, began to see a more "return to normal" re: promotional events and activities.**

Some of the pandemic pivot events, like Leprechaun Chase and Elf on a Shelf in a Store in Lenoir were so popular that

we kept them on the schedule along with our traditional offerings.



PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITY & EVENTS	
2/1/23	Love Letter for Local
3/10/23	Leprechaun Chase
4/1/2023 - 11/1/23	Cruise-ins
4/22/23	Bootlegger 100
4/29/23	NC Gravity Games
6/3/23	Lenoir Bike Festival
5/15/23	Lenoir Legends
6/2/23	Neon Night Ride
6/6/23	Summer Music Madness
7/4/23	Stars & Stripes Décor
7/14/23	Blackberry Festival
8/19/23	Southern Sundown 4 Miler
9/1-3/23	Carolina Tattoo & Arts Gathering
10/3/23	Police National Night Out
10/21/23	Wood, Fire, Smoke Festival
10/27/23	Mad Hatter Pumpkin Patch Parade
11/11/23	Veteran's Day Celebration
11/16/23	Winter Wonderland Christmas Décor
11/16/23	Light Up Lenoir
11/24/23	Elf on a Shelf in a Store in Lenoir
11/25/23	Small Business Saturday
11/27-12/23	Christmas Window Display Competition
12/1/23	Christmas Parade
12/1 -20/23	Downtown Carriage Rides

- **City of Lenoir CIP 2024-2025 Reference:**

The New Holiday Light Show and Decor has been very well received by the community. Strategic selection of displays which are “interactive” has encouraged visitors to not only view the display but get out of their vehicles and take selfies and family pictures. After interacting with the displays, many have stayed for a meal or dessert! We have been able to enrich our display each year offering a little something new to the public. This coming year will enter into Phase 3 with the addition of a **selfie spots of a star and JOY card and animated display to view while in the arches**. More **utility pole snowflakes** are planned to extend down Harper Ave toward Hwy 321. An image projector would allow for holiday themes to be illuminated on the facades of Downtown buildings in the squares and utilized throughout the year. Equipment maintenance, electrical infrastructure and replacement needs to be factored in each year. The addition of seasonal baskets and seasonal **banners (Christmas and Patriotic)** have been a welcoming aspect of our gathering events.
Phase 3 Estimated Cost: \$38,675.60



- The LMStP continues to partner with the NC Agriculture Extension Office of Caldwell County while exploring the feasibility of a farmers market option in the Downtown core. With the recent purchase of 1130/1136 Harper Ave,



conversations continue regarding the possibility of providing a more permanent structure to house a **Farmer's Market in an outdoor pavilion**. **Maurer Architecture** has been contracted to **evaluate the conditions and possibilities this structure might yield and/or also consider new construction options**. This type of facility could house not only the market, but serve as a larger outdoor venue. Nestled alongside the Overmountain Victory Trail running through Downtown, the “Overmountain Victory Pavilion” could provide a site to gather for biking events, music events and *Unity Park Community Garden Healthy Eating Demonstrations*, just to name a few.

The impact **farmers markets and permanent outdoor pavilions** make on their local communities inspires place-making, improves the local economy, and preserves rural livelihoods. These markets create and revitalize communities as rich as the produce they sell. Markets bring farmers to urban and rural settings

where consumers shop for fresh, locally grown foods. The direct-to-consumer connection builds relationships between consumers and farmers, giving farmers a source of income and consumers' confidence in the foods they are choosing for their families.

Pavilions recently constructed in our area provide an outdoor venue that is suitable for outdoor concerts and any large gathering (100+), such as a company picnic, awards banquet, fundraiser, family reunion and wedding receptions. These Pavilions have electricity, tables and restrooms for men and women. The impact farmers markets and permanent outdoor pavilions make on their local communities inspires place-making, improves the local economy, and preserves rural livelihoods. These markets create and revitalize communities as rich as the produce they sell.

- The **Lenoir Legends** continued to host their games at Lenoir's Downtown Historic Walker Stadium. This program, coupled with **CCC&TI Cobras program**, will continue to be an asset for our Downtown community. The improvements at Historic Walker Stadium have certainly been an asset for Downtown Lenoir bringing visitor traffic, as well as local support, into Downtown to the benefit of everyone.



- The LMStP Staff continues to work collaboratively with Administration Staff and Public Works Staff to implement City Hall Façade Improvements and replacing the tower for the historic downtown clock. Staff is working with the NC Main Street Center and the faculty and staff in the Architectural Department of UNCG to create design schematics for these external improvements.

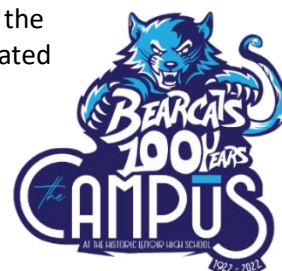


- Economic Development Dept continues to collaborate with the COL Parks and Recreation Department regarding **improvements in the auditorium in the Historic Lenoir High School**. We secured Maurer



Architecture to produce conceptual design work and an opinion of probable cost for both the Auditorium and the Gymnasium.. This work was then incorporated within the **NC Rural Transformation Grant application and we received \$580,000 in grant funding** to put toward this phase of the project. Theater/stage and audio upgrades to the auditorium would provide us with an ideal setting to host a variety of events and meetings. As part of the

Architecture to produce conceptual design work and an opinion of probable cost for both the Auditorium and the Gymnasium.. This work was then incorporated within the **NC Rural Transformation Grant application and we received \$580,000 in grant funding** to put toward this phase of



Downtown Master Plan, **the DLR Group has been charged with evaluating the use** of adjacent buildings in order to maximize the impact of these City owned properties. We are in the final stages of bidding for roof replacement in the Gymnasium and the Band Building and should see new roofs in place in the very near future.

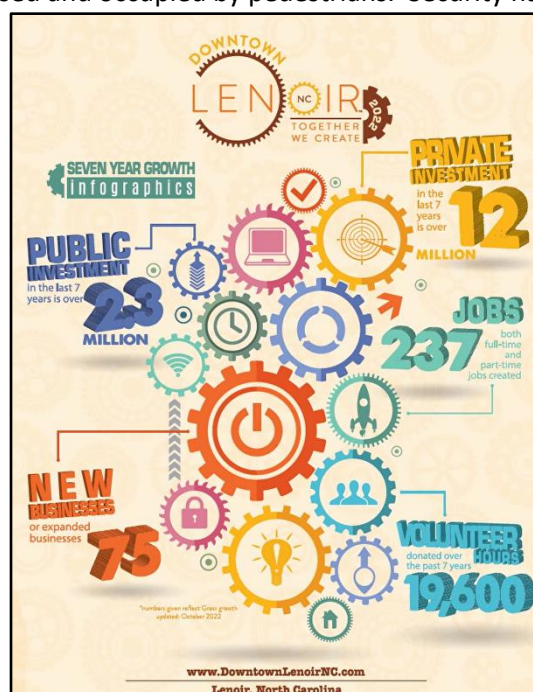


- Downtown Lenoir Social District went into effect in January 2023. The district has been well received by the Downtown businesses and the community. Collaborating with the Lenoir Police Department, Lenoir Planning Department, Public Works and City Council, the LMStP staff helped to establish the Downtown Lenoir Social District. Social districts are areas where people can walk with open, to-go containers of alcoholic beverages in a contiguous area. A social district may include both indoor and outdoor areas of businesses within the defined district during the days and hours established for the social district. The Downtown Lenoir Social District will allow alcoholic beverages to be consumed within district boundaries Wednesday – Saturday 12pm – 10pm. Boundaries for the Social District are clearly marked with sidewalk signage at the entrance and exit areas of the District.



- In addition to the Downtown audio/speaker system and additional power grids installed, the COL Department Staff members continue to implement initiatives that support the **Downtown Lenoir Event Safety and Improvement program**. With the much-appreciated help of Public Works and IT Department, additional **street lighting and video cameras** were installed in the parking lot between Main Street and Mulberry Street to increase the security in that area. Additional **“bike gate” crowd control fences** were purchased to help protect citizens during large events such as the Starry Night Christmas Parade. These fences have proven to be quite effective and beneficial during such events. Police, Parks & Rec, Public Works and the Fire Department assist not only in staffing certain activities, but also in providing heavy equipment when needed 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 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 **40 properties** and initiated conversations with dozens of Downtown property owners interested in renovating their properties. In 2023, we have seen an additional Historic Tax Credit project completed take place within the district and others being considered. Recently, conversations with a property owner on Main Street have indicated another new apartment could be on the way. 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.

- **RECENT PROPERTY ACQUISITIONS:**

PROPERTY ACQUISITIONS / SALES		(former site of)
902 West Ave: Pandorica Open LLC (Daniel & Rebecca Phillips)	2/1/2023	Folk Keepers
214 Church St NW: Jennifer Bennett Williams	1/1/2023	Templeman Eye
221 Boundary St: Zillion Services LLC	3/1/2023	Cook Apartment Building
101 NW Main St: Steven Stewart	6/1/2023	Historic Belk/Younce Insurance
110 Mulberry St SW	11/15/2023	SunTrust

- **RECENT BUSINESS OPENINGS / EXPANSIONS / RELOCATIONS**

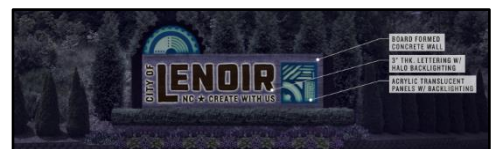
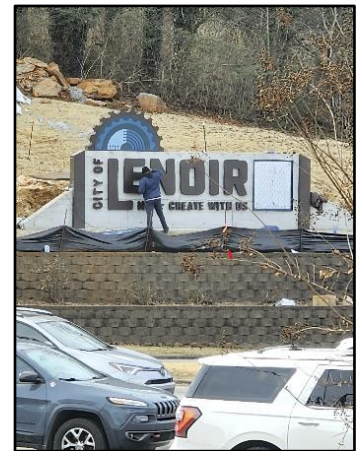
New Businesses	
118 Main St: CCG Cards & Memorabilia	7/1/23
808 Harper Ave Suite 209: Appalachian Pediatric Therapy	7/20/23
808 Harper Ave Suite 203: The Counseling Group	7/20/23
808 Harper Ave Suite 205: Halle CPA, PC	7/31/23
217 N Main St: The Brush & Palette	9/30/23
214 Church St NW: Church Street Medical Center & Aesthetics	10/12/23
1018 Harper Ave: Frankie's Pizza	9/2/23



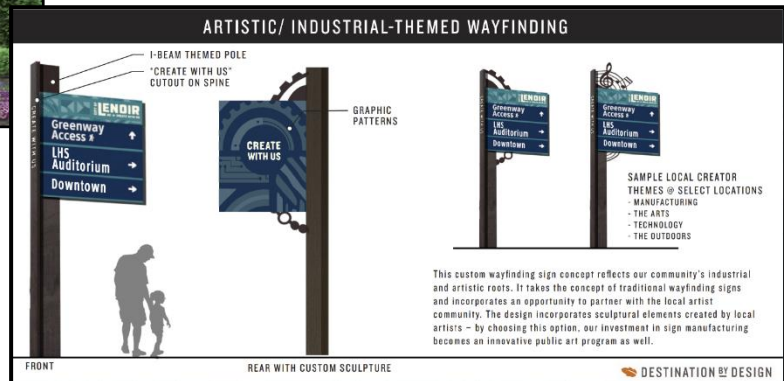
- **Vehicular Sculptural Wayfinding and Gateways** In collaboration with the City of Lenoir's Planning Department and Public Works Dept, the Econ Dev Dept continues to work with Destination by Design, a consulting firm in Boone, NC to produce this unique system. In collaboration with our partners at the WPCOG and the Finance Department, **we are putting the recently awarded \$250,000 ARC**



grant to work to award to help fund the City of Lenoir Sculptural Vehicular Wayfinding sign system. The Team will continue its efforts with DbD to complete the technical aspects of vehicular sign manufacturing and sign location planning. Wayfinding is an excellent way to create a sense of place and tell residents and visitors about our amenities. Investing in wayfinding will 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 Smith Crossroads and head downtown.** Staff is 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!"** The gateway sign at Smith Crossroads is almost complete launching this program in a dramatic way.



This City-wide branding and vehicular wayfinding sign system could be expanded in the future, with subsequent phases being a **coordinated pedestrian-scale wayfinding in the Downtown**, signage along our **Greenways**, and neighborhood “street topper” signs for **neighborhood branding**.



A **well-designed wayfinding system** can convey information effectively and have a positive impact on both individuals and the community through increased comfort and awareness of the users as well as increased visibility for attractions, municipal amenities and local businesses. 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 Smith Crossroads and head downtown, and the LHS Campus Theater Auditorium and Recreational Fields or continue on to find our Mountain Bike Trails, OVT Trails, Greenway MLK and Aquatic Center - to name just a few.

Below please find a list of initiatives/projects the Economic Development Department plans to address in 2024:

- The Lenoir Main Street Program Staff (LMStP) will continue to be actively involved in the **City-wide vehicular wayfinding system and gateway signage projects** currently underway and will work with the Finance Department to administer the **\$250K ARC Grant Award**.
- In collaboration with the DLR Group, the COL Parks and Recreation Department and the Public Works Department discussions will continue in 2023 that focus on the potential use of **The Campus at the Historic Lenoir High School** auditorium and adjacent buildings as potential event spaces in order to maximize the use of these City owned properties. The team will work with the Finance Department to administer **the \$580K RTGF Grant Award**.
- LMStP Staff will work with **the DLR Group** to put the final touches on the **Downtown Master Plan** featuring **The Campus** and the final version will be available for Council adoption in **1st Quarter 2024**.
- LMStP Staff will work collaboratively with the NC Sculpture Center, the Caldwell Arts Council, COL Public Works and Admin. Dept Staff to produce the **TIME WELL SPENT clock tower sculpture** for the Downtown Historic Clock.



- 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 and work with new and existing businesses in the commercial district.**
- The LMStP staff continues to work with the National Main Street Center to manage the **\$48K National Park Service / National Main Street Façade Improvements Grant** and assist property owners through the process.
- The Economic Development Dept will continue to work collaboratively with the Parks & Recreation Department and the Chamber of Commerce to host a stopover for **the Cycle NC event** in October of 2024.
- Through invitations to present at conferences, recognition programs, and marketing efforts, the LMStP and the Economic Development Staff will continue with efforts to **raise the awareness locally, across the State, and nationally about the Lenoir Main Street Program and Downtown Lenoir accomplishments and growth.** LMStP is currently engaged in regional initiatives within the NW prosperity zone of neighboring Main Street communities. These programs include the new **Main to Main Trail program. We have been selected with 7 other communities in NC to host a business development workshop in June 2024 launching this program.** We look forward to sharing more about these programs in the near future.
- The DLDA and LMStP is laying the ground work for loyalty program and an entrepreneur boot camp program, **GEARED UP for GREATNESS** and work with the **National Main Street America Staff coordinating the grant for the Entrepreneur Eco-System award.**
- 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.
- The Economic Development Dept will continue to work collaboratively with the Chamber of Commerce to lay the ground work for the **Take 321 Enjoy the Journey and the Adventure Starts Here** campaign.
- The Economic Development Department will continue to work with Public Works Dept & Parks & Rec to further solidify plans for **an outdoor farmer's market OVT Pavilion venue** for Downtown.
- The Economic Development Department plans to continue providing our community with an engaging and enjoyable holiday experience. We hope to be able to **enhance and improve our existing holiday décor and Downtown Banner System** for Downtown for the enjoyment of our citizens.
- LMStP Staff plans to continue providing our community with an engaging and enjoyable activities and events throughout the year. In addition, the LMStP Staff will work with the DLDA to produce Blackberry Festival and the WOOD.FIRE.SMOKE. Artisan Festival.



Sorry
Chief...
I just
couldn't
take it
out.. ;-)

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.

Thank You for your continued support of the initiatives and goals of the Economic Development Department and the Lenoir Main Street program. Looking forward to ***"Great things in store in 2024!!"***

Kaylynn Horn & Matthew Anthony





Recreation Administrative Offices (828)757-2165 - Fax (828)758-1315

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 2023

- Installed Security Cameras & Signage at Broyhill Walking Park
- Dredging of Broyhill Walking Park completed
- Installed security LED lights at Broyhill Walking Park, Mulberry Recreation Center & Optimist Park office
- New Roof Installed at Mulberry Recreation Center
- Mulch added for playgrounds at Martin Luther King Jr. Center, Optimist Park, Ridge Street Park & Mulberry Recreation Center
- All Playground Equipment at West End Park and 6 sets of benches cleaned and repainted.
- Lights Installed at Mack Cook Stadium
- New fencing installed at Mack Cook Stadium. Handicap area designated at top of concrete Seating
- New Mini Split heating and cooling system installed at Lenoir High School IT room
- New stage floor installed at Lenoir High School Auditorium
- Piano donated to the city for Lenoir High School Auditorium
- New HVAC system installed at Lenoir High School Auditorium
- New concrete wall installed at Martin Luther King Jr. Center near the Tennis Courts
- Men's soccer field established and marked at Wilson Athletic Field. Trash receptacles, and stadium bench seating were placed on site.
- New LED lights installed at the indoor pool
- New LED lights installed at Martin Luther King Jr. Center ballfield, and tennis courts

Updates:

Lenoir High School Property Enhancements:

Renovations on the LHS Auditorium project continued in 2023 with Phase two of this project. Work that has been done in phase two includes general painting & repairs, painting of the walls and ceiling in the entry lobby and main lobby, roofing repairs over the entry lobby, painting of the existing walls in the stage area, replacement of broken glass window panes in the stage area, new HVAC system, conversion of existing Auditorium lighting to LED. Phase two of the project has been completed. These upgrades are being done with CDBG Funds. The gymnasium and band building roofing has been submitted for bid proposals.

Splash Pad:

Initial Contact with McGill Associates for construction of pad, scope of work, and drawings.

Martin Luther King Jr. Center:

Bids collected for exterior paint and door replacement. Bid process started for resurfacing tennis courts Collecting bids for resurfacing tennis courts

Disc Golf:

Staff continues to explore areas within the city to place 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 have been issues.

Below is a list of concerns and impacts Lenoir Parks & Recreation may incur in 2024:

- Replace playground equipment at J.E. Broyhill Park
- Paint the exterior of the MLK Center is expected to begin spring 2024
- Replace the exterior doors at the MLK Center will begin spring 2024
- Replace flooring in lobby and multipurpose rooms at MLK Center/in progress
- New mowers for Parks & Grounds Division request in FY 24-25 budget
- Repaint the indoor and outdoor pools at LAFC.
- Replacing the indoor pool filtration system at Lenoir Aquatic & Fitness Center
- Exterior paint & door replacement at Mulberry Recreation Center(FY 24-25 budget & Lenoir Aquatic & Fitness Center FY24-25

Highlights for future projects:

- Interior/Exterior Renovations to the Optimist Park Clubhouse.
- Renovations to Mulberry Recreation Center (Replace tile flooring, Cut/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).
- Renovations to MLK Center, Cut/Sand/Paint & Refinish gym floor.
- Adding a decktron system to LAFC indoor pool to help with moisture issues.
- Update of the Parks & Recreation Master Plan.

LAFC Improvements (PARTF Grant):

The Recreation Department was awarded the PARTF Grant on November 1, 2022 in the amount of \$500,000. The grant is a 50/50 matching grant. The total project will be a little over 1 million dollars. This project is under way now. The city has three years to complete this project. Met with McGill Associates, looking to receive drawings and scope of work early 2024. Construction scheduled to begin early spring 2024.

West End Park Improvements:

Renovations to the West End Community Park would include updating the shelter and basketball court. This would include painting the shelter, add 4 new picnic tables, two new trash cans, resurfacing the basketball court, replacing some fencing around the court, replace backboards, rims and nets. We may be able to renovate the park by using CDBG funds.

Old City Property – Stage/Prospect Streets (Old Tennis Court Area):

The city owns five or six parcels of land around these streets which at one time had tennis courts and playground equipment on some of the property. The property has not been used in quite a long time. There is no parking at these sites. My suggestion would be to sell the property or possibly work with Habitat for Humanity to see if there is interest.



2024 Strategic Planning Retreat

Planning & Community Development Initiatives & Projects

ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN 2023

- Current Planning

- o The planning department issued 235 zoning permits in 2023, similar to permit numbers in 2022. Applications for single family homes accounted for 33 of those permits, and 11 were for manufactured homes. This is lower than house permits issued in 2022, but still more than pre-pandemic levels.
- o It was a strong year for commercial site development permits. This year, permits for new construction were higher than renovation of existing buildings. New development in 2023 includes
 - Sunshine House Daycare – an early education and childcare company with 100 locations in 7 states
 - Biscuitville – a breakfast QSR
 - Mattress Warehouse
 - Valvoline
 - Urgent Care/T-Mobile in a new two-tenant Building
 - Caldwell County Farm Bureau
- o Other commercial re-development and business expansion in 2023 includes new buildings at Boone Lumber, the Harper Room & Frankie's Pizza in Downtown Lenoir, First Cash Pawn on Blowing Rock Blvd, and updates to the Blue Ridge Community Action building on Ashe Avenue.
- o Planner/GIS Specialist Matt Duchan was hired in June 2023.

- Comprehensive Plan Update

- o Staff issued a Request for Proposals for a Comprehensive Plan in early January, and the selection committee is currently evaluating proposals from various firms. Interviews will be held in late February, with a selection made by the end of the month.
- o The RFP highlights Lenoir's need to focus on neighborhood planning as the building block for tailoring policy concepts. This focus will provide a framework for stabilizing neighborhoods suffering from disinvestment, like West End and Whitnel.
- o NC 160D-501(a) requires that a Comprehensive Plan be in place and "reasonably maintained" in order for a municipality to implement a zoning ordinance.

- Ordinance Amendments

- o Light Retail definition (ZOA 1-23): This amendment added "pawn shop" as part of the definition of light retail, and clarified outdoor display and outdoor storage allowances.
- o Subdivision minor modifications (OA 2-23): This change granted staff the ability to allow minor adjustments to Major Subdivisions administratively, as allowed in GS 160D403(d).
- o Code Revisions GS 14-4: Revisions to seven chapters of the Code of Ordinances that address general good housekeeping and statutory compliance.

- **Code Compliance & Minimum Housing:**
 - o Code Compliance Officer Robert Teague obtained the Certified Zoning Official certification in December, adding to Planning Department's professional legitimacy.
 - o 23 Zoning violations abated
 - o 30 Banner Sign violations abated
 - o 3 city-abated properties
 - o 1 owner-abated property
 - o 1 bid accepted on city-owned property

LOOKING AHEAD IN 2024

- **Current Planning:**
 - o Planning staff has already issued 15 permits issued so far in 2024, including 4 residences.
 - o Police and planning are still coordinating efforts to target housing and nuisance problems.
 - o Mobile Home Park inspections were completed in January 2024.
- **Comprehensive Plan**
 - o The City will contract with a professional planning services firm by early Spring, and will begin coordinating the comprehensive planning process alongside them. This will be the first Comprehensive Plan in Lenoir since 2007, and only the third Comp Plan since Lenoir instituted zoning. We look forward to robust community engagement later this year and forming the plan's recommendations in early 2025.
- **Code Enforcement/Minimum Housing Needs**
 - o The Comp plan will have many recommendations and ordinance changes. Along with neighborhood stabilization tactics, we anticipate policy concepts that deal with commercial code enforcement and repair of nonresidential buildings.
 - Currently, staff is determining what building regulation code exists in Lenoir's ordinances, and what could be added to broaden code enforcement abilities. This background research and the new plan's recommendations will lead the effort in improving Lenoir's building stock.
 - o The three demolitions in 2023 totaled \$42,545. In compliance with state law, all demolition abatements receive an asbestos inspection and abatement (as-needed) prior to demolition. Asbestos mitigation took about one third of the demolition budget, about \$15,000. We continue to send properties to tax foreclosure as well as push for owner abatement.
- **Stormwater Program**
 - o The City is in compliance with the Phase 2 Stormwater regulations. We hold a current National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit for our MS4 (municipal separate storm sewer system). The City contracts the WPCOG to administer the six minimum control measures for the NPDES permit requirements. Coordination with the WPCOG regarding the review and permitting of new developments has been very successful, with the support from Caldwell County Building inspections we have been about to use inspection holds to ensure compliance with stormwater regulations. See the WPCOG's annual report for more details about compliance with the 6 minimum control measures
 - o As a separate service, but also required of the NPDES permit, the WPCOG is mapping the City's entire stormwater system. So far, about 50% (nearly 8,000 features) have been mapped. The mapping will be complete by the June 2026 renewal date.
- **Greenway 911 Location**

- As Lenoir greenways expand, so does the need for increased public safety on the trails and paths. Staff are working on a 911 location and signage system for the greenway in-house. The goal is to post a location marker every quarter mile, so that if someone were to call 911 and give a mile marker location, they can be located within 5 feet.
- **User/Business Friendly:**
 - 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. In 2024, staff is looking to implement online forms for permits and code enforcement by expanding our iWorq package. This would cut down on data entry and make the application process and review workflow smoother.
 - The parcel data and GIS service is currently updated quarterly under our current package. The expansion will include weekly parcel data updates, keeping our working permit data with the most recent information.

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.

- **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.
- **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

- iWorq Expansion, \$4,250
 - Portal Home online interface including 3 webforms = \$3,500
 - GIS REST service = \$750
- Greenway 911 Location Signs, \$1000
 - \$25 per sign, about 35 signs
 - Could split over 2 or 3 fiscal years.
- Building Demolition/Legal Fees for Foreclosures: The three demolitions in 2023 totaled \$42,545. Continue to fund at current levels for demolishing structures as well as legal fees related to foreclosing on abandoned houses that are still salvageable.
- 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.



Brent Phelps
Chief

CITY OF LENOIR POLICE

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



Scott Hildebran
City Manager

During the calendar year of 2023, the Lenoir Police Department worked through various community concerns and dealt with the ongoing struggle of hiring good people and retaining the talented employees we currently employ. The following pages will describe and discuss the accomplishments and ongoing work for our agency.

At the beginning of 2023, the department was working through some vacancy issues. We obtained four additional officer positions from the Caldwell County School System. These positions were to fill the open elementary schools in the City of Lenoir with full-time School Resource Officers (SROs). About the same time of the award of these positions, we experienced four retirements from several senior officers. As a result of this circumstance, it allowed for a restructure in our Command Staff and created the opportunity for various individuals to be promoted to new positions. Our department re-instituted the Major's position, which strengthened the command structure of the department. As a result of the retirements and departmental restructure, eleven individuals were promoted in the first quarter of 2023 and two additional promotions occurred in the third quarter of 2023.

One of the ongoing projects our department took the lead on in our area was the creation of a Critical Incident Stress Management Team (CISM). This team was implemented in the fall of 2022 and was comprised of officers from Hickory, Longview, Morganton, and the Newton Police Departments. This team was the first law enforcement certified team in the state. During 2023, the team members deployed to various departments in our area to conduct defusing and debriefing meetings for officers involved in critical incidents. Lieutenant Chris Bumgarner, who leads the team, was asked to speak at the North Carolina Chiefs of Police regional meeting for Region I and II to discuss this program.

Our department; along with agencies from across the country, continues to experience a rise in overdoses, mental health issues, and community concerns regarding homelessness. Our department, as well as others, have worked with the Western Piedmont Council of Government (WPCOG) to collect data and engage the homeless population in our jurisdictions. This will continue to be an ongoing project for our department, as we try to assist and deal with this complicated community concern.

Even though we face a number of 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 2023

PATROL DIVISION

The Patrol Division is the backbone of the agency. The men and women who make up this division are staffed 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. They are the initial responders to all calls for service, no matter the nature of the event. In 2023, the Patrol Division responded to a combined 40,312 self-initiated and response calls for service. Through these service calls, we have been able to provide a safer place for residents and visitors to live, work, and play.

Patrol Officers must be able to respond to any call for service no matter the level of danger or the current weather condition. One of the many on-going equipment projects completed this year was the procurement of new rain jackets for all sworn personnel and 10 new ballistic vests. These items are a necessity for patrol officers in order to conduct normal patrol functions; they must be routinely replaced and/or updated.



Patrol Officer Recognition:

In order for Intermediate and Advanced Law Enforcement Certificates to be awarded, officers must acquire a certain amount of training hours and years of credible experience. In most cases, they must possess four to eight years of credible service to receive this professional certificate.

In 2023, Patrol Corporals M. Foust and S. Woodward received their Advanced Law Enforcement Certificate. Patrol Corporal M. Zambrano received his Intermediate Law Enforcement Certificate.

Sergeant B. MacLeod received his Traffic Crash Reconstructionist Certificate, which requires 400 hours of core classes taken within a ten year period.

Sergeant P. Moser and Officer A. Smith were both Golden Ticket award recipients in 2023. This award recognizes outstanding service provided by our team members.



Captain Jody Herman Graduated from the FBINA:

Captain Herman attended the FBI National Academy Session #287 in Quantico, Virginia. Graduates of the FBI's prestigious National Academy Program represent all 50 states, 194 countries and over 8,200 law enforcement agencies. Over 54,000 graduates have completed the FBINA Program. FBINAA members make up the highest 1% of all senior law enforcement in the world.



Patrol Officers Community Involvement:

Patrol Officers continue to focus their efforts on reports of homeless camps and individuals throughout the City of Lenoir. Officers work with businesses, code enforcement, and property owners to assist the homeless population in locating resources to benefit whatever current situation they may be facing.

Oftentimes these abandoned sites are littered with large amounts of trash and debris that needs to be cleaned up. Patrol Officers make it a priority to aid in renovating these areas to limit the amount of reoccurring incidents, all the while improving the aesthetics of the area.



The Patrol Division partnered with One Blood to host three blood drives in 2023. The blood drive events were held in June, August, and October. We recognize that engaging in community service activities, such as blood drives, helps build positive relationships between the police and community. These events foster trust by showcasing the department's involvement in activities that directly benefit the community outside of law enforcement.



Western Piedmont Council of Government Initiative:

Officers worked with the Western Piedmont Council of Governments over a two-week period to locate and compile data of the homeless population for a pilot homeless initiative program. During that time, officers assisted personnel from the WPCOG with locating and documenting cases of unsheltered people.

Critical Incident Stress Management Team:

Patrol Lt. Chris Bumgarner oversees the Foothills Regional Law Enforcement Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) team. The primary focus of the team is to provide regular one-on-one peer support, as well as post critical incident group intervention. In 2023, CISM team members from Lenoir PD participated in seven group interventions (defusing / debriefing). Three of those interventions were held for our officers following critical incidents, with the remaining four being in support of other agencies.

A Community Grant from Wal-Mart in the amount of \$2,948.00 was awarded to the CISM team. These funds are being used to provide advanced training opportunities for CISM team members.

Lt. Bumgarner presented at the North Carolina Association of Chiefs of Police Regions I and II training in November. He discussed the development of the regional CISM team and the impact the team has had in the region since its inception.



CRIMINAL INVESTIGATIONS DIVISION:

During 2023, the Criminal Investigations Division (CID) continued to work diligently with the citizens of Lenoir and within our various communities to investigate criminal acts and deter criminal activities of all types. CID investigated an array of cases in 2023, totaling 756. Crimes against persons and property will continue to be a top priority to assure our citizens have a safe place to live, work and play.

Nuisance:

Investigators continue to work closely with Code Enforcement and the city's planning department to address nuisance violations within our neighborhoods. They work with property owners whenever possible to address various nuisance issues. In 2023, focused efforts resulted in 157 properties being investigated for a variety of nuisance violations. Of the 157 cases, 127 were abated either by the property owner or by the City of Lenoir. Pictured below are some of the properties abated in 2023:



1415 Meadowlane Drive before abatement



1415 Meadowlane Drive after abatement



1216 Spainhour Street before abatement



1216 Spainhour Street after abatement

Opioid Crisis:

The opioid crisis continues to affect the lives of many families throughout the City of Lenoir and Caldwell County. Detectives investigated a total of 140 overdoses in 2023, with 93 of these being directly attributed to opioid use. These overdoses disrupt the lives of families and their loved ones, all around our community, state and nation. Our Narcotics Investigators work with local, state and federal agencies to combat the flow of illegal narcotics coming into the area. In 2023, our officers seized \$4,041,426.00 worth of illegal narcotics inside the City of Lenoir and assisted other agencies with a seizure of \$568,650.70 worth of narcotics in the area. Cases of criminals illegally distributing these various forms of deadly narcotics to our citizens will continue to be a top priority.

Below are photographs from a few of the many drug seizures from 2023:



Through the continued support of city council, city staff and citizens, investigators have been able to obtain advanced technological audio/video equipment in order to efficiently and effectively investigate criminal activity. As technology advances in society, so do the criminals who commit these crimes. In order to investigate incidents thoroughly, it is important that we remain current with equipment needs, offer training opportunities, and network with other local, state and federal agencies. Application of these resources will improve success rates for our investigators and help provide our citizens with the tranquility they so deserve.

Support Services

The Support Services Division manages and oversees various administrative and response functions for the police department. These functions include training, logistics, records, evidence, community services, and the communications center. In February of 2023, our C-Platoon was transferred into Support Services, which includes School Resource Officers, Traffic Enforcement, Downtown, Parking, and Community Resources.

Upgrades:

This past year, the Support Services Division oversaw a \$50,000 renovation project of the Lenoir Police Department training room.



During Renovation



After Renovation

Communications Center:

The communications center saw an increase in calls for service during 2023. Communications received 65,916 total phone calls. Of those calls, 7,398 were processed as 911 emergency calls and 11,460 were non-911 calls for service. The communications center processed 20,881 officer-initiated calls and made 40,329 CAD entries. In addition, communication's personnel processed and received 333 after-hours water and sewer service calls for the City of Lenoir.



Staffing levels for the communications center continue to be a focus in order to provide effective and efficient services to the community. In excess of being staffed, our communications personnel continue to advance their level of knowledge through various training, and certification opportunities. Angela Crawley and Zylah Walker completed Telecommunications Certification, which is now a state mandated requirement for municipal police agencies. Bethany Clark and Avery Hollingsworth were appointed A-TAC leaders, Terminal Agency Coordinators for DCI in June of 2023. Bethany Clark completed Basic Hostage Negotiations and de-escalation courses; she received certificates for both.

Training:

The training section of the Lenoir Police Department is responsible for all hiring processes, promotional processes, as well as overseeing annual in-service training and maintaining records on officer certifications. During 2023, the training section oversaw 30 background investigations and 11 hiring processes (9 police officers and 2 civilian employees.)

The training section also implements, coordinates and tracks training for all department personnel throughout the year. In 2023, LPD personnel participated in 6,718 training hours.

At the end of the each year, the Training Coordinator is tasked with preparing and submitting an agency compliance report to the State. The 2023 report was completed and submitted at the beginning of January of 2024.

Evidence:

In 2023, Evidence Tech J. Kerley processed 2,349 pieces of incoming evidence. She was able to destroy; per Court Order, 1,399 pieces of evidence. She took in 246 pounds of unused or unwanted medication through two community events and our department's lobby drop box.

Logistics:

The Logistics Lieutenant for the Lenoir Police Department oversees all asset inventory and purchasing for the department, as well as assists in Internal Affairs. In 2023, Logistics procured seven new vehicles for the department. Four of those vehicles were assigned to the Patrol Division and three were allocated as administrative vehicles. Our Logistics Lieutenant performed an inventory audit of our equipment and assets during the year in order to account for issued and possessed inventory. The procurement of a cargo container aided with the evidence overflow and larger items of evidence storage needs.

Community Resources (C-Platoon):

The department's Community Resource Platoon observed many changes in 2023, starting with a transfer from the Patrol Division to Support Services. Over the course of 2023, this platoon obtained four newly appointed School Resource Officer (SRO) positions granted and funded by the State of North Carolina. All schools in the City of Lenoir are now staffed by a Lenoir Police Department SRO. In addition to the newly assigned SRO positions, Corporal Lynn developed a Field Training Program designed specifically for the role of a School Resource Officer.

In 2023, officers from C-Platoon attended several job fairs, conducted numerous business and religious facility security assessments, held tours for groups of students of our facility, and aided in special projects and events throughout the City.



Upgraded Drone:

This past year, our department upgraded our drone. This gives the department the ability to effectively scan large crowds, check rooftops, look for missing people, as well as assist in a number of other law enforcement duties. Within the first couple of months, this piece of equipment assisted in quickly locating a missing child at a large downtown event.









Training:

C-Platoon held training sessions for active shooter situations for the faculty and staff of all the schools in our City. They also conducted active shooter classes specifically for upper classmen at Hibriten High School. Officers of C-Platoon participated in active shooter response training and juvenile law and de-escalation training. They also conducted several site surveys and threat assessments of local businesses, as well as site surveys of all schools within our City. In addition, MPO C. Smith conducted classes for middle school students on bullying and cyber bullying. SROs H. Reid and C. Rubio received their Intermediate Law Enforcement Certification.

Schools:

School Resource Officers conducted over 35 lock down drills and assisted in over 20 fire drills in our city schools. LPD SROs organized and scheduled four K9 sniffs of school properties, with the assistance of K9 Officers.

SROs also started a mentorship program involving at-risk students. They attempt to have positive interactions with students identified by school staff as being troubled. They endeavor to have positive interactions with these students at least twice a month. In addition, our C-Platoon established a reading program in the elementary schools where SROs read to classes weekly.

In 2023, LPD SROs provided security for over more than 50 school sporting events, as well as security for Hibriten High School's graduation and Project graduation, which was held at Bo's Entertainment.

Some photos of SRO school activity and interactions are shown below:



POTENTIAL OBSTACLES FOR THIS YEAR AND BEYOND

Recruitment And Retention Of Employees:

The professional men and women of the department and all city departments are our biggest resource. Capturing and retaining dedicated employees is essential. And yet, recruitment and retention is an ongoing issue facing the law enforcement profession nationwide. Our department is no exception; we will need to continue our focus on overcoming this obstacle in the future. If there was a single contributing factor, our agency and other agencies could correct the issue. However, the majority of agencies are seeing officers retire or leave the profession altogether. Filling those vacancies is becoming more difficult, with fewer applicants applying.

Huge efforts have been made in the past several years to align our starting salary to a more competitive level. However; as our starting pay rises, so too does it rise for surrounding departments. We reached out to 17 agencies and captured their pay in the table below, with the year 2024 sorted from highest to lowest. Lenoir currently sits at number 11 out of 17 for starting pay. In 2023, we lost two officers to the NC Highway Patrol due to a higher pay incentive.

Agency	2022	Current 2024
Appalachian State University PD	X	\$ 62,382.32
Hickory Police Department	\$ 45,000.00	\$ 55,000.00
North Carolina Highway Patrol	X	\$ 51,852.00
Boone Police Department	\$ 40,286.00	\$ 50,967.00
Catawba County Sheriff's Office	\$ 40,215.00	\$ 46,545.42
Morganton DPS	\$ 42,760.00	\$ 46,020.00
Lincolnton Police Department	\$ 41,670.00	\$ 45,990.00
Granite Falls Police Department	\$ 34,503.00	\$ 45,012.24
Caldwell County Sheriff's Office	\$ 41,606.00	\$ 45,000.00
Blowing Rock Police Department	\$ 39,064.00	\$ 44,916.00
Lenoir Police Department	\$ 36,014.00	\$ 44,217.72
Conover Police Department	\$ 38,699.00	\$ 43,726.00
Hudson Police Department	\$ 35,507.00	\$ 43,488.00
Newton Police Department	\$ 38,702.00	\$ 43,487.00
Claremont Police Department	\$ 38,356.00	\$ 42,245.00
Burke County Sheriff's Office	\$ 38,105.00	\$ 42,035.00
Valdese Police Department	\$ 37,007.00	\$ 40,708.00

One trend in our profession is hiring interested candidates and paying them to attend BLET to obtain their basic certification. This will likely become a normal standard of practice for departments in an effort to compete and capture more applicants. When hiring potential officers and sending them to BLET, 10 to 11 months can pass before they get out of field training and start performing basic job tasks as police officers. Last year, we were informed that the BLET program is conducting an overhaul of it's training material, which will likely add an additional six weeks to the BLET program.

Vehicles for the Department:

Our biggest expenditure on a yearly basis is our annual fleet vehicle cost. This past year, we added four elementary SRO positions, which in turn, will have an impact on our fleet. Also, the automotive industry went on strike in 2023 and this has caused the procurement of vehicles to be more difficult. Major manufacturers are alerting everyone that prices will likely increase. At this point, they have not released potential figures for the increase for this coming budget projection. Last year, we purchased two Toyota vehicles for detective positions due to the fact that we were able to get vehicles in the current budget year. Agencies across the state are looking at creative solutions until the vehicle market stabilizes.

Communication Center Merge:

Our agency has entered into an agreement with Caldwell County to merge and create a centralized communications center for our community. This will be a project spanning several years, but we feel that in the long term, it is the best option for the City, County, and citizens.



Thank you for your time and consideration in reviewing this report. We appreciate the support and look forward to serving and meeting the needs of the City of Lenoir in the years ahead.

Chief Brent Phelps

2024

Public Service Annual Report

GRANTS AND PROJECTS UPDATE

Brownfields/EPA Assessment Grant #2

The city was awarded a second EPA Brownfield Assessment Grant in April of 2022 in the amount of \$500,000.00. Site work began in October 2022 and will continue over the four year term of the grant with Greg Icenhour, our consultant with Mid Atlantic Engineering and Environmental Solutions, conducting Phase I and Phase II environmental assessments on identified sites. The Phase 2 environmental assessment has been completed on the Old Broyhill site located at the corner of Virginia Street and College Avenue. An application has been submitted to the State Brownfield office to begin the process of entering the site into a Brownfield Agreement. This process could take 18 to 24 months to get the final Brownfield Agreement in place. Assessment work has been completed on the old American Efrid property and the gymnasium and auditorium in the Campus project. We have also continued to assist the redevelopment of the properties in the old depot area to help maintain momentum in the redevelopment of those properties. The City has also been working to develop a partnership with the EDC to determine where the EDC's target properties may overlap with the target properties in the grant program to maximize the benefits of the grant funds wherever possible.

The purpose of the Brownfield 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 also a key strategy to the implementation of the Fairfield South small area plan.

FEMA BRIC Grant Application

FEMA made available a grant opportunity for funding projects that improve or mitigate infrastructure that is located in flood hazard areas. The Utilities Department, working with the Western Piedmont COG, identified two potential projects and submitted a grant application for 70% funding with a 30% local match for funding in 2023. The projects would involve the construction of an equalization basin to equalize the flow during severe rain events and a new septic tank receiving station at the Lower Creek Wastewater Treatment Facility. In addition, funds have been requested to replace the sewer line that follows Zack's Fork Creek from Pennell Street to the soccer complex on Zack's Fork Rd. The first grant application for the project scored well but was not selected for funding through the BRIC grant program. The City was asked to resubmit the grant for funding through another program (U-4487) with the state. Preliminary indications were that this application was looking very promising for funding through this program however

we have not received a response at this time. This resubmission changes this to a 90% grant with a 10% match from the city.

A new BRIC application was submitted in late 2023 with revised numbers and a 75% grant request with a 25% match. This grant was ranked in the top10 applications during the preliminary round. We have continued working with the WPCOG to improve the application to obtain an even higher score. The final draft of the revised grant will be submitted in early February 2024. The total project cost is \$10.0 million with \$7.5 million in grant funding and \$2.5 million in local match. The sewer line replacement portion of this project is currently in the Utilities department CIP. The equalization basin is part of a larger renovation project for Lower Creek also identified in the current CIP.

Stormwater Planning Grant

The City has been approved to receive Stormwater Planning grant funds through the American Recovery Plan Act (ARPA) and State Reserve Program (SRP) funds approved by the State Water Infrastructure Authority (SWIA) and the Division of Water Infrastructure. The grant is in the amount of \$248,640.00. In the grant application, the City of Lenoir identified three top stormwater system priorities to address that will further position them to better manage and plan for the operations of their city-wide stormwater system.

Priority One: Document and assess our existing MS4, in order to proactively identify and plan repairs and improvements with a capital improvement plan for city-maintained stormwater conveyance.

Priority Two: Lower Creek erosion documentation and mitigation - threatens both private property, public infrastructure, and public and privately maintained bridges.

Priority Three: Inadequate capacity in downtown and surrounding areas with more "hard" stormwater conveyance/piped streams - document and design interventions, including possible daylighting of streams, at key locations that become overwhelmed during even modest storm events.

The City has engaged Freese and Nichols Engineering to administer the program outlined in the grant application. The work is underway at this time.

*Public Works and Public Utilities Annual Updates are submitted under separate reports.



Radford Thomas
Public Services Director

CITY OF LENOIR

Public Utilities

510B Greer Circle
Lenoir, NC 28645
828-757-2175



Dr. Jeff Church
Operations Manager

Public Utilities 2024 Annual Report

January 22, 2024

WATER

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. All meters have been installed and are functional; however, approximately 480 meters require a firmware update. Replacement meters have been ordered and should be installed by the end of February. Once the replacement meters are installed city staff will work with the project team to finalize all punch list items. It is the staff's hope this project will be closed out within a couple of months. The project cost is approximately \$4.5 million.

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. The NC Division of Water Infrastructure determined the project eligible to fund using State Capital and Infrastructure Fund (SCIF) funding made possible by the assistance of Representative Destin Hall. The project is approved and is currently in the design phase. Boring logs were received the week of January 12, 2024 for the latest geotechnical work. The geotechnical data will be evaluated and compared with previous borings over the coming weeks and then discussed with the geotechnical engineer. The geotechnical engineer will then prepare and submit the final report of geotechnical recommendations needed for the tank design. The proposed water system pressures are being compared with the water line plans. A meeting will be scheduled with City staff in the next several weeks to refine the project area before submitting plans and specifications to Public Water Supply. The project estimate is \$6.3 million.

Lenoir-Valdese Interconnection Project

The City is approved to receive funding in the amount of \$17,000,000 through Session Law 2023-134, House Bill 259, Section 12.2.(e) to construct a water interconnection between the City of Lenoir and the Town of Valdese. McGill Associates is retained to be the design engineering firm. The project is scheduled to kick off in late winter/early spring 2024.

Lead and Copper

The water system lead and copper study is currently underway. Freeze and Nichols staff have completed a draft webpage that will be launched early February. The City, in September 2023, received notification the Division of Water Infrastructure (DWI) and the State Water



Scott Hildebran, City Manager



Infrastructure Authority (SWIA) approved the Lead Service Line Replacement project to receive a total funding amount of \$500,000 from the Drinking Water State Revolving Funds (DWSRF) Bi-Partisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) Lead Service Line Replacement Funds. The loan is repayable at 0.00% interest. An initial scope of work was submitted in November of 2023 and is scheduled to be approved by early February 2023. The scope included \$347,500 for field inspections. City staff solicited and received informal quotes for contractors to perform the field inspections.

Flash Mix Basin Repairs (Water Plant)

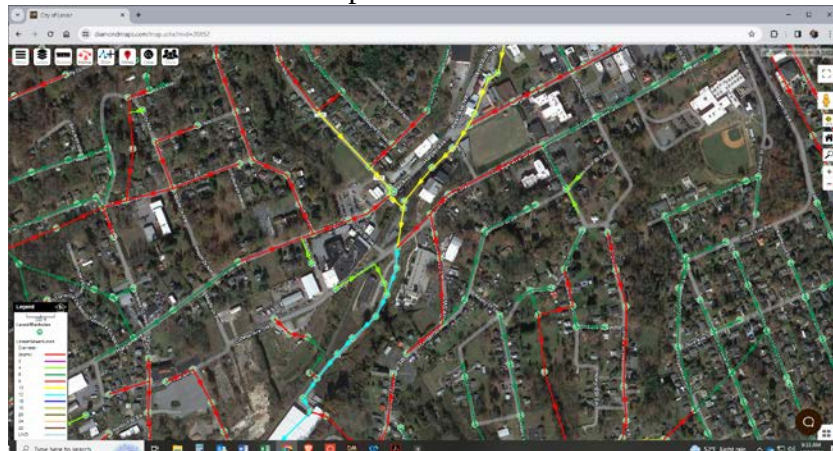
This project would include concrete repairs and replacement of old equipment. This project is designed and bid, with bids received on January 4, 2024. As of this report date, City staff are awaiting the bid recommendation letter from McGill Associates.

Collections and Utility Service Policy and Fees

With the implementation of the new metering system, staff conducts an ongoing a review of our policies and fees related to service applications, cut on and cut off procedures and policies. Billing and collection policies are also reviewed. The technology in the smart meters is much more expensive than the traditional analog meters. Fees for tampering with or damaging a meter have increased to reflect the increased cost of the meters and the transmitters associated with the AMI network. City staff reviews the current water and sewer tap fees to insure they are adequately covering the cost for a new service installation. This process is ongoing. The water and sewer tap fees were last updated in the fall of 2022.

Diamond Maps

The utilities department has purchased an online GIS platform, based on Google Maps, to inventory our utilities infrastructure. The platform is very user friendly and is able to be updated on a daily basis, thus, making it a living document. Each member of the distribution and collections crew has access to the mapping platform. A link for the program overview can be accessed at www.diamondmaps.com and a sample screenshot of the sewer system showing direction of flow and manhole locations is pasted below.



Utility Department Capital Asset Inventory

Freese and Nichols has completed the inventory of all of the water and wastewater facilities and capital assets such as treatment plants, water tanks and sewer pump stations to assist with capital planning and to better track maintenance and repair needs at the facilities. The document is a

living document and staff will update it in October every year.

SEWER

Gunpowder Bar Screen Replacement

The City purchased a new bar screen for the Gunpowder wastewater plant for approximately \$65,000 replacing a unit that is approximately 30 years old. The bar screen filters out various debris items that, if left unaddressed, would cause multiple maintenance issues within the wastewater plant.

Septic Receiver Upgrade-Lower Creek Plant

City staff installed a catch basin with a screening grate at the Lower Creek Wastewater septic receiving station. This project has greatly decreased the amount of “flushable” wipes that has traditionally entered the plant.

Smith Crossroads Sewer Line Project

City staff met with staff from North Carolina Department of Water Infrastructure (NCDWI) in mid-January to provide close-out information. The final adjusting change order and pay application should be completed by the end of February.

GRANTS

Water and Sewer Asset Inventory Assessment Grants

The City received notification from the North Carolina Division of Water Infrastructure (NCDWI). The asset inventory assessment grant application was approved by the State Water Infrastructure Authority (SWIA) to receive grant funding from the American Recovery Plan Act (ARPA) and the State Reserve Program (SRP). The grant is approved to fund one hundred percent of eligible project construction costs up to a maximum of \$200,000 million for each inventory assessment.

Additional Grants

Radford Thomas is reporting on the BRIC and Brownfield grants.

FUTURE PROJECTS

Whitnel Water Transmission Line Replacement

This project was identified in the water distribution system analysis as a top priority project. It would replace the existing 20 inch line from the water plant to Sawmills with a 24 inch line. Cost estimates range from \$7 million to \$10 million dollars. Surveying has been completed to determine the location of the new line. Funding sources are currently being identified.

Morganton Boulevard Water Line Loop

This project would connect the Whitnel 20 inch transmission line from east of Harrisburg Drive to Fairview Drive along Morganton Boulevard.

Divisional Valve Replacements

This project would begin the process of replacing the valves that separate the high pressure side of the distribution system (Cajah's Mountain side) from the lower pressure side of the system (Whitnel side). This project is ongoing as funds and time allows.

Pressure Reducing Valve Vault

Replacement of the vault located on Fairview drive that connects the high pressure side to the low pressure side on the 24 inch main transmission line from the Cajah's Mountain tanks.

Hudson Valve Insertions

Continue adding strategic valves to the Hudson distribution system to improve divisional separation during water main repairs.

AWIA Compliance Projects

This project may include the purchase of large, portable generators, security cameras and alarms and fencing to improve security measures at the water treatment plant. This is an ongoing project planned over several years in the CIP.

Lower Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant Updates/Upgrades

City staff is working with McGill Engineering to design the replacement of the mixers and diffusers in the basins.

Water Plant Operational Building Upgrades

This may include interior and exterior painting, HVAC updates, window replacements and lighting improvements. This project is partially funded in the current FY budget.

Vehicles and Equipment

Replacement of service trucks, mowers and other maintenance equipment. This is ongoing and included in the CIP.

Manhole Improvements

This project includes the repair or replacement of old brick or deteriorated manholes in the collection system.



Public Works Department

510-B Greer Circle SW
Lenoir, North Carolina 28645

Public Works Operations Manager
Jonathan Hogan
(828) 757-2183

Public Works Department – Annual Report for Calendar Year 2024

Engineering Division (2 FTE)

- Worked with our Horticulture Specialist to develop an annual planting plan, hanging basket program in the downtown.
- Continued to work with the Downtown Economic Development staff to select and purchase new Holiday decorations extending our footprint beyond downtown closer to entranceways.
- Worked with the Downtown Economic Development staff to secure a grant for the Campus revitalization project.
- Worked with the Downtown Economic Development staff and Destination by Design in completing Wayfinding documentation and NCDOT submittals. Project was put out to bid and contract awarded to Rite Lite Sign, Inc. currently completing contract documentation and working with DED staff on the artistic embellishments.
- Worked with Downtown Economic Development staff and consultant, Destination by Design, to begin contract documents for the Smith Crossroads gateway signage project. This project will include installation of a back-lit decorative sign, and requires coordination with multiple stakeholders (NCDOT, Duke Energy, sub-consultants); NCDOT ROW Encroachment Agreement has been submitted. Working with Destination by Design to complete traffic study per NCDOT Gateway Signage policy. Working to complete easement agreement for waterline on Broyhill property. **2023 sign project was let for bid and awarded to Carolina Bomanite. As of 1/23/2024 the project is 98% complete.**
- Worked with Parks & Recreation, Caldwell Extension office and Master Gardeners to design and implement new landscape at Lower Creek Greenway trailhead. Fall work is complete, spring planting is on schedule. **This project was completed in 2023. City Horticulture Specialist continues to work with Master Gardeners on this project.**
- Worked with NC State to complete the Broyhill Park Stormwater Project which included repairs and maintenance needed on the Pennton Ave. Wetland.

- Worked with Custom Coatings, Inc. to complete external stucco repairs, sealing and painting of the City Hall facility.



Street Division (15 FTE)

- Supervised resurfacing of ten (14) streets in the City of Lenoir. Resurfacing for the current fiscal year is ongoing. Streets paved in 2023:

**Arlington Cir
Broadland St
Patterson St
Jason Pl
German St
Meadowland Dr
King George Ct**

**Queen Anne Ct
Clark Dr
Yorktown Ct
Jefferson Ct
Georgetown Ln
Prince William Dr
Arrowood Dr @ Hibriten High School**

- In-House stream bank repair at Fire Station #2
- Installed frame/grate drainage at Powell Rd. /Greenway parking lot.
- Assisted with cleaning sidewalks, sweeping and barricading streets in preparation for all events (Blackberry, Christmas Parade, Car Shows etc.) as well as hauling and installing Christmas decorations.
- Assisted Sanitation with leaf collection utilizing driver, trucks and equipment.
- Continues to work with Planning Department on permitting and other issues.
- Worked with contactors on removing waste dirt from the Smith Crossroads Sign Project site.
- Replaced 36” storm culvert on Poplar Street.
- Started using Thermoplastic pavement marking in street maintenance operations to prolong life of striping, provide better visibility and save money on paint.
- Standard operations included the following:
 - o Completed 1,724 work orders
 - o Hauled 281 loads of brush
 - o Approximately 79 uses of “Hot Box” asphalt recycling equipment
 - 79 potholes and 128 utility cuts patched
 - o 41 Streets scraped and graveled
 - o 14 Storm calls for Snow/Ice and/or tree removal
 - o 249 Storm Drains cleaned/ general maintenance



Sanitation Division (13 FTE)

- Continued the roll-off dumpster rental program from February through October
 - 83 dumpster rentals in CY2023 (95 rentals in CY2022);
- Performed loose-leaf collection from Mid-October through mid-February (2024).
- Staffed multiple Special Events throughout the year to include Blackberry Festival, Car Shows, and Christmas Parade etc.
- Purchased new 8yd PacMac for small and special pickup routes.
- Purchased new 25yd Heil rear loading refuse truck.
- Standard Operations included the following:
 - 865 Bulk piles collected in 2023
 - 6,880.51 tons of garbage collected in 2023.
 - 1,176 hours spent collecting yard waste.



NEW 8yd PacMac



NEW 25yd Rearloader

Building Maintenance Division (6 FTE)

- Installed new service and EV charging equipment at new downtown location
- Complete in-house remodel of the LPD Training Room.
- Added electrical infrastructure to 14 Duke Energy poles for Holiday Deco.
- In-house fabrication and installation of handrails LHS.
- Installed new mini-split units at Public Works and LHS.
- Installed LED lighting at City facilities; this is an ongoing project with more facilities planned for Installation during CY2022. A summary and 2023 update of completed facilities and description of fixtures is included below:

LED Lighting Retrofit Project	
Facility	Description
Mulberry Recreation Center	25% No Change
Martin Luther King Center	Complete
Lenoir Aquatic Center Ind.	Complete
Lenoir Aquatic Center Out.	Complete
Blue Ridge Memorial Park	Complete
Optimist Park	16 Lights left for installation

- Added electrical infrastructure and holiday deco at LFD and LPD.
- Assisted with City Hall remodeling and furniture relocation.
- Repaired/replaced all wall packs and up lighting at Veterans Memorial downtown.
- Standard operations included the following:
 - o Performed monthly inspections of City buildings (exit signage, plumbing, lighting, and HVAC systems)
 - o Performed maintenance and repairs on City-owned traffic signals (downtown area)
 - o Performed required inspections of the TH Broyhill Walking Park Dam.
 - o 251 Work Orders Completed
 - o Continued to staff all downtown events for mechanical and or electrical services (Blackberry, Light-Up Lenoir, Music Madness and Smoke festival).



Cemeteries Division + Horticulture (7 FTE)

- Hosted the annual *Luminary Display* at Blue Ridge Memorial Park. Over 150 volunteers from numerous agencies and institutions assisted with bag placement and lighting of candles. The event in 2023 proved to be a tremendous success once again.
- New section (Serenity Cove) surveyed, pinned and mapped for future burials (526 graves).
- Ordered 2 columbarium's for a total 128 niches for cremated remains.
- Contracted with McGill Associates to create Blue Ridge Memorial Park Master Plan developing the remaining 15 acres of city owned land.
- Standard operations included the following:
 - o Seasonal maintenance of City cemeteries (Blue Ridge, Belleview, 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 and pesticide application for weed control.
 - o 2023 Burials - 148
 - o 2023 Plot Sales – 141
 - o 2023 Monuments Set - 71

****Refer to page 12 for 5-year burial trends and future needs**;**

- Current number of available spaces as of December 31st, 2023:
 - o Tranquil-Sold Out
 - o RockHill- 10 (8 grave lots)
 - o Serenity Cove- 494 lots



Horticulture (2 FTE)

- Implemented new Hanging Basket program for Downtown
- Added plantings in the Downtown Square Area- Hosta (30), Daylilies (75), and Drift Roses (6).
- Installed new center pieces along with annuals in Planters (22), Azaleas (25), Annuals (180 summer&150 winter).
- Maintained Downtown cleanliness by spraying weeds and removing trash as needed.
- Designed for new and existing Downtown are Landscape Beds and Planters.
- Mulched for the Different Downtown Lenoir Event for Aesthetics (55 loads).
- Installed a new landscape in the parking lot area by the Police Department.
- Organized and Supervised the Cities Bloom Blast Event for Volunteers and Master Gardeners of Lenoir Area.
- Mowed and manicured the turf in the Downtown Area including overseeding and Spraying for turfgrass Weeds.
- Trimmed Trees along Harper Avenue and West Avenue.



Vehicle Services Division (5 FTE)

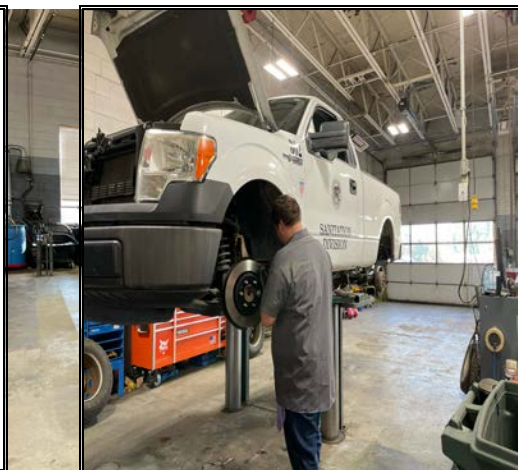
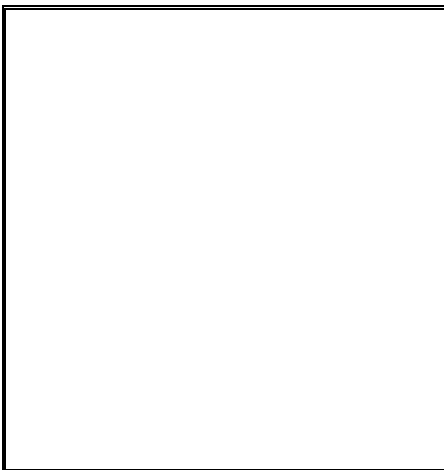
- New AC/Heating added to main working area of the garage. A definite staff morale booster.
- Continue to use assembled service “kits” for common and larger vehicles consisting of required filters and other maintenance items. These kits make for more efficiency.
- Implemented the diesel mechanics training program with CCC&TI. Thus far, we have covered the air brake system and suspension.
- Continued focusing on the preventative maintenance program, resulting in fewer service calls:

Off-site Service Call Summary (6-Year)						
Calendar Year	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Off-site Service Calls	47	42	35	32	27	26

- Managed the GovDeals program for the disposal of surplus vehicles and equipment:

GovDeals Summary – CY2023		
Item Description	Quantity	Sale \$
Miscellaneous small parts	N/A	6,172.43
Vehicles/Heavy Equipment	10	83,381.00
Mowing Equipment	5	2,092.00
	TOTAL:	\$91,645.43

- Standard operations included the following:
 - o Completed 1,722 work orders



Public Works Department – Calendar Year 2021 Concerns and considerations (update), and Calendar Year 2022 outlook:

The Public Works Department has continued to complete infrastructure and facility upgrade projects, and sincerely appreciates Council's commitment to funding projects throughout the City. In the past several years, we have been fortunate to acquire much-needed vehicles and equipment replacements, and complete important facility upgrades, but we still consider our fleet to be aging and in need of significant investment. The below sections identify vehicle, equipment, and facility needs that have been scheduled in recent years, completed, deferred, or added as needs evolved.

• **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	MY1997 replacement	\$125,000	High
Streets	Single Axle Dump Truck	Replacement for MY1998 Truck	\$125,000	High
Streets	Single Axle Dump Truck	Replacement for MY2000 Truck	\$125,000	Mod.
Streets	Single Axle Dump Truck	Replacement for MY2005 Truck	\$125,000	Mod.
Streets	1-Ton Service Truck	FY 21-22 On Order	\$60,000	Complete
Streets	Asphalt Tack Truck	Replacement for MY1987 Truck	\$250,000	Mod.
Streets	Motor Grader	MY1991 replacement (breakdown during snow event- 2022)	\$275,000	Complete
Streets	Wheeled Loader	Replacement for MY1991 Equip.	\$210,000	Mod.
Streets	Skidsteer Loader	Replacement for MY2008 Equip.	\$85,000	Mod.
STREETS TOTAL			\$1,320,000.00	
Sanitation	Automated Garbage Truck	ARPA-2022	\$325,000	Complete
Sanitation	Automated Leaf Collection Truck	Replacement of Pull- Behind Vac.	\$275,000	High
Sanitation	Pak-Rat Small Garbage Truck	Replacement for MY2000 Truck	\$120,000.00	Complete
SANITATION TOTAL			\$395,000.00	
Building Maintenance	Light Duty Truck- ½ ton 4WD	Replacement for MY2001 Truck	\$30,000	High
BM TOTAL			\$30,000	
Vehicle Services	Above Ground 2 Post Lift	FY21-22 Complete	\$20,000	Complete
Vehicle Services	Light Duty Truck- ½ ton 4WD	Replacement for truck transferred to Planning Dept.	\$30,000	High
VS TOTAL			\$30,000	
Cemeteries	Light Duty Truck- ½ ton 4WD	FY21-22 Complete	\$30,000	Complete
Cemeteries	Zero- Turn Mower 60"	Replacement for MY2012 Mower	\$15,000	Complete
CEMETERIES TOTAL			\$15,000	

Capital Improvements – Facilities (update):

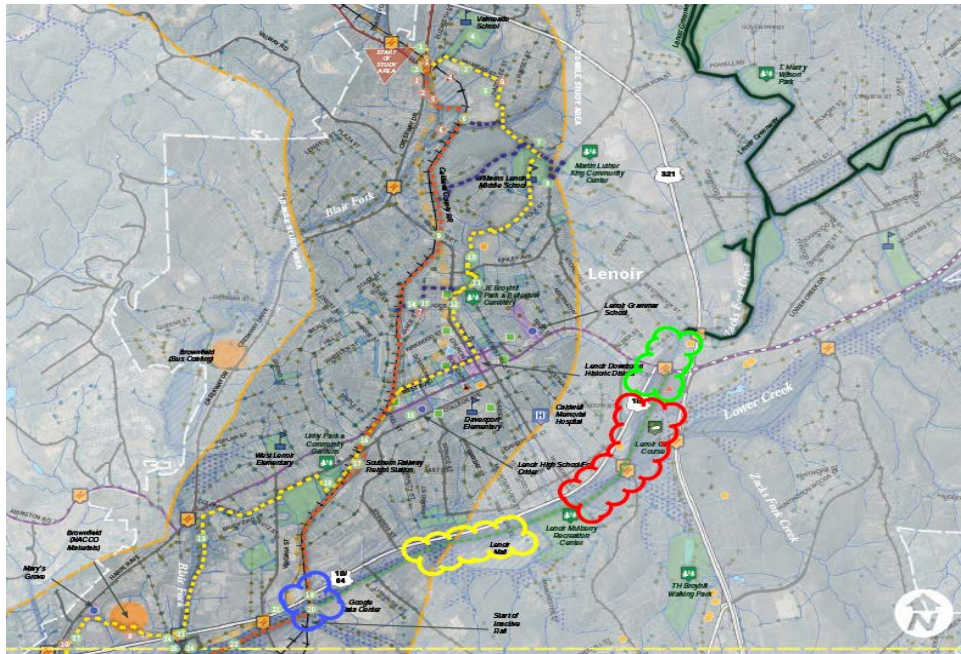
Over the past four years, the City has completed several important facility upgrades, roof replacements and numerous, LED lighting upgrades, as well as HVAC system replacements. The updated spreadsheet below contains projects from previous years that have been completed, are scheduled or planned for in the immediate future, or have been recently added due to facility condition assessments:

Facility	Project Description	Comment	Priority	Notes
City Hall	Stucco/Plaster Exterior	Small Areas or cracking	High	Complete
Clock Tower	Stucco/Plaster Exterior	Tower removed due to safety		Donor Funds, 2023 In Process
MLK Center	Roof Replacement			Complete
LAFC	Roof Replacement			Complete
Mulberry Rec. Center	Roof Replacement	Updating Quotes	High	Complete
Mulberry Rec. Center	LED Lighting	Complete LED Conversion	High	25% Complete
LAFC	HVAC (1 unit)	Ordered, Mar-April	High	Complete
LAFC	LED Lighting	Full LED Conversion	High	25% Complete
MLK Center	HVAC (2 Units) multi. room	Increasing repair frequency	High	16,000.00
MLK Center	Entrance Awnings			Complete
PU Shed	Vactor Shed Roof			Complete

Capital Improvements – Projects (current and future):

- **Hospital Avenue Sidewalk Project:** Right-of-way acquisition for this project has been ongoing for approximately one year. Currently there are still three (3) properties that have not agreed to the offer(s) to purchase the necessary right-of-way or easements for the project. These properties, in accordance with NCDOT standards, must be fully appraised to determine land values. The appraisal process is underway. A tentative bid date of March 08, 2022, was established for the project, but this date is contingent upon right-of-way certification by NCDOT. Work has continued throughout 2022. Worked with Wetherill Engineering and Professional Property Services to complete ROW acquisition. 100% plans and draft bid document were submitted and comments received. Revision have been made and all documents submitted to NCDOT via EBS portal. Awaiting ROW Certification and approval to move forward with letting the project. **2023 We worked with Wetherill, NCDOT and Duke Energy to get the utility relocation part of the project underway. As of today all trees have been pruned or removed, poles installed and some overhead utilities relocated. Currently we are waiting on AT&T and Piedmont Natural gas to complete their relocations. Due to the updated engineers estimate for construction we applied for additional LAP funds and were awarded \$1,640,000 with a local match total of \$410,000. Due to the additional funding the project let date was moved to mid-February 2024.**
- **Harper/West Avenue Two-Way Street Conversion:** This project continues to be a future priority for the City, but is highly dependent on funding. Preliminary work on signalization design has been completed by transportation consultant, Mattern and Craig. We anticipate the project to be completed in phases, with 1A (Steel Street closure) already completed. Remaining phases include the following: 1B – Harper/West Avenue intersection improvements; 2 – Harper Avenue conversion; and 3 – West Avenue conversion (if deemed necessary). **Project is still on hold at this time. DLR Master Plan could spark some movement on this project.**

- **RTP Trail Grant:** The City was awarded grant funding to complete trail crossings of Harper Avenue, Light Street, and College Avenue (near the Blue Bell project), in December of 2020. Transportation consultant, Mattern and Craig, assisted with the funding application and is currently working on project design. A final design, bidding, and construction schedule should be available in Q2, 2022. Have continued to work with Mattern and Craig on this project. Have provided CAD files for design and encroachment agreements. **2023 The RTP Grant was extended for 1 year. Mattern & Craig has completed design work for these Greenway sections. This work should be contracted by spring 2024.**
- **College Avenue Infrastructure Improvements:** The City pledged to perform roadway improvements within the right-of-way of College Avenue and Underdown Avenue to address traffic patterns around the recently completed Blue Bell mill project. These improvements, which included drainage and curb and gutter installation, were completed by the site contractor for the mill project in 2021. Removal of an existing traffic island, and final asphalt overlay, will be completed by City staff in spring, 2022. Traffic island and final asphalt work have not been completed. **Mattern & Craig has completed the striping and signage plan for this Greenway connector. Bid package has been completed and hoping to have out to bid first week of February 2024.**
- **Parkview Estates Improvements:** Due to this subdivision being targeted for in-fill development, and the construction of several new homes being completed, the City initiated a greenway connection and roadway improvements to improve access and visibility for the neighborhood. The greenway connection to the Zack's Fork Road main trail network was completed in 2021. This included construction of a small trailhead and parking area near the intersection of Ebel Place and Sassafras Court. The roadway improvements to Ebel Place, which will include minor widening and asphalt resurfacing, may be completed in Q2, 2022, if funding allows. **Improvements to Ebel Place have not been completed to date. In 2023 a restructure of the Ebel Place and Powell Rd intersection was completed. Signage was added as well as thermos pavement markings.**
- **Greenway Expansion – Gaps and Connections:** The City continued its expansion of the greenway trail network in 2021 with the completion of new trail sections serving the Parkview Estates subdivision, and asphalt surfacing of existing trails sections at the Mulberry Recreation Center and north of Sherlee Street. We also continue to work with transportation consultant, Mattern and Craig, for design development of the RTP connection between Harper Avenue and College Avenue, and the Highway 18 OVNHT/greenway crossing. Additionally, in 2021, the City received a greenway easement from Waterlife Church for construction of a trail through their parcel (former mall property). This trail section will tie in to the recently paved section at Mulberry Recreation Center, and will serve as a starting point to transverse the remainder of the former mall property. During the next fiscal year, we expect to continue identification of trail network gaps, and with adequate funding, continue with construction in key areas. These focus areas include the **Highway 18 crossing** (noted above), a connection from the **Pennton Avenue terminus that will cross Harper Avenue, Lenoir Golf Course property**, and additional easement(s) through the **former mall property**. **2023 Mattern & Craig has completed design for Greenway connections at Waterlife, Cube Smart, Quest and Google. The Planning Department is working with property owners at these locations to obtain the needed easement documents. The engineering report package for the Highway 18 OVNHT crossing has been submitted to NCDOT. We hope to have those recommendations and approvals back in February, a spring bid for this crossing is the goal. The Greenway extension at Harper along the golf course property has been submitted to the EBS portal for project assignment in the STIPP. Once that is approved and RFP will be created for this project.**



OVNHT Master Plan Excerpt

- Arrowood Street Bridge Replacement:** Previously noted, this prioritized project was included in a funding application to FEMA in January, 2022. Public Works staff worked with Mattern and Craig to develop the application, and successful recipients will be notified of award in July, 2022. Bridge inspections (performed by NCDOT consultants) in 2016, 2018, and 2020 categorized the structure as poor, and in need of significant repair or replacement. The asphalt wear surface continues to fail, and in 2021 City staff attempted a chip seal repair as a temporary solution, to offer a consistent roadway surface. This repair has begun failing due to continuous movement of the timber decking. This project was not selected for FEMA grant funding in 2022. However the grant application was revised and resubmitted (Mattern and Craig) through another funding source. We have not been notified of possible award at this time. Paving maintenance has been performed in 2022 but continues to fail. 2023 We did not receive funding through FEMA grant. **Arrowood Bridge continues to be an issue with holding asphalt. Mattern and Craig is scheduled to complete an updated bridge inspection within the next two weeks. They are also exploring funding sources specific to bridge replacements.**
- 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.). We have currently received two (2) quotes for consultant services to assist with plan development (waiting on revisions to a third quote). Ongoing. Precision Safe Sidewalks was selected to inventory trip hazards and schedule grinding to reduce/remove the trip hazard along public sidewalks. **ADA Transition plan was completed and Precision sidewalks sidewalk grinding was completed per the inventory, Street Department has identified and repaired numerous sidewalk trip hazards in 2023 to include locations on Norwood St and West Main.**

- Blue Ridge Memorial Park Expansion:** A *Master Plan* for the remaining approximate 15 acres of City-owned property at Blue Ridge Memorial Park has been included in the CIP for several years. In 2019, cemetery staff contracted with a surveyor to lay off the last remaining vacant section of the existing park, and since that time sales and burials have continually increased. If these trends continue, remaining capacity will be exhausted in 3-4 calendar years. In 2023 a new section of cemetery was opened “Serenity Cove” with 500 single grave plots. Given our current numbers that should get us through at least 3.5 years. RFP’s were sent out in June of 2023 for the Blue Ridge Memorial Park Master Plan. McGill and Associates was awarded the contract to design a buildable Master Plan. The project kickoff meeting was held on Friday 1/19. The goal is to have the Master Plan complete by summer 2024.
- LFD – Headquarters Sinkhole:** Following heavy rain events in 2021, a sinkhole was discovered in the northeastern lawn of the LFD – Headquarters property near the Harper Avenue and Ridge Street intersection. After investigation, it was determined that the large (48”), corrugated metal culvert that runs through the property was compromised. A video camera inspection of the pipe showed significant rust and erosion of the pipe invert (bottom flow-line), as well as metal deformation and debris collection. The pipe also appears to be undersized for the drainage area, as frequent surcharging of upstream manholes has been observed by LFD staff on numerous occasions. The pipe is 25’-30’ in this location, and its proximity to the fire department building makes an excavated repair nearly impossible to complete. We have engaged *Catawba Valley Engineering & Testing* to lead the geotechnical and civil engineering efforts to design a suitable system replacement in this area. This firm previously installed crack monitoring devices in the building to monitor and measure any foundational movement after concerns arose (~2019). This project is ongoing, and construction estimates are only preliminary. Project costs may exceed \$500,000. Work has continued with Catawba Valley Engineering & Testing as well as WK Dickson & Co, Inc. Four (4) civil options have been designed for pipe repair and replacement. Due to the depth of the pipe, proximity to the structure, existing utilities and the void created by the partial collapse the construction estimates range from two million to three point six million dollars (\$2,000,000 - \$ 3,500,000). Once option is selected we will put project out for bid. 2023 WK Dickson was awarded the contract for Engineering Services, design and construction admin for this project. One concept was selected which involves abandoning the current pipe and installing new pipe more shallow and further away from LFD Station #1. Currently all permitting and 60% plans have been submitted. We have also applied for Golden Leaf funding for this project and are awaiting the February notice of award. Project schedule has project being let in February with a construction start in March. Construction estimates still remain relatively the same at two and a half million dollars to three and a half million dollars (\$2,500,000-\$3,500,000).
- LPD/Williams Produce- Sinkhole:** A possible sinkhole was identified in the rear parking lot of the old Williams produce. The large retaining wall between this property and the LPD rear parking has shown signs of significant settling. This project is only in the beginning stages as we have contracted with Western Carolina Surveyors to survey the property to identify ownership and parties to be involved in this project. Our next step will be to meet with Catawba Valley Engineering to evaluate the storm water system in that to determine the issue. No change in 2023.

- **Finley/Greenhaven Sidewalk Rehabilitation:** In 2021, several concerns were raised by community members and elected officials about the condition of the sidewalk that parallels Finley Avenue between North Main Street and the newer sidewalk installed on the northern end of Greenhaven Drive. The existing sidewalk is narrow (approximately 3' in width), and is in poor condition. We also have frequent complaints with vegetation overgrowth preventing safe travel on the sidewalk. With the existing width not compliant with ADA standards, this sidewalk section has been identified as a priority for replacement. Cost estimates for the project have not been developed to date, and right-of-way/street lane widths have not been investigated to determine if sufficient area exists for replacement without the need for additional right-of-way from neighboring property owners. **No change in 2023.**
- **Circle Drive Repairs:** A Public Works Department memorandum was presented to Council in 2020 highlighting issues with Circle Drive in the Lower Creek neighborhood. The curb and gutter and asphalt in a 200' section of northern Circle Drive appeared to be failing due to subgrade issues. The memorandum suggested a repair method using soil undercutting and replacement with stone to create a firm subgrade, then replacement of failing concrete curb and gutter and asphalt. The initial cost estimate for the project, anticipating self-performance of the work by Street Division staff, was \$30,000. This funding would have been taken from the division's general operating budget, therefore the project has not been completed to date. **2023 No change at this time (funding).**
- **Greenway Culvert Repairs:** In 2020, after several attempts to repair settling asphalt in the greenway trail near the Red Roof Inn property, it was discovered that a large culvert (96") in this area had failed and surcharging stormwater flows were creating voids under the trail surface. The City enlisted McGill Associates to design a culvert replacement project featuring new 96" pipe, cast-in-place end walls and trail surface restoration. The project design and permitting is complete, but has not been advertised for bids. Public Works and Parks and Recreation Department staff continue to monitor the area for impacts. ****Approximately 200' upstream of the culvert replacement location, a section of streambank has eroded to the edge of the asphalt trail. This condition will need to be included in the culvert replacement project, after a contractor has been selected. ** We have received quotes for repair of the pipe and partial replacement. Meeting scheduled with McGill on 1/18/2023 to discuss past design, permitting and putting project out for bid due to the work required on Red Roof Inn property per our easement. This project was put out for bid with only one bid received. The bid for replacement was \$200,000+. The bid was rejected. We obtained quotes from Shotcrete Contractors Inc. to repair the pipe and fill the voids that were creating the recesses in the greenway asphalt. Shotcrete completed the culvert repair for \$64,000.**
- **Downtown Beautification:** After receiving comments regarding the appearance of downtown, including old and discolored sidewalk/concrete, Public Works and Main Street Program staff solicited informal quotes for sidewalk cleaning in the downtown area. A general description of the area was provided, but prices varied considerably for the work: 3 quotes ranging from \$5,000 - \$48,000. Given the large variance, and informal nature of the project description, after receiving quotes a decision was made to develop a formal bidding package to more accurately identify a scope of work for interested vendors. The bidding package has not been finalized to date, but there are also considerations for an updated *Downtown Master Plan* that may impact the scope of work. 2022 \$16,413.85 was spent in 2022 with Fatboy Prowash LLC., in cleaning downtown sidewalks. The sidewalks cleaned were Main, Mulberry, Church St, Boundary, Harper, Ashe, West Avenue as well as the Square area, Soldiers Memorial and Against the Grain sculpture. **2023 Downtown Beautification continues as the Horticulture Division added a new hanging basket program this year as well as updating numerous landscapes throughout the downtown. This includes adding perennial shrubs and annuals to the planters, removing dead or unsightly shrubs, pruning trees and mulching as well as turf maintenance (see horticulture report).**

- **NC VW Phase II /Level II Public Access /EV Charging Rebate:** The city of Lenoir applied for rebate via NCCOG through NCDEQ. Rebate was approved on 10/24/2022 for up to \$10,000 or \$5,000 per port installed (rebate expires 3/27/2024). We are working on obtaining quotes, at this time we have received (1) quote from ChargePoint. **This Project was completed in November of 2023. Public Works Building Maintenance and Street staff completed installation of charging system and parking requirements to include concrete, striping and signage (Vehicles).**
 - **Street Resurfacing 2023:** The contract was awarded to Tri-County Paving for the cost of \$436,000 at a unit price of \$82.00 (an 11.83% decrease from 2020-2022 Contract). Tri-County Inc. completed the fall paving schedule and will resume in spring. Public Works contracted with iWorQ (our Streets software company) in December to complete an overall assessment of our streets as well update our listing/ratings before prioritizing the spring/summer paving priorities. **To date Tri-County Paving has completed paving on fourteen (14) streets to include completing the Georgetown Estates subdivision (see Street Department report for listing) The next two (2) year paving contract will be let to bid this spring/summer.**
-

Submitted by:

Jonathan Hogan

Jonathan Hogan
Public Works Operations Manager