

**LENOIR CITY COUNCIL
MEETING MINUTES
TUESDAY, JANUARY 6, 2026
6:00 P.M.**

PRESENT: Mayor Joe Gibbons presiding. Mayor Pro-Tem Ike Perkins, Councilmembers present were Jonathan Beal, Rebecca Dellinger, Ralph Prestwood, Kimmie Rogers, David Stevens, Crissy Thomas, City Manager Scott Hildebran, City Clerk Lauren Hartley and Attorney Timothy Rohr.

CITY STAFF: In attendance was Finance Director Donna Bean, Public Services Public Utilities Director Jeff Church, City Parks & Recreation Director Phil Harper, Communication & Public Information Director Joshua Harris, Public Services Public Works Director Jon Hogan, Fire Chief Norman Staines, Police Chief Andy Wilson, Planning Director Hannah Williams, and Community Engagement Coordinator Ashley Smith.

ABSENT: Economic Development Main Street Director Brenda Floyd.

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Gibbons made the following announcements:

1. He thanked all the city staff for a wonderful job during this holiday season.
2. Mayor Gibbons announced the former City Manager, Lane Bailey's mother in-law, Margaret Langston passed away. She was a resident of Lenoir prior to her move to Salisbury.
3. City Attorney TJ Rohr's father in-law Rev. Herman Hicks passed away, of Morganton.

Mayor Gibbons said to please keep these families in your thoughts and prayers.

- A. Moment of Silence & Pledge of Allegiance
- B. On behalf of City Council, Mayor Gibbons presented a resolution and a key to the City to former Councilman Todd Perdue in honor and recognition of his 22 years of dedicated and outstanding service to the City Council, City of Lenoir, and its citizens.

Todd Perdue said it has been a pleasure to serve the last 22 years and to be able to represent the citizens of Lenoir as a member of the City Council. Due to his wife's health needs he decided to resign and also has moved outside of the city to accommodate her needs. He said this council is in great shape with a wonderful new member, Rebecca Dellinger and David Stevens being able to continue the two-years left on his term.

Todd Perdue said the thing he will remember most about his time on council is how everyone got along and never let politics or personal agendas get in the way of what's right for the city. He commended the City Manager, Scott Hildebran on being an excellent manager. He stated he has great memories of his time on council and there are great things ahead for the city.

- C. Cynthia Randolph, CPA, PLLC presented the FY2024-2025 Annual Audit to City Council. Ms. Randolph thanked City Council, Finance Director Donna Bean, City Manager Scott Hildebran along with staff for the great job and assistance. She shared the FY2024-2025 annual audit was submitted to and was approved by the Local Government Commission (LGC). Ms. Randolph did issue an unmodified opinion, which is normal for an audit for financial statements. The City has a federal and state single audit. As of June 30, 2025, there were no material weaknesses or sufficient deficiencies in compliance or internal controls that needed to be noted in the audit and no financial performance indicators to report. Ms. Randolph reported the change in the general fund balance was \$3,399,204 and the general fund expenditures increased by 827,358. The change in the fund balance for the special revenue funds was a decrease of 394,035. The City's tax collection rate is 97.1%. The Water and Sewer Enterprise Fund had a change in net position increase of \$1,749,792. Ms. Randolph remarked the City is in excellent financial condition.

Councilmember Stevens thanked Financial Director Donna Bean for her work and said the City employees take this seriously and looks for ways to save money.

Mayor Gibbons thanked everyone for a great audit.

Upon a motion by Councilmember Stevens, City Council voted 7 to 0 to accept the FY2024-2025 Annual Audit, as presented.

A copy of the audit is available for viewing on the city's website.

II. MATTERS SCHEDULED FOR PUBLIC HEARING:

- A. A public hearing was held for the second reading for Code Amendment; Unauthorized or Improper Use of Public Places/Trespassing Ordinance Chapter 13 Unauthorized or Improper Use of Public Places and Chapter 18 Trespassing and Prohibited Activity Under Bridges and Pedestrian Underpasses of the Lenoir Code of Ordinances, clarifying enforcement and penalties.

Mayor Gibbons opened the public hearing and asked Police Chief Andy Wilson to come speak about the ordinance.

Police Chief Andy Wilson said the ordinance amendment before council tonight is intended to update our current code to provide clear and consistent guidance for the use of public spaces across the city. Chief Wilson said the language in the ordinance amendment reflects information from legal counsel and regional partners, including Western Piedmont Council of Governments and the Homeless Response Team. In sections 13-15 which was previously limited to parks and recreation facilities only has expanded to city properties, bridges, streets and other similar public areas.

Chief Wilson said the enforcement part emphasizes involuntary compliance, arrest is not the go to. The emphasis is to keep public places safe, accessible and usable for everyone.

Councilmember Thomas asked if someone wanted to camp out at one of our parks this would apply to them, this would not be for any particular group of individuals.

Police Chief Wilson replied yes, this ordinance would apply to anyone doing prohibited things in public places.

Mayor Gibbons asked if anyone would like to address the council concerning this public hearing.

Charles Senf at 2354 Happy Hollow Lane stated his concerns with the presented ordinance and suggested it be postponed.

Yokefellow Executive Director Sharon Harmon of 115 Haigler Road SE commended the Lenoir Police and stated they are wonderful to work with. She spoke about the previous LEO's shelter that opened in 2014, but is now closed. She spoke about the homeless outreach programs and stated she has not seen any outreach activity for months.

Director of Community and Economic Development for Western Piedmont Council of Governments Ben Willis of 2650 Hillwood Drive stated the Western Piedmont Council of Governments has many departments including a Homeless Response Team. He spoke about the outreach and help that is available. He said the team would be happy to come to any organization to speak about what they offer. Their Planning Department was involved with the review of this proposed ordinance amendment and matched what other similar municipalities in the regions have adopted.

M. Leonardo Chumbimuni of 105 Winchester Drive expressed his concern about the homeless and how this ordinance may cause harm. He spoke about how there is a better solution than policing the homeless.

Councilmember Thomas said the time she has been on council she has not been aware of the homeless population having massive arrests and has not received phone calls about the homeless being picked up and harassed.

Police Chief Andy Wilson replied there have been no major arrests due to homelessness. Chief Wilson said the focus of this ordinance is not arrest, that is the last resort. The ordinance regulates the use of properties and does not have anything to do if you are homeless.

City Manager Scott Hildebran said this ordinance cleans up and clarifies what the policies and regulations are for city properties.

Councilmember Beal said he has spent a shift riding with the police department and most of the calls were reports of a suspicious person, the level of compassion from the Police Department on these calls were outstanding. Beal said there was no arrest because vagrancy is not a crime in North Carolina.

Beal said this specific ordinance is speaking about outside locations that are city property, which are paid with tax dollars. The council is here to protect those properties that the tax payers pay for. Beal said this ordinance is for protection and to make sure everyone has a safe experience in any of our public places.

Emmanuel Lazo of 1601 North Main Street said he would see the homelessness in the parks and asked what happens when you tell them to leave. He expressed his concerns about informing homeless of their options.

Mayor Gibbons said Mr. Willis spoke about the resources available through the Homeless Outreach Program, Yokefellow, and other places.

Mayor Gibbons closed the public hearing and opened it up for council.

Upon a motion by Councilmember Beal, City Council voted 7 to 0 to approve the ordinance amendment, as presented.

- B. A public hearing was held for US EPA Notice of Intent to Apply for Brownfield Clean-Up Grant to be used for the environmental clean-up of the “old Broyhill Site” located at 1429 College Ave., SW Parcel ID# 2749445311.

Mayor Gibbons opened the public hearing and asked Radford Thomas to come speak about the project.

Thomas said they are applying for two grants. One is for cleaning up the old Broyhill property, that the city owns. The other is another assessment grant that can be used to help our local individuals to inform them on how to market their property. This public hearing was published in the newspaper for public comment.

Greg Icenhour with Mid Atlantic Associates, LLC, spoke about the two grants they will be applying for. The goal for these would be to be able to put these properties in economic reuse. In total the grants would be a total of \$1 million of Brownfield related funding.

Marta Lazo of 1601 North Main Street said the Brownfield program helped her on the building she owns on North Main Street. She has referred this program to others.

Mayor Gibbons closed the public hearing. No action was needed from City Council.

III. CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS:

Mayor Gibbons presented the following items:

- A. Minutes: Approval of the City Council minutes of the meeting of Tuesday, December 2, 2025, as submitted.
- B. Resolution: Approval of a resolution in honor and recognition of Todd Perdue’s dedicated and outstanding service to the City Council, City of Lenoir and its citizens as submitted.
- C. Acceptance of an Offer to Purchase Real Property and Notice of Offer to Purchase Real Property; 1340 Fairview Drive SW: Marcus Sims has submitted an offer to purchase 1340 Fairview Drive SW owned by the City of Lenoir in the amount of \$13,000.00 plus advertising costs, NCPIN #2748563698 and Tax ID# 06184-1-7 as submitted. Staff has advertised in the News-Topic an upset bid period as required by N.C.G.S. §160A-269. The required 5% bid deposit has been received. No upset bids were received.
- D. Project Bid Award: Lenoir Gateway Phase II; Approval to award the contract for the Lenoir Gateway Phase II to the lowest, responsive, responsible bidder Rite Lite Signs Inc. for \$414,772.00 as submitted. Rite Lite Signs Inc. is also the contractor for the ongoing Lenoir Wayfinding Project.
- E. Finley Area Water Systems Improvement Project; Proposal for Bunnell Lammons Engineering (BLE) to perform Construction Material Testing Services with anticipated cost of services of \$27,585.00. The total project budget, after bids, included a line-item budget of \$80,000.00 for these services as submitted.
- F. Code Amendments; Chapter 4, Article 4, Buildings and Building Regulations, Non-Residential Buildings or Structures Standards, and Chapter 10, Minimum Housing Standards (First Reading): First reading of ordinances amending Chapters 4 and Chapter 10 of the Lenoir Code of Ordinances related to non-residential buildings or structures standards, and minimum housing standards and authorizing a public hearing to be held on Tuesday, January 20, 2026 for the second reading of the Ordinances.

Upon a motion by Councilmember Thomas, City Council voted 7 to 0 to adopt the above

listed items (A through F) on the Consent Agenda as listed and recommended.

IV. REQUESTS AND PETITIONS OF CITIZENS

Charles Senf of 2354 Happy Hollow Lane spoke to council about having a resolution on this date because of the assault of the capital on coming close to losing our rights and citizenship.

M. Leonardo Chumbimuni of 105 Winchester Drive spoke on behalf of Pastor Ivan de la Cruz. He read a letter from him stating he serves at a church and the citizens of Lenoir and surrounding communities. He spoke about the families that have been affected by ICE.

Marta Lazo of 1601 North Main Street expressed her concerns about the community and the hurt she sees. Lazo said the community needs help for them and a safe haven.

Hilda Grunados of 1302 Harper Ave said she owns a small business in Lenoir. She spoke about her concerns on ICE and harassing the community. She appreciated the support of Lenoir.

M. Leonardo Chumbimuni of 105 Winchester Drive stated his concerns and suggested ideas council can consider on how to control what happened with ICE and for the residents.

Emmanuel Lazo of 1601 North Main Street spoke about how ICE has affected the community. He suggested to City Council on how to address this concern.

V. REPORTS OF BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

VI. REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE CITY MANAGER

City Manager Scott Hildebran presented the following:

A. Items of Information

1. The January calendar will be provided to City Council listing various meetings and events.
2. Curbside Christmas tree pickup begins Tuesday, January 6 through Friday, January 30.
3. The Lenoir Business Advisory Board will meet on Thursday, January 8 at 6:00 p.m. at City Hall, Third Floor.
4. The City/County Services Committee will meet on Monday, January 12 at noon at the J.E. Broyhill Civic Center.
5. The Economic Development Advisory Committee will meet on Tuesday, January 13 at 8:15 a.m. at the J.E. Broyhill Civic Center.
6. The ABC Board will meet on Thursday, January 15 at 2:00 p.m.
7. The City offices will be closed Monday, January 19 in observance of Martin Luther King Jr Day.
8. The City Planning Retreat will be held on Friday, February 6 at 8:30 a.m. at Blue Ridge Energy meeting room.

VII. REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE CITY ATTORNEY

There was no report from the City Attorney.

VIII. REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE MAYOR

A. Mayor Gibbons recommended the following elected official appointments to be filled:

1. Greater Hickory Metropolitan Planning Organization Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) – Jonathan Beal
2. Caldwell Railroad Commission – (Joseph Gibbons (fill unexpired term of Todd Perdue –

January 1, 2027)

Upon a motion by Councilmember Thomas, City Council voted 7 to 0 to approve the recommendations, as presented.

IX. REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF COUNCILMEMBERS

- A. Mayor Gibbons said City Council will now enter into Closed Session and that no action is expected: City Council entered into closed session under N.C.G.S. §143-318.11(a)(4) to discuss matters involving economic development; and under N.C.G.S. §143-318.11(a)(5) to establish, or to instruct the public body's staff or negotiating agents concerning the position to be taken by or on behalf of the public body in negotiating the price and other material terms of a contract or proposed contract for the acquisition of real property by purchase, option, exchange or lease.

Upon a motion by Councilmember Prestwood, City Council voted 7-0 to go into closed session.

OPEN SESSION:

- A. Upon a motion by Mayor Pro-Tem Perkins, City Council voted 7-0 to re-enter into session.

X. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Mayor Gibbons adjourned the meeting at 8:24 p.m.

Lauren Hartley, City Clerk

Joseph L. Gibbons, Mayor