

# City of Graham City Council Meeting Minutes September 9, 2025



The City Council of the City of Graham held a regularly scheduled meeting on September 9, 2025, at 6:00 p.m. in the Council Chamber, City Hall Municipal Building, 201 South Main Street, Graham, NC.

## Council Members Present:

Mayor Jennifer Talley  
Mayor Pro Tem Ricky Hall  
Council Member Bobby Chin  
Council Member Bonnie Whitaker

## Staff Present:

Megan Garner, City Manager  
Aaron Holland, Assistant City Manager  
Bryan Coleman, City Attorney  
Bob Ward, City Attorney  
Renee Ward, City Clerk

**CALL TO ORDER:** Mayor Jennifer Talley

## INVOCATION & PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Pastor Rodney Foxx, Children's Chapel UCC gave the invocation.

## PROCLAMATIONS:



### **Children's Chapel United Church of Christ – 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**

City Council recognized Children's Chapel United Church of Christ for its 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.



**National Hispanic Heritage Month** – City Council proclaimed September 15 to October 15, 2025, as National Hispanic Heritage Month in the City of Graham.

## **RECOGNITION:**

### **Graham Firefighters, Police Officers, City Staff, and a Graham Resident**

City Council recognized the Graham Police Officers, Firefighters, City staff, and Ms. Brenda Cruz for rescue efforts during Tropical Storm Chantal.



## **CONSENT AGENDA:**

- A.** To approve the August 12, 2025, City Council meeting minutes and August 26, 2025, Special Closed Session meeting minutes.
- B.** To approve a resolution awarding a police badge and service sidearm to Retired Assistant Police Chief Rodney King.
- C.** To approve a resolution authorizing the submission of an application to the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program for the Travora Street Stormwater Mitigation Project.
- D.** To appoint Tim Allen to the Graham Historical Museum Advisory Board to fill an unexpired term ending June 30, 2027.
- E.** To approve a Budget Amendment transferring \$20,000 of Federal Drug Forfeiture Revenue to the Police Department for use.
- F.** To approve a Budget Amendment transferring \$3,000 of State Drug Forfeiture Revenue to the Police Department for use.
- G.** To approve a Budget Amendment for \$250,000 for repairs at the Wastewater Treatment Plant, \$84,000 for repairs at Back Creek #2, and \$140,000 for water usage payment to Burlington, due to the impact of Tropical Storm Chantal.

- H.** To approve a request to close parking spaces on E. Elm Street on September 13, 2025, from 7:00 am to 8:00 pm for the fall Big C Community Christian Concert.
- I.** To approve a request from Alamance County Veterans Services for the Veteran Day Parade on November 8, 2025, to include the closure of McAden Street, pending approval from NCDOT for closures of state roads.
- J.** To approve a request from First United Methodist Church of Graham for a Fall Carnival event on October 4, 2025, located on E. Market Street between N. Main Street and N. Marshall Street from 2:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. (Includes setup and cleanup).
- K.** To adopt an amended Traffic Schedule to restrict weight limits for Oneida and Market Streets.
- L.** To approve the Drinking Water Emerging Contaminants Construction Project and the 2025-2035 Water Capital Improvement Plan Resolutions.
- M.** To approve tax releases in the amount of \$3,069.14.

Motion by Mayor Pro Tem Hall to approve the Consent Agenda, seconded by Council Member Chin. The motion passed unanimously.

## **PUBLIC HEARINGS:**

### **ITEM 1: AMEND DEVELOPMENT ORDINANCE – MINOR SUBDIVISIONS**

A public hearing had been scheduled to consider an amendment to the Development Ordinance Article 8, Section 10.337 (1) to update the existing language regarding Minor Subdivisions.

Assistant City Manager Aaron Holland stated this was a request to amend the Development Ordinance to update existing language regarding minor subdivisions, allowing for one additional lot, and add a clearer synopsis of how the parent parcel is treated in minor subdivisions. He shared the minor subdivision language currently allowed for four or less lots, and the requests from Council were for Staff to look at changing it to five lots. He stated that the Staff added a time frame requirement, as well as addressing the parent parcel. He said that to eliminate confusion whenever individuals wanted to split property, they would know whether to include or exclude the parent parcel in the total number of lots. He said the Planning Board recommended approval, but asked that the time frame requirement be removed from that language and to change 'public street' to 'public right-of-way,' which staff agreed to.

Mayor Talley stated that people wanted to live here because of the low property tax rate of .3099. She shared that, according to her discussions with the Staff and the Public Works Director, the Council unanimously supports controlled growth. She noted that apartments and multi-family housing were being built before their tenure on the Council, and that this Council had only approved one townhouse community since taking office. She stated the most affordable thing for the City was to encourage controlled development. She asked the Council how they felt about increasing the number of lots from five to six on a parcel. She shared she had spoken to several developers, and they relayed that it would be too expensive to develop only by dividing a parcel into only four lots. She asked what the Council felt about six lots.

Council Member Whitaker inquired about the cost to the City for water meters.

Assistant City Manager Holland said the developer would pay the tap fees, which ranged between \$1,500 and \$2,000; however, the actual cost, including materials and labor, could be as high as \$10,000. He stated that the concern with allowing more than five lots is that it would affect staff by putting so many taps into a development, and we should really ask whether that should be a developer's responsibility. He stated that the Staff liked five lots, but he had concerns about installing so many taps and the City having to absorb that cost.

Mayor Talley stated that the issue was discussed and inquired about the possibility of revising the policy to provide a credit of up to \$2,500 per tap. She said the problems were when you have to move a lot of dirt or connect across the street. She said she did not think the City should have to bear that cost. She said she thought this was going in the right direction and asked if there was a way to rewrite the ordinance to allow up to a five-lot subdivision or six lots, including the parent lot, but restrict the utility improvement cost to \$2,500 per lot.

City Attorney Ward stated he would need to review the classification and fee schedule.

Mayor Talley stated the fees should be based on the costs incurred by the City, and the developer should bear those costs.

Motion by Mayor Pro Tem Hall to table this item and request Staff to bring forth a rewrite to include issues discussed, seconded by Council Member Chin. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Tom Boney, of Alamance News, inquired about the public hearing for a specific proposal and then discussed changing it from five lots to six lots, and whether it could be continued under the public hearing description if the Council were to change the number of allowable lots.

City Attorney Ward suggested re-advertising the public hearing.

## **ITEM 2: SESQUICENTENNIAL PARK – LOCATION**

A public hearing had been scheduled to discuss the location of the Sesquicentennial Park.

Mayor Talley thanked everyone for coming out tonight. She shared there had been eleven publicly advertised meetings regarding the park, and each time it was on the agenda, the Council allowed people to speak. Some of the challenges have been that the City of Graham did not actually build the Sesquicentennial Park. It was built by a group of individuals who wanted to clean up an eyesore at the Court Square. She shared that Pat Baily, Sam Powell, and others initially raised funds to build the park to celebrate the County's 150th anniversary. She stated the park was built over an improperly filled basement. She did not know if they were aware of it or not, but over time, the ground had sunk, creating numerous dangerous voids beneath the bricks. She stated that the engineers and the Public Works Director said it would continue to sink, and unfortunately, it was not a simple fix. She noted the estimated repair costs are approximately \$600,000.00. She said it was her understanding that this cost did not include any contingencies.

Mayor Talley noted several things during these previously publicized meetings that have been brought to light. She shared some of the options that have been proposed by both citizens and staff, which include either rebuilding the park where it currently sits or relocating it. She shared that either option would require dismantling the entire park and temporarily storing it or relocating it to another City property.

Mayor Talley stated that during the discussions, some residents raised concerns about the noise from traffic. She shared that Main Street carried around 25,000 vehicles a day, including tractor-trailers, logging trucks, and the sound of loud jay brakes, with people often asking what the City can do. She shared the City could not do anything about a state NCDOT road.

Mayor Talley stated that other concerns raised included the park's lack of fencing, which posed security issues, and the vandalism of the bell, which had to be relocated. She shared that a business owner asked if the park could be reimagined to add something to the pergola to shelter people from the sun or rain. She shared that another business owner came to speak, wanting to ensure the City had a green space downtown, and that several residents were concerned about the memorial bricks. She stated that she felt comfortable speaking for the entire Council, that they were all adamant that the monument bricks would be preserved and reused.

Mayor Talley stated that a second option, suggested by people as a result of those meetings, was to relocate it nearby, possibly beside the Graham Historical Museum. She noted the memorial bricks would need to be carefully collected and repurposed. She stated that several people suggested the park could be safer and more secure with the addition of fencing, lighting, bathrooms, and kitchen access in the Historical Museum. This location would provide a quieter environment, away from the constant traffic and sirens. She shared the estimated cost for this would be significantly less, at approximately \$50,000 or less.

Mayor Talley stated a third option the Council heard was to sell the existing parcel. The council discussed whether, if that were to happen, the building could be named the Sesquicentennial Building as a way to honor the sesquicentennial name. This citizen also asked if a new structure were built, could it have a rooftop green space to celebrate the history of the original building.

Mayor Talley stated that comments were made that a new building would need to be substantially similar to the original building that stood there in the early 1900s.

Mayor Talley shared the financial reality of the City was having to use money from the fund balance to pay for unexpected expenses, such as the damage to our water department during Tropical Storm Chantal. She shared that \$5 million was needed to repair the spillway that was damaged during the storm, \$3 million to relocate all electrical equipment out of the new flood zone, and \$8 million was needed for interconnections and water line extensions. She stated that all of this information has been shared with every single legislator, and she had met with them personally to request additional funds to help with the damages. She also requested that when the legislators return to session, they inquire about the availability of funds to help cover the expenses resulting from the tropical storm damage. She then said the legislators relayed that all monies coming into the state budget were being directed to Western Carolina as a result of the hurricane.

Mayor Talley shared that this was a perfect example of the importance of infrastructure and the critical need for the City to have reliable water, especially during times of natural disasters. She further stated that she was proud of the City of Graham for never losing its water supply, noting that no businesses were



closed and no residents were put on water restrictions. The City of Graham had prepared for an event like this, and she praised the Utility Director, Tanya Mann, who ensured the transition to the emergency water supply was done with minimal interruptions.

Mayor Talley stated the City's general fund was \$22,000,000 and could not be used for water or sewer improvements or repairs related to the storm. She explained that the funds needed to come from the water and sewer budget, which could only be funded through water and sewer increases, as well as grants the City had applied for and been awarded, totaling \$19,000,000. Mayor Talley shared that staff would continue to seek funding aggressively.

Mayor Talley stated that everyone cared about the sesquicentennial part and that she had personally purchased bricks to honor loved ones. She noted that the question was not how to honor the park and its significance in our history, but how to do so responsibly and safely in a manner that aligns with the City's financial reality.

The public hearing was opened, and the following spoke:

Council Member Chin asked Mr. Russell Compton to come forward and present his idea on moving the park behind the Graham Museum.

Mr. Russell Compton, 313 Holt Avenue, Graham, lived here his entire life. He stated that he did not represent anyone but himself. He stated that he had served on the Graham Historical Museum Board and would like to see the park relocated behind the Graham Museum. He said there was a courtyard located there that would need renovating. He shared that in 1851, the City was laid out, and lots were dedicated. He shared that Thomas Sellars purchased Lot 2 and constructed a small, two-story brick building. He said that 50 years later, the Patterson Brothers bought the building, demolished it, and constructed a new three-story building called the Patterson Building. He shared the building was destroyed by fire about 30 years ago. He said now we have the issue of an improper foundation. Mr. Compton stated the park does not function well in its original location due to traffic noise and people being unable to use it as a place to meditate, hold an event, or engage in conversation. The bell, a historic artifact, had to be removed due to protests happening nearby. He suggested that the Graham Museum's location could serve as a venue for events open to both the City and external attendees. He proposed selling the park space, rebuilding the building, and relocating the park to a new site.

Mr. Ted Nelson, 5408 Hanover Park Drive, Winston-Salem, stated that he had lived in Graham for a long time and still visited frequently. He suggested moving the park as Mr. Russell presented.

Ms. Kay McMullan, 818 Rivers Edge Drive, Graham, lived on Eastway Lane for over 32 years. She recommended that the Historic Museum needed more signs to direct people to the Museum. She said she was in favor of letting the builder pay to have the base fixed, rather than the taxpayers. She also inquired about the \$600,000 received from the State and why it could not be used for park repairs.

Mayor Talley shared that the purpose of the \$600,000 was to repair the crosswalks after NCDOT repaved the roads.

Mr. Randy Phillips, of 130 Burton Street, requested that the park remain in its current location because it represents a part of history.

Mr. Chip Turner, of 128 Westover Street, Graham, requested that the park remain in its current location.

He added if the park was moved, he wanted a refund for the bricks he bought.

Mr. Daniel Alvis, 1092 Noah Road, Graham, requested that the park remain in its current location. He suggested using a hydro fill to fill the basement holes.

Ms. Judy Hunt Lindley lived at 602 North Melville Street, but now resides at 1906 Springmeadow Drive. She asked that the park stay in its original location.

Ms. Patsy Baily Allard, daughter of the late Sesquicentennial Committee co-chair, Pat Baily. She shared how hard her mother worked on this park. She asked that the park stay in its original location.

Mr. Alex Bullis, of Wildwood Lane, questioned the Council on the lack of transparency and the bidding process for the park's repairs.

Mr. Richard Wright, 236 South Marshal Street, requested that the park remain in its original location and be kept open and active.

Mr. Keith Westbrooks, 604 Trock Wilder Court, Graham, suggested keeping the park in its original location.

Ms. Chelsea Dickey, of 511 Oakwood Lane, announced that she was running for Mayor, stating that she was speaking on behalf of several citizens who were unable to be present. She read a letter from another citizen regarding the bricks and requested that the park remain in its original location. She offered contacting Alamance Impact and Duke Energy to help with the cost of the park repairs.

Mayor Talley asked the Public Works Director to speak about the park.

Mr. Burke Robertson, Public Works Director, shared that heavy metals and contaminants had been identified.

Mayor Talley expressed concerns that the wall could collapse onto the bricks and crush them.

Mayor Pro Tem Hall asked if we could save the clock.

Mr. Robertson stated the clock was not in any imminent risk of falling over.

Mr. Tom Boney, of Alamance News, stated that he took exception to the fact that this topic had been discussed or was on the agenda eleven times. He also expressed concerns about relocating the park to the area behind the Historical Museum.

Mayor Talley stated that she had asked the City Clerk how many times the issue had been discussed and recorded in the minutes, and that was the information she received.

Council Member Whitaker stated that the public hearing was intended to gather ideas, and this was merely a public forum.

Mr. Boney asked that the Council record all their meetings, especially the work sessions and budget workshops.

Mayor Talley explained how budget meetings and work sessions are advertised and that anyone was welcome to attend. She shared that those types of meetings had never been recorded, as they were work sessions intended for discussing various issues and needs of the City.

Mr. Boney concluded that the money the Mayor solicited from the State could have included the park, as Senator Galley made it very clear. Still, he stated that the Mayor's view was that she did not want to do that, instead wanting to focus on crosswalks.

Mayor Talley stated that she was a person of her word, and when she requested funding for a project that the Council had approved and agreed upon, it should be used for that purpose.

Council Member Whitaker asked if we had requested assistance from the County to cover the repair costs.

City Manager Garner stated she had not had any conversations with the County.

Ms. Jill Bullis, 500 Wildwood Lane, Graham, stated she had lived in Graham her whole life. She shared her grandmother bought bricks for her entire family, intending them to stay there as a legacy forever. If the park were moved, she would want her bricks back. She stated she did not want her family's bricks relocated.

Mayor Talley said there would be no decisions made tonight and appreciated the ideas and the opportunity to listen and make the best decision for the community. She suggested putting something out to the community to gather their ideas based on the information presented tonight.

Motion by Mayor Talley to close the public hearing, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Hall. The motion passed unanimously.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD**

Ms. Katherine Walker, ACTA, will launch a new app called Micro Transit on October 1, 2025, allowing users to schedule a ride at any time for \$2.00.

### **CITY STAFF COMMENTS**

No comments.

### **CITY COUNCIL COMMENTS**

Council Member Chin reminded citizens of the following events:

- Thursdays at Seven – September 11<sup>th</sup> - Castaways
- Big C Concert – Saturday, September 13<sup>th</sup>
- Kinfolk Concert – Saturday, September 20<sup>th</sup>
- Every Saturday in September will be “Movie in the Park” – 7:30 – 9:30 pm.
- Esperanza Festival – September 28<sup>th</sup> – 12:00 pm – 8:00 pm
- Graham Fall Fest – September 27<sup>th</sup> – 10 – 4 pm



## CLOSED SESSION

City Council will consider going into closed session pursuant to N.C.G.S. 143-318.11(a)(5) to consider the purchase of 1771 N. Jim Minor Road in Haw River, parcel ID number 152551, owned by Thomas and Linda Stewart, adjacent to Graham Regional Park, for the intended use of park and recreational facilities and to discuss potential litigation in accordance with N.C.G.S. Section 143-318.11(a)(3).

Motion by Council Member Whitaker to go into closed session pursuant to N.C.G.S. 143-318.11(a)(5) to consider the purchase of 1771 N. Jim Minor Road in Haw River, parcel ID number 152551, owned by Thomas and Linda Stewart, adjacent to Graham Regional Park, for the intended use of park and recreational facilities, and to discuss potential litigation in accordance with N.C.G.S. Section 143-318.11(a)(3), seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Hall. The motion passed unanimously.

The closed session was held.

Motion by Mayor Pro Tem Hall to go out of closed session, seconded by Council Member Whitaker. The motion passed unanimously.

Motion by Mayor Pro Tem Hall to return to open session, seconded by Council Member Chin. The motion passed unanimously.

No action was taken in open session.

## ADJOURN

Motion by Mayor Pro Tem Hall to adjourn, seconded by Council Member Chin. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 9:48 p.m.

Renee M. Ward, CMC  
City Clerk