

# City of Graham City Council Meeting Minutes February 10, 2026



The City Council of the City of Graham held a regularly scheduled meeting on February 10, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. in the Council Chamber, City Hall Municipal Building, 201 South Main Street, Graham, NC.

## Council Members Present:

Mayor Chelsea Dickey  
Mayor Pro Tem Ricky Hall  
Council Member Bobby Chin  
Council Member Bonnie Whitaker  
Council Member Jim Young

## Staff Present:

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

CALL TO ORDER: Mayor Chelsea Dickey

## INVOCATION & PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Dr. Derrick Thorpe, Senior Pastor, First Baptist Missionary Church, gave the invocation, and all stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

## PRESENTATIONS AND RECOGNITION:

- Grace VandeVisser, Alamance County Convention and Visitors Bureau - Season Six - The Story of Art in America.

Ms. VandeVisser invited Graham to be part of the Story of Art in America. Season Six will feature art in Burlington and Graham. To participate in the series, the cost would be \$7,200. She also noted that Graham's participation in the production was not a guarantee. Council consensus was to make a decision at the March Council meeting.

- **9/11 5K Fundraiser – Children of Fallen Heroes**  
Recreation and Parks and the Graham Fire Department raised \$5,170.66 for the Children of Fallen Heroes through the 9/11 5K run and presented a check to Mr. Jeb Wasley, Children of Fallen Heroes. Mr. Wasley then gifted the Fire Department with a drone.



- Graham Fire Department – Received the United Way of Alamance County Outstanding Volunteer Award for their continued efforts to help unload food items at the Salvation Army.



Mayor Dickey requested moving the public comment section to the beginning of the meeting.

Motion by Council Member Young to move Public Comments to the beginning of the agenda, seconded by Mayor Dickey. The motion passed 3-2. Mayor Dickey, Council Member Young, and Mayor Pro Tem Hall voted yes, and Council Members Whitaker and Chin voted no.

### PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Paul Keller, 410 Stonehedge Drive, Graham, spoke in opposition to moving the park because it would eliminate needed parking spaces.

Crystal Lawson, Cooper Road, Graham, spoke in opposition to moving the park.

Kay McMullan, 818 Rivers Edge Drive, Graham, lives outside the City and spoke in opposition to moving the park because it would eliminate needed parking spaces.

Randy Phillips, 130 Burton Street, Graham, expressed his disappointment in the City Council and spoke in opposition to moving the park.

Cheryl Schmidt, 1981 Riverwalk Drive, Graham, spoke in opposition to moving the park and expressed concerns about the new location.

Patsy Bailey-Allard, 6146 Snow Camp Road, Graham, spoke in opposition to moving the park and the funds needed to move it. She asked to keep the park in its current location.

Nadia Euliss-Pickens, 113 West Gilbreath Street, Graham, spoke in opposition to moving the park. Her son,

Ryker Pickens, also spoke against moving the park.

Jane Albright, 231 S. Marshall Street, Graham, spoke in opposition to moving the park. She asked the Council to keep the park in its current location.

Eve Carmen Isley, 10613 Flennigan Way, Charlotte, spoke in opposition to moving the park. She shared that her father worked for Alley, Williams, Carmen, and King, who donated the park plans.

Jim Albright, 232 South Marshall Street, Graham, shared his survey results; 433 people responded. He spoke against moving the park.

Daniel Alvis, 1022 Noah Road, Graham, spoke in opposition to moving the park.

Susan Gross, 2342 Atwood Drive, Burlington, spoke in opposition to moving the park.

Sam Powell, 1067 East Lake Drive, Burlington, spoke in opposition to moving the park.

William Snyder, 658 James Griffin Drive, Graham, operates a business in downtown Graham, spoke in opposition to moving the park and eliminating needed parking spaces.

Carol Reddy, a Maryland resident who lived in Graham, spoke in opposition to moving the park.

Keith Westbrook, 604 Trok Wilder Court, Graham, spoke in opposition to moving the park and eliminating needed parking spaces.

Sam Cahoon, 219 South Melville Street, Graham, spoke in opposition to relocating the park and emphasized the need to preserve its memory and integrity. He also asked that any action taken be in compliance with North Carolina law.

Julie Manning, 234 Webster Road, Graham, spoke in opposition to moving the park.

Jill Bullis, 500 Wildwood Lane, Graham, spoke in opposition to moving the park. She asked the Council to be attentive to the citizens of Graham.

Eric Crissman, 208 Albright Avenue, Graham, spoke in opposition to moving the park.

Beth Belcher, 2152 Lake Point Drive, Graham, expressed disappointment in the Council and spoke in opposition to moving the park.

Ronnie Isley, 510 Mendell Terrace, Graham, spoke in opposition to moving the park and asked the Council to reconsider.

Todd Pickard, 200 Wilson Street, Graham, spoke about the park's history and asked Council to keep it in its current location. He asked to bring the kids back to Arts Around the Square.

Renee Russell, 218 Ward Street, Graham, owns 64 Harvard in downtown Graham, spoke in opposition to moving the park. She stated that she believed the community would raise funds to repair the park.

Joseph Bullis, 2068 Cooper Road, Graham, spoke in opposition to moving the park. He expressed

disappointment in the Council, calling it a slap in the face to the citizens who want to keep the park.

Jennifer Brito, 605 N. Main Street, Graham, spoke in opposition to moving the park. She asked the Council to reopen consideration and place it on a future agenda.

Leah Cutlip wrote in to express opposition to moving the park and eliminating needed parking.

Rachel Foster of Maple Street, Graham, wrote to express support for relocating the park to create a larger footprint.

Council took a five-minute recess.

**PROCLAMATION:** Mayor Dickey presents the Haw River Trail 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Proclamation to Recreation and Parks Director Brian Faucette.



**CONSENT AGENDA:**

- A.** To approve the January 13, 2026, City Council and Closed Session meeting minutes and January 20, 2026, Special Budget Planning Session meeting minutes.
- B.** To approve a street closure of the 100 block of W. Elm Street for the 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Esperanza Hispanic Heritage Festival on September 26, 2026, from 8:00 a.m. to 11 p.m.
- C.** To approve a budget amendment in the amount of \$260,500, comprised of the following departments: Governing Body (\$1,500), Information Technology (\$19,000), Finance (\$65,000), Police (\$85,000), and General Fund Non-Departmental (\$60,000), and Utilities Fund Non-Departmental (\$60,000).
- D.** To approve the Mid-Year Report and tax releases in the amount of \$282.79.

Mayor Dickey asked to pull Item B.

Council Member Chin asked to pull Item C.

Motion by Mayor Hall to approve A and D, seconded by Council Member Young. The motion passed unanimously.

Mayor Dickey stated she wanted to pull Item B due to the Esperanza Festival occupying space in the parking lot off Elm Street, and this parking lot may or may not be a new park.

City Manager Garner stated contact would be made with the applicant, and Council may want to consider moving this item to March.

Council Member Chin asked for the \$1,500 request for the governing body be removed from the budget amendment. He asked City Manager Garner to provide background on each budget amendment item.

City Manager Garner stated the Mayor requested to attend the NC Main Street Conference in New Bern, with an estimated expense of \$1,500, including registration, hotel, mileage, and potential per diem. Information Technology (\$19,000), removed the 50/50 split between Fund 31 and placed it in Fund 10. Finance (\$65,000) was for extensive internal audit work for Fiscal Year 2024 by two different auditing firms. Police (\$85,000) due to four unplanned retirements. General Fund Non-Departmental (\$60,000) and Utilities Fund Non-Departmental (\$60,000) due to bond and insurance ratings and premiums being higher than in the prior year, including insurance, workers' compensation, property, and liability. She shared the claim data drives the cost and premiums for each year. She noted the budget amendment did not increase the fund balance appropriation and that sales tax revenue would cover it.

Motion by Council Member Chin to approve budget amendment for Information Technology (\$19,000), Finance (\$65,000), Police (\$85,000), General Fund Non-Departmental (\$60,000), and Utilities Fund Non-Departmental (\$60,000).

Mayor Dickey stated, for clarification, that \$1,500 was being omitted to allow her to attend a conference to further downtown development.

Council Member Chin stated yes.

Motion was seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Hall. The motion passed 3-2. Mayor Dickey and Council Member Whitaker voted no.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **ITEM 1: ACCEPTANCE OF PUBLIC STREETS AND RIGHTS-OF-WAY – VALOR RIDGE SECTION 1**

City Council considered approving a Resolution authorizing the adoption and maintenance of the portions of Wildwood Lane, Langlais Drive, and Jared Court located within Section 1 of the Valor Ridge Subdivision.

Assistant City Manager Holland stated the Resolution before Council tonight was to authorize the adoption and maintenance of the portions of Wildwood Lane, Langlais Drive, and Jared Court, located within Section 1 of the Valor Ridge subdivision. He stated that development in Section 1 of the Valor Ridge Subdivision has been completed, and the streets have been offered to the City of Graham for adoption. These streets have been inspected by Public Works, the City's Engineer, and the Planning Department for compliance with the proposed development pattern permitted under their approved construction drawings. All public infrastructure in these phases has been deemed complete and meets the standards for acceptance. He noted staff recommended approval.

Motion by Mayor Pro Tem Hall to approve the Resolution authorizing the adoption and maintenance of

the portions of Wildwood Lane, Langlais Drive, and Jared Court located within Section 1 of the Valor Ridge Subdivision, seconded by Council Member Whitaker. The motion passed unanimously.

## **ITEM 2: DISCUSS OPTIONS – ALCOHOL SALES – ARTS AROUND THE SQUARE**

City Council considered options for alcohol sales during the Arts Around the Square event.

Recreation and Parks Director Brian Faucette stated the proposal was very similar to last year's event and a request had been received from local businesses to have alcohol vendors on the event site for Arts Around the Square.

Mayor Dickey asked whether local businesses could sell at the event, or only vendors.

Mr. Faucette stated just the vendors. He noted the business would need to submit a vendor fee, which would then be reviewed by the Police Department; if approved, space would be allocated within the venue.

Mayor Dickey stated there are eight to nine alcohol-selling businesses downtown and that she would like them to benefit. She noted that if an outside vendor is brought in, we should also allocate that revenue to the downtown businesses. She asked whether there was a way to set up a temporary social district for this event.

Council Member Young stated the businesses were opposed to that because they would not have control over someone entering the premises, purchasing beer, and leaving, which would create liability concerns.

Mayor Dickey asked Crystal Lawson to come forward and speak.

Crystal Lawson stated that she owns Powercade in downtown Graham. She said that if an outside vendor were brought in, it would take away from the brick-and-mortar locations. She stated a designated beer garden would be something to discuss.

Mr. Faucette stated that last year, approval from the Council was for vendors, and two were downtown businesses.

Mayor Dickey stated that if Forgotten Road Ales was able to benefit from the event, she would like all the local businesses to have that equal opportunity, and they could benefit by having a temporary social district for this event.

Council Member Chin stated that Forgotten Road Ales completed the paperwork and gotten a special license. He stated for local businesses who wanted to participate needed to go through the process in place. He stated by having people walk into an established business and walk out with alcohol, liability could be transferred to the City.

Mayor Dickey stated she was trying to mitigate confusion and that Graham was one of the few towns in Alamance County that did not have a social district. If someone accidentally walked out with alcohol, it could be bad for them, businesses, and Graham.

Council Member Whitaker stated there were no issues last year, and she was not in favor of people walking out of establishments with alcohol in hand.

Mayor Pro Tem Hall stated he agreed and that it would require additional officers and incur additional costs.

Council Member Young noted that if a social district were established, it would require State approval.

Mayor Dickey stated that a public hearing would need to be held, the ordinance amended, and the amended ordinance filed with the State and the ABC Commission.

Motion by Council Member Chin to approve the sale of alcohol during the Arts Around the Square Event and suspend Chapter 12; Article I; Division 1; Section 12-11 – *Wine or Beer Container – Public Display* within the approved event areas for the duration of Arts Around the Square on May 16, 2026, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Hall. The motion passed unanimously.

### **ITEM 3: ARTS AROUND THE SQUARE – DOG-FRIENDLY EVENT**

City Council considered allowing dogs at the Arts Around the Square Event.

Recreation and Parks Director Brian Faucette stated this request was also for Arts Around the Square. He shared that staff had been approached by a handful of dog organizations in our County who wanted to participate in Arts Around the Square. He stated that an ordinance currently prohibits dogs at City events. He asked to suspend the ordinance for all future events, not just Arts Around the Square.

Michelle Shaffer, Recreation and Parks, noted that the proposal recommends using 6-foot or shorter leashes, no retractable leashes, ensuring dogs are fully vaccinated, requiring cleanup of pet waste, removing any dogs showing aggressive behaviors from the event, and keeping dogs under handler control at all times.

Council Member Whitaker asked about the purpose of having animals at the event.

Ms. Shaffer stated that two animal organizations have applied to attend the event, including Burlington Animal Services, and that lifting the ordinance would allow them to attend.

Mayor Pro Tem Hall recommended checking with the City's insurance before proceeding.

Motion by Mayor Pro Tem Hall to table this item to the March 10, 2026 Council meeting, seconded by Council Member Chin. The motion passed unanimously.

### **ITEM 4: RULES OF PROCEDURE FOR CITY COUNCIL**

City Council considered providing feedback to staff on revisions and responses to the draft Rules of Procedure for City Council.

Council Member Whitaker asked to move this to a special meeting to have adequate time to review and discuss all 42 rules.

Motion by Council Member Whitaker to table this item, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Hall. The motion passed unanimously.

Motion by Council Member Young to move this item to the Special Meeting on February 23, 2026, at 3:00 pm, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Hall. The motion passed unanimously.

### **ITEM 5: NEW PARK PROJECT**

City Council considered an RFQ for the new park project design and construction.

Mayor Dickey asked the attorneys if they had a chance to read North Carolina General Statute 100-2.1.

City Attorney Coleman stated he had read it, but before making any comment, would like more time to review it, noting that it mostly discussed State property rather than local government property.

Council Member Young stated that he was here to stand for what was right for the community, even if there were disagreements, and he hoped everyone could see he was trying to be fair and thoughtful. He stated he respected everyone's voice tonight and in previous meetings. He stated that he thought everyone present wanted what was best for Graham, and his motion was to reaffirm the Council's May 13, 2025, decision, which passed 4-1, to dismantle the pergola, remove and store all memorial bricks, and make the area safe. He proposed that staff now act on that approved motion to secure the site. Additionally, he asked to allow time for the public to fundraise, as the park was originally built, so the community can contribute through donations or memorial brick sales. He stated he was told he was flip-flopping and noted that, as a leader, you need to be open-minded and listen to everything. He stated he did not understand why it never happened after that motion was passed. He stated he watched that meeting, and it really made him mad. He thought he was misled, and that Mayor Pro Tem Hall was misled as well, until the Alamance News checked the facts regarding the grant money. He stated that we should follow through with that motion and give the public time to raise funds. He asked the Mayor about grant funding from Duke Energy and Impact Alamance, and people have been saying that, but people needed to start raising money and selling bricks. He stated that this was the right thing to do and that it was to honor the motion made on May 13, 2025, by the last Council.

Mayor Dickey asked that he reread the motion.

Council Member Whitaker stated it was basically to dismantle the park because it was sinking and unsafe, and to store it at the City until the Council could decide how to proceed, but it never happened.

Council Member Young read a portion of the May 13, 2025, Council meeting minutes. "Mayor Talley stated the vote was 4-1 to move forward with removing it and making it safe, and then hear from the public how to repurpose that space without the cost of repair, which would be close to half a million dollars. The City did not have the money to do that at this time, but something needed to be done now to make it safe. She stated all the memorial bricks would be saved and repurposed, as well as the clock, pergola, and benches."

Council Member Young shared he watched several Council meetings, and each time the Council said we have to do something, and staff were all but begging for direction. He stated that another meeting was held in September, that people attended and spoke, and that no one brought up the motion from the May 13, 2025, meeting to dismantle it and make it safe. He stated his motion was made, and this was the right thing to do.

Mayor Dickey asked whether he was proposing any reallocation of funds for this project or any steps forward after tearing down the park.

Council Member Young stated that it was a decision for the Council, but we needed to give people the opportunity to raise funds and restore the park to the way they wanted it.

Mayor Dickey asked, even though we have grant funds, did he still want to put it back on the people to fundraise?

Council Members Chin and Whitaker stated yes, because it was not funded with Graham's dollars.

Council Member Young shared that he would be speaking at the next Alamance County Commissioners meeting to request funds, as it was the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Alamance County.

Mayor Dickey shared that the grant funds received are due to be spent down by June 30, 2026, and was working on a tight timeline.

Council Member Young reiterated his motion and asked for a vote. He stated either way, the park had to come down.

Council Member Chin seconded the motion.

Council Member Whitaker stated she agreed with the vote and was concerned about safety. She stated that no matter what, it needed to come down, and then decide whether to repair it, put it back, or move it.

City Manager Garner asked Council to clarify the definition of “safe” for staff. She asked whether safe meant the fencing could come down and that it would be safe for people to walk on. She also noted the grant money, as previously passed, provided a directed grant to the City of Graham for downtown revitalization. She stated there was little specificity about how the funds could be spent, and there was a June 30, 2026, deadline. She shared there were other items in the B1 district that could be considered for funding, and the amount allocated to the crosswalk enhancements was shifted to the park project, which was \$485,320. Further, if fundraising efforts are considered part of the motion, it would be wise for the City Council to adopt a donation policy specific to this project, so that donations to the City are earmarked for this specific purpose. She stated it would not have to be done tonight, but that it should be done before any fundraising efforts begin. She asked what to do with the bricks, as some said they did not want their bricks relocated. She stated at this point and time, a relocation was not definitive, and if anyone wanted them back, we would provide a form that would state who picked up bricks.

Council Member Chin asked whether disassembly and storage were included in the cost.

City Manager Garner stated the disassembly and relocation would be handled by internal staff, specifically the Public Works Department. She shared there would be equipment rental in order to move the park, and it would not be fast or easy. She stated the cost would need to come from somewhere.

Council Member Chin asked if the grant money could be used.

City Manager Garner stated, in her opinion, probably not, because the grant was for downtown

revitalization.

Mayor Pro Tem Hall asked if the grant money could be used for the crosswalks.

City Manager Garner stated that it would be a City Council action and that, at this point, she did not know whether that project could be completed by June 30, 2026. She stated that an extension had been requested for those funds, and there was no guarantee it would be granted.

Council Member Chin asked what else the money could be used for.

City Manager Garner noted in a previous staff report that the initial funding decision, which included:

- Resurfacing municipal lots on West Elm and Maple.
- Different breakdowns for paving: Harden and Maple, Main and Marshall, Elm and Marshall.
- Downtown street light upgrade, which was approved and funded, accomplished.
- Repaint the metal poles downtown. Duke Energy responded that they have no plans to paint them. She noted a quote we received years ago, and if we wanted another quote, we would have to pay an engineering firm to get it.
- Resurfacing East Elm from East Harden to Home Street.
- Pedestrian crosswalk improvements downtown was one that was initially funded, and then that funding was shifted last month to the park.
- Tree replacement downtown was approved. Public Works has that set for spring.
- Hanging baskets. We were presented with the quotes to maintain those. There is the issue of getting an agreement with Duke Energy to hang something else on their poles. May or may not be approved and would take some time.
- Pave Way Systems - Pattern Pavement, brick pavers, UMM appearance for approximately 1/3 the cost of conventional pavers. It would require NCDOT plan approval. Brick paver sidewalks were the last ones. The cost for those at the time of the staff report was \$39 to \$47 per square foot. She stated these were items prepared by public works at the time the City Council considered them. Paving was a quick option that could most likely be accomplished between now and June 30, 2026.

City Manager Garner noted that the Council had a tight timeline and that some of these items would require outside agreements, which would add to the overall timeline.

Mayor Dickey stated that since there would be no design to repair the park, she requested that we move forward, hope we get the extension, but make the motion something bigger than just taking it down. She requested that we make the motion to put it back up as well.

Council Member Young stated he thought it was best to get something done tonight, to reaffirm his motion, and to hash out the other stuff. He stated the motion was made and seconded, and asked for a vote.

Mayor Dickey stated she had one last comment: if we do not hash out the next step, half of the community members might come and want their bricks back, leaving the other half in limbo. If we are putting it back the way it is, we would want to have all the bricks, and we want to be able to represent all these community members. She stated that she was putting together a whole package to help people understand our vision for where we were going with this, so they can either claim their bricks or leave them to be memorialized in the same location.

Council Member Young stated he made a motion to reaffirm the motion made by Council last year, and it was seconded.

Mayor Dickey asked, all in favor.

Council Member Whitaker asked how it would be funded and whether the City would fund it.

Council Member Chin stated yes, that was always the intent, and that Public Works would do it. He stated the challenge was to raise \$500,000. He stated if they take the challenge to raise at least half of it, and then, through grants, put the park back in its current location.

Mayor Dickey asked City Attorney Ward whether the state statute required the City to repair the park.

City Attorney Ward stated Council could remove it, make it safe, and take some other action to dispose of it or restore it.

City Attorney Coleman stated that if it were a temporary removal, you would have 90 days to put it back or relocate it to another equal or similar prominence.

Council Member Whitaker stated she was not comfortable making a decision because the attorneys needed more time to do research.

**Motion:**

Mayor Dickey stated that a motion was made by Council Member Young, seconded by Council Member Chin, and she asked who was in favor. Mayor Pro Tem Hall and Council Members Young and Chin voted to disassemble and store the park and make it safe. Mayor Dickey and Council Member Whitaker voted no.

Mayor Dickey stated the motion again for clarity. She noted the motion was to dismantle the park and make it safe, and that would be the first step and stop there. She noted it was passed by a vote of 3-2.

Mayor Dickey asked Council to define safe so City Staff knows what to do.

Council Member Young asked Mr. Robertson to explain how to make the area safe.

Mr. Robertson stated you would need enough dirt to fill in the voids where it would properly drain, seed, and straw it for the short term.

Council Member Whitaker stated we would haul dirt into a place that is already sinking, and then have to dig the dirt out again, which made no sense.

City Manager Garner stated, as staff, we would also warrant considering passing it to potential fundraising efforts, what City role would help promote, and what role would help facilitate.

Mayor Dickey stated she was interested in hearing what the City Attorney has to say about the state statute. She stated that interpretation would push Council in the right direction, and if we are legally bound to repair the park, then we have to repair the park.

City Manager Garner stated staff would wait until the March agenda, when the City Council hears from the attorneys.

Council Member Chin stated a commitment was needed from the residents of Graham who have a hand in this.

Mayor Dickey asked Jane Albright to come forward as the acting spokesperson. She stated there were many moving pieces. She asked whether Ms. Jane Albright would be the spokesperson and point of contact for everyone to come together.

Ms. Albright asked if Council could meet them halfway. She stated that if the Council would use the grant money to start the project, she would Chair the Committee to raise the rest of the funds needed to put the park back.

Mayor Dickey noted to the City Manager that she relayed to the Council that they could not allocate those funds because she was against it and it was a bad look.

City Manager Garner stated that was not correct, and if that perception was given, she apologized. She stated that if the project to repair the park cost \$500,000, the Council had \$485,320 that could be allocated by City Council action to begin repair work on the park. She stated that as soon as the City lawfully expends at least \$485,320 by June 30, 2026, we would be in compliance with the grant without an extension, again, which may or may not happen. She shared the difference, which would have to be City dollars that would have to be allocated in the project ordinance that was originally adopted, amended last month, and can be amended as many times as the City Council wanted. She stated that Staff could not lawfully pre-audit a contract again in our scenario here for \$500,000 until the total amount of the contract is available for funding. In the project ordinance, whether it should be amended again will be the \$485,320. She stated the difference would be allocated from City dollars regardless of whether those City dollars flowed through fundraising efforts, or something else, but that does, at least initially, put the City on the hook to pay the difference. However, if we were able to expend \$485,320 by June 30, 2026, then we would be in compliance with our grant requirements, regardless of whether it is \$500,000 or \$600,000, whatever the difference is, as long as we had work, tangible items to show that things happened at that park. She noted if we were lawfully billed within what we lawfully spent, then we would be good. She said then the project could, in theory, go beyond June 30, 2026 as long as it was funded solely with City dollars, whether it was City money, donations, or whatever that looked like.

Mayor Dickey stated she did not want to wait a month and risk getting even closer to the June 30, 2026, deadline if some of this grant money was going toward repairing the park. It sounds like the community will raise the remaining funds.

City Manager Garner stated that the School of Government said informal construction and repair contracts that do not involve buildings, such as a pergola, would not qualify as a building; that may or may not be the case, but according to them, no ads are required until you hit the formal threshold of \$500,000. If you hit the \$500,000 threshold, it says you can run newspaper or electronic ads for the full seven days before bid opening. Advertising via electronic means requires only board approval. She stated that Council was most likely referring to a formal bid scenario, which would require a 7-day published notice for construction and repair contracts that do not involve buildings.

Mayor Dickey stated that, in theory, we could start tomorrow if we direct it.

City Manager Garner stated that it was correct and Council would need to approve the advertisement by electronic means if we don't make the deadline for Thursday's paper. She stated that technically, it could start before Thursday. She noted that when the Staff drafted an ad, they would send it to the publication, and the seven-day clock would start on Thursday.

Mayor Dickey stated we could call a special meeting, select a bid, and begin moving forward.

City Manager Garner stated you would select the lowest responsive responsible bidder.

City Attorney Ward stated he and Attorney Coleman had a brief conversation, and that if the Council could give them until next Monday, they could produce something to give you this piece of the puzzle.

Mayor Dickey made a motion to reallocate the funds to move forward with a seven-day bid process and build back Sesquicentennial Park in the same build, and then hold a special meeting within the next 10 days to get this rolling.

Council Member Young asked before we hear back from the City Attorney.

Mayor Dickey stated, "Yes, before we hear from the Attorneys, because the community wanted it, whether she was legally bound to do it or not."

Mayor Pro Tem Hall asked whether the Mayor was saying we were going to take a 2,700-square-foot piece of property and still have only 1,100 square feet of usable space.

Mayor Dickey stated yes.

Mayor Pro Tem Hall stated that it was a waste.

Mayor Dickey stated that it was my motion and asked if there was a second.

City Manager Garner asked the Mayor to repeat her motion.

**Motion:**

Mayor Dickey stated that the motion was to reallocate \$485,320 to rebuilding Sesquicentennial Park in the same design, get the bids out this week, and then hold a special meeting in 10 days to pick the lowest bid.

Council Member Whitaker inquired about the lowest bid.

City Manager Garner stated if Council awarded a contract, it had to go to the lowest responsive, responsible bidder. City Council can reject all bids, but if you award a bid based on a process, whether it is formal or informal, through a bid process, not a qualifications-based process, that has to go to the lowest responsive, responsible bidder.

Mayor Dickey asked for a second.

Seconded by Council Member Young, the motion failed 3-2. Mayor Pro Tem Hall and Council Members Chin and Whitaker voted no. Mayor Dickey and Council Member Young voted yes.

Council Member Whitaker asked to hear back from Legal.

City Attorney Ward stated it was a long, detailed statute, and it would be good to approach it thoroughly because we do not want to do anything to jeopardize the contracting or the funds.

Mayor Dickey asked whether Council would like to table the discussion of the grant funds as well, since it could be tied to what the Attorneys bring back.

The Council's consensus was to resume the discussion of the grant funds after the Attorneys report back.

### **CITY STAFF COMMENTS**

City Manager Garner shared that Council Member Young requested a presentation from the Invictus Task Force. He wanted to confirm that Council was good to add to the City Council agenda.

Council consensus was to add this topic to a future Council meeting.

### **CITY COUNCIL COMMENTS**

Mayor Pro Tem Hall expressed dissatisfaction with Mr. Boney, Alamance News. He stated he had spoken with Mr. Brian Baker, Assistant County Manager, at the Community Leader's Retreat regarding parking spaces for the new park project. He shared that Mr. Holland had also contacted Mr. Baker.

- Council confirmed interest in scheduling a presentation from the Invictus Task Force (Child Predator Task Force).
- Updates provided on commission activities, including Historic Resources Board, Appearance Commission, Historical Museum, and MPO.
- Parks & Recreation will hold its Hall of Fame Dinner on April 11.

Council expressed appreciation to Public Works, the Fire Department, and the Police Department for their recent efforts during winter storms.

Mayor Dickey expressed concerns that the logo, typeface, and color palette very closely resembled those of the neighboring municipality of Burlington. She stated Graham was a community with its own rich history, creativity, and vibrancy. She believed the brand should clearly and confidently reflect individuality rather than mirroring another city. She stated she was a team player and would support the brand moving forward, but believed this moment presents an opportunity to set a higher bar, a higher standard for future projects, rooted in transparency, community involvement, and a thoughtful process that honored what makes Graham unique.

Mayor Pro Tem Hall stated that the logo was not within the Council's jurisdiction; it was within the City Manager's and staff's jurisdiction. He stated the Council had its responsibilities, and the Manager and staff had theirs.

City Manager Garner asked Council if she could reply. She stated that the staff worked under the direction provided by the City Council. She shared that it was made very clear not to engage in a wide-scale effort that would have cost the City as much as neighboring cities spent on branding. The prior Council made it very clear in the directives given to staff, and staff carried out exactly what was assigned to them by the

City Council at that time.

Mayor Dickey noted that the Affordable Housing Commission included realtors, developers, and municipal representatives. If anyone was interested in being part of that group, let her know.

### CLOSED SESSION

City Council will consider going into closed session to consult with the attorney in accordance with N.C.G.S. Section 143-318.11(a)(3), City of Mebane versus City of Graham, Case #25CV007126-000.

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

The closed session was held.

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

No action was taken.

### ADJOURN

Motion by Mayor Pro Tem Hall to adjourn, seconded by Council Member Chin. The motion passed unanimously. (8:07 p.m.)

*Renee M. Ward, CMC*  
City Clerk