

City of Graham

City Council Meeting Minutes

July 14, 2026



The City Council of the City of Graham held a regularly scheduled meeting on July 14, 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 - *Absent*
Bryan Coleman, City Attorney
Renee Ward, City Clerk

CALL TO ORDER: Mayor Dickey called the meeting to order and presided.

INVOCATION & PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Pastor Scott Lawson, Graham Presbyterian Church, gave the invocation and all stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA:

ADD-ON: Mayor Dickey shared a request from a resident asking to make a presentation to Council regarding the Sesquicentennial Park. She asked to add it under New Business. Council consensus was to add this request under New Business.

Motion by Mayor Pro Tem Hall to adopt the agenda with the add-on, seconded by Council Member Young. The motion passed unanimously.

CONSENT AGENDA:

A. To approve the following minutes:

May 20, 2026 Special Meeting
June 1, 2026 Special Meeting
June 9, 2026 City Council Meeting and Closed Session minutes

B. To approve a resolution donating 10 sections of 5-inch large diameter supply hose and 25 sections of 1.75" fire hose to Alamance Community College Fire Academy.

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE CONVEYANCE OF SURPLUS FIRE HOSE TO ALAMANCE COMMUNITY COLLEGE PURSUANT TO N.C.G.S. § 160A-274

WHEREAS, the City of Graham Fire Department owns surplus fire hose consisting of:

- Ten (10) sections of 5-inch Large Diameter Supply Hose; and
- Twenty-five (25) sections of 1.75-inch Fire Hose;

WHEREAS, the above-referenced fire hose has reached its intended service life for emergency response operations in accordance with National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1962 and has been replaced through the City's scheduled hose replacement program; and

WHEREAS, North Carolina General Statute § 160A-274 authorizes a governmental unit in this State to exchange with, lease to, lease from, sell to, or purchase from any other governmental unit any interest in real or personal property upon such terms and conditions as the governmental unit deems wise, with or without consideration; and

WHEREAS, the City of Graham has determined that it is in the best interest of the City to convey the above-described surplus fire hose to Alamance Community College for no consideration; and

WHEREAS, the Alamance Community College Fire Academy provides critical training and certification for future firefighters, many of whom ultimately serve the City of Graham Fire Department and other fire departments throughout the region; and

WHEREAS, the City of Graham has determined that donating the surplus fire hose to the Alamance Community College Fire Academy will continue to provide a significant public benefit by enhancing firefighter training while extending the useful life of equipment no longer suitable for front-line emergency service.

THEREFORE, THE GRAHAM CITY COUNCIL RESOLVES THAT:

1. The City of Graham hereby conveys to Alamance Community College the following surplus property:
 - Ten (10) sections of 5-inch Large Diameter Supply Hose; and
 - Twenty-five (25) sections of 1.75-inch Fire Hose.
2. The property herein described shall be conveyed for consideration of continued public benefit through firefighter education and training.
3. The City Manager, Finance Officer, and City Clerk are authorized to execute all documents necessary to complete the conveyance authorized by this Resolution.
- C.** To approve the amended request for the 6th Annual Esperanza Hispanic Heritage Festival on Saturday, September 26, 2026, to include the City parking lot beside Roasted Coffee Depot.
- D.** To approve a resolution directing the City Clerk to investigate a petition received under G.S. 160A-31 for potential contiguous annexation of GPIN 8893170556 & 8893171427 and to approve a

resolution fixing the date of August 11, 2026, for a public hearing on the question of annexation pursuant to G.S. 160A-31 for .73 (+/-) acres.

**RESOLUTION DIRECTING THE CLERK TO INVESTIGATE A PETITION RECEIVED
UNDER G.S. 160A-31 LOCATED OFF E HARDEN STREET
GPIN: 8893170556 & 8893171427
(AN2601)**

WHEREAS, a petition requesting annexation of an area described in said petition was received on July 14, 2026, by the Graham City Council; and

WHEREAS, G.S. 160A-31 provides that the sufficiency of the petition shall be investigated by the City Clerk before further annexation proceedings may take place; and

WHEREAS, the City Council of the City of Graham deems it advisable to proceed in response to this request for annexation.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, by the City Council of the City of Graham:
That the City Clerk is hereby directed to investigate the sufficiency of the above-described petition and to certify as soon as possible to the City Council the result of her investigation.

**RESOLUTION FIXING DATE OF AUGUST 11, 2026, FOR A PUBLIC HEARING ON THE
QUESTION OF A CONTIGUOUS ANNEXATION OF TWO LOTS PURSUANT TO
G.S. 160A-31 FOR 0.73+/- ACRES LOCATED OFF E HARDEN STREET
(AN2601)**

WHEREAS, a petition requesting annexation of the contiguous area described herein has been received; and

WHEREAS, certification by the City Clerk as to the sufficiency of the petition has been made.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the City Council of the City of Graham, North Carolina, that:

Section 1. A public hearing on the question of annexation of the area described herein will be held at the City Hall, 201 S. Main Street, Graham, NC, at 6:00 pm on August 11, 2026.

Section 2. The area proposed for annexation is described as follows:

Legal Description GPIN#: 8893170556 & 8893171427

Beginning at a 1" open iron pipe, a corner with Martin Van Capps and having N.C. Grid Coordinates of North 837,661.32 & East 1,891,077.96, said beginning being S 48° 14' 24" E 1,618.86' from N.C Geodetic Monument "Conklin" having observed N.C. Grid Coordinates of North 838,739.50 & East 1,889,870.38,

thence with the line of Martin Van Capps S 36°00'06" E 90.70' to an existing 3/8" open iron pipe and thence continuing S 35°48'05" E 94.29' to an existing 1" open iron pipe, said iron pipe having N.C. Grid Coordinates of North 837,511.47 & East 1,891,186.44 and being a corner with Martin Van Capps. Thence continuing with the line of Capps S 88°54'02" E 74.86' to a 1.5" existing pinched iron pipe in the line of Capps and a corner with Riverside Baptist Church. Thence with the line of Riverside Baptist Church S 51°01'35" W 168.79' to an existing concrete monument on the northern right-of-way of N.C. Highway 54. Said monument has N.C. Grid Coordinates of North 837,403.87 & East 1,891,130.06. From the said monument, the line continues with N.C Highway 54 along a curve having a radius of 2,914.79' and a bearing of N 42°24'54" W with a Chord distance of 100.91' and an Arc distance of 100.92' to a #5 rebar set by Landmark Surveying, Inc. Thence continuing along the Right-of-way of N.C. Highway 54 a bearing and distance of N 43°24'24" W 22.55' to a mathematical point and thence again N 43°24'24" W 137.10' to an existing 3/4" open iron pipe a corner with Martin Van Capps. Thence continuing with line of Capps N 61°41'16" E 21.29' to an existing 1" open iron pipe in the line of Capps and thence N 61°59'40" E 121.11' to the beginning and having an area of 31,901 Sq. Ft.± / 0.73 Acres± / 0.0011 Sq. Miles as shown on a plat titled Final Plat – Corporate Limits Extension - City of Graham – For Property of Dewey Brown, Jr. and Fannie B. Brown.

- E.** To approve a Project Ordinance for \$3,115,265 for capital projects. \$1,000,000 would be designated for a new fire apparatus, and \$2,115,265 for the fire station design and construction. Approved by City Council during the Fiscal Year 2026-2027 budget process.

**Capital Project Ordinance
Capital Improvements - Pay As You Go Fund
Fire Apparatus and Fire Station Design/Construction**

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF GRAHAM, NORTH CAROLINA, that pursuant to Section 13.2, Chapter 159 of the General Statutes of North Carolina, the following Capital Project Ordinance is hereby adopted:

Section 1. The Project authorized is the Capital Improvements - Fire Apparatus and Fire Station Design/Construction Projects.

Section 2. The officials of the City of Graham are hereby directed to proceed with this project within the terms of the project. Staff is authorized to execute change orders within the budget ordinance.

Section 3. The following revenues are anticipated to be available to the City to complete the project:

Transfer from 10-6600-8500 (General Fund)	\$3,115,265
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TOTAL	\$3,115,265
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Section 4. The following amounts are appropriated for this project:

Fire Apparatus	\$ 1,000,000
Fire Station Design/Construction	\$ <u>2,115,265</u>
TOTAL	\$ <u>3,115,265</u>

- Section 5. The Finance Director shall report on the financial status of this project as directed by the City Council and will inform the Council of any unusual occurrences.
- Section 6. Copies of this project ordinance shall be made available to the City Manager and the Finance Director for direction in carrying out this project.
- Section 7. This ordinance shall take effect upon passage.

F. To approve and accept a donation from Shamrock Nutrition for an Insignia F50 85” TV for the Graham Recreation and Parks Department after-school program.

G. To approve the Recreation and Parks Department’s Street closures for downtown programs in 2027:

- **Arts Around the Square:** closure of the 100 blocks of East and West Elm Streets, 100 blocks of North and South Main Streets, the public parking lot at the intersection of East Elm Street and Marshall Street, and the public parking lot on the 100 block of West Elm Street on Saturday, May 15, 2027, from 5:00 am to 6:00 pm. No rain dates.
- **Thursdays at Seven Concert Series:** closure of the 100 block of West Elm Street on May 27, June 24, July 22, August 26, September 9, & September 23 for the 2027 Thursdays at Seven Concert Series. All closures will begin at 5:00 pm and reopen by 11:30 pm. In the event a concert must be postponed, we also request the same closure as above on the following dates: June 3, 10, 17; July 1, 8, 15, 29; August 5, 12, 19; September 2, 16, 30; October 7, 14.
- **9/11 Commemorative 5K Event:** closure of the northbound lane of Maple Street from Pine Street to McAden Street, McAden Street from South Main Street to Maple Street, the southbound lane of South Main Street from Pine Street to McAden Street, Pine Street from South Main Street to Maple Street from 6:00 am to 11:00 am on Saturday, September 11, 2027. No rain dates.
- **Pumpkin Bash:** closure of the 100 blocks of East and West Elm Streets on Friday, October 29, 2027, from 3:00 pm to 10:30 pm and North and South Main Streets from 4:00 pm to 10:30 pm. No rain dates.

H. To approve a Budget Amendment to recognize \$26,788 in insurance reimbursement payments and increase the Police Department Capital Outlay Equipment account by \$24,503 and the Repair and Maintenance account by \$2,285.

CITY OF GRAHAM					
BUDGET AMENDMENT ORDINANCE					
2026-2027					
BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF GRAHAM THAT THE 2026 - 2027 BUDGET ORDINANCE SHALL BE AND IS HEREBY AMENDED AS FOLLOWS:					
Section 1.					
EXPENDITURES					
DEPARTMENT/ACCOUNT		APPROVED	AMENDED	INCREASE	(DECREASE) INCREASE (DECREASE)
Police - Capital Outlay Equipment	\$	121,410.00	\$ 145,913.00	\$ 24,503.00	\$ 24,503.00
	\$	121,410.00	\$ 145,913.00	\$ 24,503.00	\$ - \$ 24,503.00
Section 2.					
REVENUES					
Fund Balance	\$	4,614,287.00	\$ 4,638,790.00	\$ 24,503.00	\$ 24,503.00
	\$	4,614,287.00	\$ 4,638,790.00	\$ 24,503.00	\$ - \$ 24,503.00

CITY OF GRAHAM					
BUDGET AMENDMENT ORDINANCE					
2026-2027					
BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF GRAHAM THAT THE 2026 - 2027 BUDGET ORDINANCE SHALL BE AND IS HEREBY AMENDED AS FOLLOWS:					
Section 1.					
EXPENDITURES					
DEPARTMENT/ACCOUNT		APPROVED	AMENDED	INCREASE	(DECREASE) INCREASE (DECREASE)
Police - Repair & Maintenance Vehicles	\$	75,000.00	\$ 77,285.00	\$ 2,285.00	\$ 2,285.00
	\$	75,000.00	\$ 77,285.00	\$ 2,285.00	\$ - \$ 2,285.00
Section 2.					
REVENUES					
Fund Balance	\$	4,612,002.00	\$ 4,614,287.00	\$ 2,285.00	\$ 2,285.00
	\$	4,612,002.00	\$ 4,614,287.00	\$ 2,285.00	\$ - \$ 2,285.00

- I. To approve a Budget Amendment in the amount of \$336,145 for 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.

CITY OF GRAHAM					
BUDGET AMENDMENT ORDINANCE					
2026-2027					
BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF GRAHAM THAT THE 2026 - 2027 BUDGET ORDINANCE SHALL BE AND IS HEREBY AMENDED AS FOLLOWS:					
Section 1.					
EXPENDITURES					
DEPARTMENT/ACCOUNT		APPROVED	AMENDED	INCREASE	(DECREASE) INCREASE (DECREASE)
Recreation - Capital Outlay Other Improvement	\$	18,000.00	\$ 354,145.00	\$ 336,145.00	\$ 336,145.00
	\$	18,000.00	\$ 354,145.00	\$ 336,145.00	\$ - \$ 336,145.00
Section 2.					
REVENUES					
Miscellaneous Grants	\$	50,000.00	\$ 357,725.00	\$ 307,725.00	\$ 307,725.00
Fund Balance	\$	4,584,727.00	\$ 4,613,147.00	\$ 28,420.00	\$ 28,420.00
	\$	4,634,727.00	\$ 4,970,872.00	\$ 336,145.00	\$ - \$ 336,145.00

- J.** To approve a Budget Amendment in the amount of \$262,214 to be paid to UPS as outlined in the approved incentive agreement.

CITY OF GRAHAM					
BUDGET AMENDMENT ORDINANCE					
2026-2027					
BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF GRAHAM THAT					
THE 2026 - 2027 BUDGET ORDINANCE SHALL BE AND IS HEREBY AMENDED AS FOLLOWS:					
Section 1.					
EXPENDITURES					
DEPARTMENT/ACCOUNT	APPROVED	AMENDED	INCREASE	(DECREASE)	INCREASE (DECREASE)
Administration - Economic Development	20,000.00	282,214.00	262,214.00		262,214.00
	20,000.00	282,214.00	262,214.00	-	262,214.00
Section 2.					
REVENUES					
Fund Balance Appropriation	\$4,322,513.00	\$4,584,727.00	\$262,214.00		\$262,214.00
	\$4,322,513.00	4,584,727.00	262,214.00	-	262,214.00

- K.** To approve a Budget Amendment in the amount of \$30,000 to transfer Federal Drug Forfeiture revenue to the Police Department account 20-5100 for use.

CITY OF GRAHAM					
BUDGET AMENDMENT ORDINANCE					
2026-2027					
BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF GRAHAM THAT					
THE 2026 - 2027 BUDGET ORDINANCE SHALL BE AND IS HEREBY AMENDED AS FOLLOWS:					
Section 1.					
EXPENDITURES					
DEPARTMENT/ACCOUNT	APPROVED	AMENDED	INCREASE	(DECREASE)	INCREASE (DECREASE)
Police - Professional Services	\$ -	\$ 30,000.00	\$ 30,000.00		\$ 30,000.00
	\$ -	\$ 30,000.00	\$ 30,000.00	\$ -	\$ 30,000.00
Section 2.					
REVENUES					
Federal Drug Funds	\$ -	\$ 30,000.00	\$ 30,000.00		\$ 30,000.00
	\$ -	\$ 30,000.00	\$ 30,000.00	\$ -	\$ 30,000.00

- L.** To approve tax releases in the amount of \$62.89.

CITY OF GRAHAM				
RELEASE ACCOUNTS				
JULY				
<u>ACCT #</u>	<u>YEAR</u>	<u>NAME</u>	<u>REASON FOR RELEASE</u>	<u>AMOUNT RELEASED</u>
19151	2025	NEWLIN, PRESTON C	SOLD BOAT IN 2024	\$44.13
19152	2025	NEWLIN, PRESTON C	SOLD MOTOR IN 2024	\$18.76

City Manager Garner noted for Item I, due to prorated taxes, the budget amendment should read \$336,145. Motion by Mayor Pro Tem Hall to approve the consent agenda with the correction to Item I, seconded by Council Member Chin. The motion passed unanimously.

OLD BUSINESS:

**ITEM 1: ORDINANCE AMENDMENT – CANVASSERS’ AND SOLICITORS’ PERMIT
PENALTY SECTION – SECOND READING**

City Council will consider approving an Ordinance amendment to Chapter 8 - Businesses, Article IV- Canvassers’ and Solicitors’ Permit, Section 8-114 of the Code of Ordinances.

Assistant City Manager Aaron Holland stated at the conclusion of the May 12th City Council meeting staff was directed by Council to review our current ordinances pertaining to Chapter 8, Article IV, Canvassers’ and Solicitors’ Permit. It was suggested that staff amend the existing penalty section to strengthen the current penalty from a civil penalty to include a criminal penalty.

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF GRAHAM, AMENDING CHAPTER 8, ARTICLE IV, SEC. 8-104 AND 113 TO THE CODE OF ORDINANCES OF THE CITY OF GRAHAM, NORTH CAROLINA

The City Council of the City of Graham, North Carolina, does ORDAIN:

Sec. 1. That the Code of Ordinances, City of Graham, North Carolina, is hereby amended by amending sections 8-114, which said sections read as follows:

Chapter 8 – BUSINESSES

ARTICLE IV. – CANVASSERS’ AND SOLICITORS’ PERMIT

Sec. 8-114. - Penalty.

Any violation of this article shall subject violators to a civil penalty in the amount of \$50.00. Violators shall pay the penalty to the City Tax Collector's office within ten days of receipt. The failure of such violators to pay the civil penalty within the specified time shall subject such violators to a civil action to collect all penalties and costs for said violation, and any civil penalty that has not been paid, for which delinquent notice was sent, shall carry an additional late payment penalty of \$25.00. Continued violations shall subject violators to separate, distinct, and successive civil penalties.

ADD: Criminal penalty. In addition to, or in lieu of, such civil penalties or other remedies, a violation of this chapter shall constitute a Class 3 misdemeanor, pursuant to G.S. 160A-175 and G.S. 14-4, as amended.

Sec. 2. That this Ordinance shall be in full force and effect from and after its passage, approval, and publication, as provided by law, and all ordinances in conflict herewith are hereby repealed.

Motion by Mayor Pro Tem Hall to approve the ordinance amendment, seconded by Council Member Chin. The motion passed 4-1. Mayor Dickey voted no.

ITEM 2: ORDINANCE AMENDMENT – ANIMALS AND FOWL SECTION 4-39 & 4-41 – CRIMINAL PENALTIES – SECOND READING

City Council considered revisions to City Ordinance 4-39 & 4-41, which propose a criminal penalty in addition to, or in lieu of, such civil penalties or other remedies.

Assistant City Manager Holland stated Council approved this a few months ago and that the amendment would require a second reading because of the criminal penalty.

It shall be unlawful for any owner or keeper of a dog to permit any dog, at any time, to run at large on the streets or sidewalks of the city or off the premises of the owner or keeper. Outdoor enclosures cannot be smaller than ten feet by ten feet. Criminal penalty. In addition to, or in lieu of, such civil penalties or other remedies. A violation of this section shall constitute a Class 3 misdemeanor, pursuant to G.S. 160A-175 and G.S. 14-4, as amended.

(f) Criminal penalty. In addition to, or in lieu of, such civil penalties or other remedies, a violation of subsection A shall constitute a Class 3 misdemeanor, pursuant to G.S. 160A-175 and G.S. 14-4, as amended.

Motion by Council Member Young to approve the ordinance amendment, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Hall. The motion passed unanimously.

PUBLIC HEARING:

ITEM 3: DOWNTOWN SOCIAL DISTRICT DISCUSSION

A public hearing was scheduled to receive public input and provide direction to staff for a downtown social district designation.

Mayor Dickey stated the social district came up at the May Council meeting. She stated the Council was interested in hearing from the community. She stated the type of social district that was most expressed at the May meeting was an event-based social district. She shared it came about because of alcohol consumption at events such as Arts Around the Square.

The public hearing was opened, and the following spoke:

Ms. Linda Barnhill, 404 Forest Drive, Graham, spoke in opposition to the social district.

Mr. Daniel Alvis, 1022 Noah Road, Graham, spoke in favor of a social district. He said it would boost the economy.

Mr. Keith Westbrooks, 606 Trock Wilder Court, Graham, spoke in favor of a social district during events only.

Mayor Dickey read an email from Jason Varner, who was opposed to social districts.

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

Mayor Dickey stated that Recreation and Parks were already doing it during events, and event-based would give us control. She shared that during Arts Around the Square, there were two local businesses benefit from selling alcohol. If there was a social district, it would equally distribute alcohol sales to all businesses. She suggested exploring what a social district would look like. If Council goes forward, it would require another public hearing and drafting an ordinance for approval. She would be in favor of exploring it more and then putting it back to the community.

Council Member Young stated that since it was discussed at the previous meeting, he had spoken to several establishments, and they really did not have a strong opinion. He shared he did not see it as a benefit, and after speaking with folks downtown, the majority either do not want it or are just indifferent.

Council Member Whitaker shared she did not think there was a need to walk in and out and around downtown with alcohol.

Council Member Chin stated we do not need a social district.

Mayor Pro Tem Hall stated he agreed.

The Council reached a consensus not to proceed with establishing a social district.

NEW BUSINESS:

ITEM 4: STREET CLOSURE – NC BBQ HALL OF FAME – ALCOVETS – COOK-OFF EVENT

City Council considered a request from the NC BBQ Hall of Fame and ALCOVETS to close the 100 block of E. Elm Street from the intersection of the circle to Marshall Street on Saturday, October 10th, from 7 am to 7 pm (includes setup and cleanup) for the Whole Hog Cook-off Special Event.

Assistant City Manager Holland stated this was a new event, the NC BBQ Hall of Fame Cook-Off, sponsored by the ALCOVETS. The request was to close the 100 block of E. Elm Street from the circle to Marshall Street on Saturday, October 10th, from 7 am to 7 pm (includes setup and cleanup).

Motion by Mayor Pro Tem Hall to approve the street closure for the Whole Hog Cook-Off Event on October 10, 2026, from 7:00 am to 7:00 pm, seconded by Council Member Chin. The motion passed unanimously.

ADD-ON – RESIDENTS COMMITTEE – SESQUICENTENNIAL PARK

Jeff Benes, 1407 East Gilbreath Street, Graham, shared that Council Member Chin recommended that interested community members start an LLC, and as a result, 47 residents attended the town hall meeting. He stated a petition to rebuild the park received over 100 signatures. The attendees formed a leadership team consisting of three people, Mr. Richard Wright, Jane Albright, and Jim Albright, with plans to create sub-committees moving forward. He stated that three of the original committee members were involved in the beginning of creating the park. Her stated they could do the park with zero dollars. They would have the grass that is there now and a bench and did not have to cost \$750,000. He stated the Sesquicentennial Park Citizens' Committee, along with the New Leaf Society, invited the City Council and the County Board

to unite with the citizens to reestablish the park.

Richard Wright, 236 South Marshall Street, Graham, shared the history of the Sesquicentennial Park and how it represented the City.

Council Member Young asked how much extra time the committee needed.

Mr. Benes stated there had been no planning meetings and that they could only spend as much money as they had. He stated they wanted to know what the Council wanted and what the goal was. He suggested doing a little each year.

Council Member Young asked if anyone had spoken to Alamance County.

Mr. Benes stated only Sam Powell. He shared that they wanted to make a presentation to the City Council first before going to the County Commissioners.

Mayor Dickey stated the committee was asking for more time and not to rush into surplus.

Council Member Chin said the community seemed to want to keep the park, and the Council had never taken a position on eliminating the park. Rather, the question was whether the park should be located somewhere else downtown. He stated the land had a history tied to a building that was a landmark in Town Square for many years. Council was exploring how to relocate the park and keep the park downtown, and comments were made that the Council did not want the park and would demolish it and be done. He shared that was not the case. When the park was dismantled, they saved the bricks. He shared the park was built with private funds, and that was why he mentioned an LLC. He shared that in 2016 the predecessors had a chance to fix the park, and they did not; now, ten years later, it is a safety issue, and that's why the park had to be dismantled.

Mayor Dickey stated she felt like the Council was trying to put the park away and not rebuild it. She stated in 2016 the committee had an opportunity, and in 2026 this Council has a very similar opportunity. She specified it may take more money, but we still have that opportunity. She shared the land was not a sinkhole, and that something could be done construction-wise. She stated the community was asking for more time, and she did not understand the rush.

Council Member Whitaker stated two and a half years was not a rush.

Mayor Dickey stated to give them six more months.

ITEM 5: SURPLUS PROPERTY PROCESS – DOWNTOWN PARK

City Council discussed the process for declaring the downtown park as surplus property.

City Manager Garner stated at the June 9, 2026 meeting, City Council came to a consensus (3-2) to explore the options associated with declaring the Sesquicentennial Park as surplus property. She noted there were three options if City Council elected to go that route.

Sealed Bids - *Step 1: Board adopts resolution authorizing sale by sealed bid. Step 2: Publish advertisement for sealed bids at least 30 days before the bid opening for real property. Step 3: Receive and open sealed bids. Step 4:*

Award to the highest responsive, responsible bidder or reject all bids.

Upset Bids - *Step 1: Unit received offer to purchase property. Step 2: The Board adopts a resolution accepting the offer and authorizing the upset bid procedure; the offeror deposits 5% of the bid amount with the clerk while the upset procedure takes place. Step 3: Publish advertisement for upset bids. A qualifying upset bid must be at least 10% of the first \$1,000 of the original offer and 5% of the remainder. Bidders must submit qualifying upset bids within 10 days after the date of advertisement and be accompanied by a 5% bid bond or deposit. Step 4: If a qualifying upset bid is received, repeat the advertisement and upset bid process until no additional qualifying upset bid is received, then award to the highest bid or reject all bids.*

Public Auction - *Step 1: Board adopts resolution authorizing sale by auction. Step 2: Publish an advertisement of the auction at least 30 days before the auction is conducted. (If electronic auction, board may authorize electronic-only notice). Step 3: Conduct auction. Step 4: Report highest bid to board; must accept or reject within 30 days of date bid is reported to board; complete sale to highest bidder at any time after board approval.*

City Manager Garner shared that public auction could include electronic auction. She stated if Council desired to declare the property surplus, staff would need to know which method to use to bring back for consideration.

Council Member Young stated if the property was declared surplus, the property having its issues may not be sold for very much. He noted that process would take months and would give the committee time to save the park and buy it themselves. He stated he was content making the property surplus, and it would still give people a chance to raise the money. He said he would like to see a commitment from the County Commissioners and would not be opposed to giving more time to delay declaring it surplus if the committee could talk to the County and see what they would do. He shared he would love to see if the County would commit to something. He suggested delaying declaring this property surplus and challenged them to go to Alamance County, and offered to go with them.

Mayor Pro Tem Hall stated every day we keep the park, it costs money, and he was ready to declare the property surplus.

Mayor Dickey asked what the daily cost was.

Mayor Pro Tem Hall stated it was \$20,000 annually.

Mayor Dickey asked if, in its current state, it was costing \$20,000 a year.

City Manager Garner stated that amount was not provided for the property as it is.

Council Member Chin stated we should move forward.

Council Member Whitaker stated we should move forward.

Mayor Dickey stated she did not want to move forward, and at minimum, should delay moving forward. She noted if three members wanted to move forward, there were three options: sealed bids, upset bids, and public auction.

Motion by Mayor Pro Tem Hall to approve the sealed bids process.

Council Member Whitaker questioned the sealed bids and having to get an appraisal.

City Manager Garner stated the statute did not require you to have an appraisal, but it would be good practice to have the property appraised before any decision is made to accept bids in whatever method Council chooses.

Council Member Whitaker stated she would not want to accept a bid without knowing the appraisal value.

Council Member Chin suggested exploring the upset bid process.

Assistant City Manager Holland stated that a public auction would be the way Council would want to go because it had an upset-bid labor and allowed for more flexibility.

City Manager Garner shared that, depending on the number of bids received, the upset bids could be the longest process and could be more expensive due to re-advertising.

Mayor Dickey asked if the consensus of Council was declaring this land surplus because it is costing the City money.

Council Member Whitaker stated we were declaring the property surplus so it could be sold.

Mayor Dickey asked what the purpose was in declaring it surplus and doing it in a hurry. She stated they only asked for six months tacked onto the two and a half years.

Council Member Chin stated the Council needed to give direction to City staff.

Council Member Whitaker stated this had been going on for two and a half years, and this can had been kicked down the road, and it was time to make a decision.

Mayor Dickey stated for the record that it was very unclear to her why Council was moving so fast.

Council Member Young stated that Mayor Dickey actually campaigned on the statement that you could come up with grants and money from other agencies to save the park. He asked what the status was.

Mayor Dickey stated that Council had shown her they do not accept donations or grant funds, and that they had grants and donations for other things, and everything had been either not used or rejected. She stated the National Real Estate organization does assessments of downtown properties; she had been talking to them to get an assessment to help us figure out what to do with this plot of land. She shared that the National Real Estate has grant funds for place building and that she had things in the works, but this Council had not proven it would move forward.

After further discussions on funding and the process, the following motion was made.

Motion by Council Member Whitaker to place the Sesquicentennial Park land up for surplus sale by public auction, by electronic auction, advertise electronically, and publish in the newspaper, seconded by Council Member Chin. The motion passed 3-2. Mayor Dickey and Council Member Young voted no.

ITEM 6: MAIN STREET CONFERENCE REIMBURSEMENT

City Council will give direction as to whether Mayor Dickey should reimburse the City in the amount of \$260 for the Main Street Conference registration.

Motion by Council Member Whitaker to recuse Mayor Dickey.

Mayor Dickey stated that this was about the principle of the issue. She stated the dollar amount was \$260 and could sound like a silly conversation. She stated that all of Council were interested in what was ethical and efficient to the government, and trying to figure out what this looks like was a deeper conversation than just the \$260. She stated when this happened, it started at the Main Street conference; the City Manager's office purchased a ticket, and then the funds were rejected by City Council. She stated she had been invoiced for the \$260. She stated at the time, Assistant City Manager Holland had emailed or communicated that she would be responsible for the \$260 if she chose to go and Council said no. She shared that this was a red flag and did not know of a lot of mayors getting invoiced. She shared that she had contacted the League of Municipalities and they pointed to whether the City had any ordinances, laws, or protocols that indeed instructed Council to pay back invoices, and if so, that was what should be done. If not, it spoke to the communication between the City Manager and the Council and what the City Manager's authority looked like to make purchases, or what policies we have in place so these invoices have the policy. She stated she was happy to pay this invoice but needed to know there was an actual policy.

City Council Member Whitaker to recuse Mayor Dickey from discussion of this item because she stood to financially gain, seconded by Council Member Chin. The motion passed 4-1. Mayor Dickey voted no.

City Manager Garner shared there was a budget amendment in the amount of \$1,500 on the agenda of the March 10, 2026 City Council meeting. Funds included a donation that was earmarked for Mayor Dickey's attendance at the NC Main Street Conference. City Council pulled that item from the consent agenda and subsequently removed the \$1,500 donation. She stated the \$1,500 was refunded to the donor. She shared that City Council gave staff direction in 2022 that Graham was no longer going to be a participant in the Main Street Program. She stated that neither she nor Assistant City Manager Holland had the authority to override a directive given by City Council. She stated it was a similar situation with the prior Mayor when attendance was requested at a National Main Street Conference. Staff handled it the same way and placed it as a budget amendment on the agenda for City Council to consider because staff could not override a directive given to us by Council, and the directive was that Graham was not going to be a participant in the Main Street program. When the budget amendment for \$1,500 was not approved, the \$260 registration fee needed to be paid to the City. Finance staff invoiced Mayor Dickey in March, and the invoice was due in April. She shared there was a reminder sent 30 or 60 days after the original due date, and the \$260 remained outstanding. She asked the City Council for direction on whether those funds are owed or if something else was required.

Council Member Young asked if this was a policy from 2022 that we would not participate in Main Street.

City Manager Garner stated it was a directive from City Council that with the 2023 budget, all dollars associated with the Main Street program and downtown development be zeroed.

Council Member Chin shared that the City was participating in the Main Street program back in 2022, and when developing the budget, it was asked what the City had benefited from being a part of the program. He stated there was no benefit, no help in bringing in new businesses to Graham, but wanted us to have someone on staff and expected the City to levy a tax on the downtown businesses that they would get. City Council did not want to add a tax on downtown businesses, and that was why, in 2023, a motion was made

to strike that budget line and remove ourselves from the Main Street program. He stated when the Mayor wanted to go to the conference, it was discussed why we would want to go to a conference in which the City had gained nothing when we participated, but she went anyway.

Council Member Whitaker stated that the Mayor said City Council would not accept donations. She stated that it was made clear that accepting donations for Council travel would not be a good precedent. She stated that the Mayor was made aware that money had not been set aside for this conference. It was also made clear that Council did not want to participate in Main Street. She stated that Mayor Dickey was made fully aware if the \$260 was paid to reserve her a spot at the conference and Council disapproved, she would be left owing the \$260. She shared that she emailed that she would pay it after last month's meeting, but she did not. She noted that if any other citizen owed money to the City, she needed to be treated the same way, and that we all needed to be treated the same way if we owe money to the City.

Council Member Young asked if the email thread discussing this with Mayor Dickey over the past several months was public record.

City Manager Garner stated it was, and it was included in the agenda packet, as well as in Assistant City Manager Holland's email to her in advance of the registration in March.

Motion by Council Member Young to inform Mayor Dickey that she owes the \$260, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Hall. The motion passed unanimously.

Motion by Council Member Young for Mayor Dickey to return to the meeting, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Hall. The motion passed unanimously.

Mayor Dickey asked for an update.

City Council Whitaker stated the Council voted that she pay the \$260.

Mayor Dickey asked whether there was a place in the law, ordinance, or policy that required her to pay it.

City Council Whitaker stated again she was asking why, and it had been explained.

Mayor Dickey asked during the discussion if Council found where it was legal or in the ordinance or policy that she was obligated to pay.

Council Member Whitaker stated because the Mayor was directed not to go, and she chose to go anyway. She stated they were treating the Mayor, as any other citizen or member of Council, the same way if we had done that.

Mayor Dickey stated yes, but we usually have ordinances and policies that we can uphold for those citizens.

Council Member Chin stated that no money was budgeted for the trip.

Mayor Dickey stated she did not purchase the ticket; it was the City Manager's office, and if we are unhappy with how this was going, we needed to address the City Manager's process for spending, or we can put a policy in place that dictates invoices should be paid back and go from there.

Council Member Young asked if the Mayor sent an email saying she would take care of it several months ago.

Mayor Dickey stated she said she would bring a check but then called the League of Municipalities, and they directed her to ask some questions.

City Attorney Coleman shared that there may not be a policy, but there was a statute that covers it. He shared NCGS 160A-64.1. He stated the determining factor was whether the City entered into a contract for City services, and it could be a seminar, and if you entered into a contract, then you could garnish the wages of the Mayor or Council Member to get the money back. He stated a contract was mutual consideration, and the City entered into a contract by paying registration on behalf of a representative. He stated the Main Street registration would fall under city services.

Mayor Dickey stated she would like to run this by the School of Government or City Attorney Ward and then continue this discussion.

City Manager Garner shared that Assistant City Manager Holland had conversations with our auditor from Stout Stuart McGowen and King and also spoke to the NC League of Municipalities when this came up, and we did not receive the same advice Mayor Dickey received regarding the donation. She said they were told that if the funds were not approved, the money would have to be reimbursed. She shared his email with Mayor Dickey on March 5, 2026, which spelled out their conversation and where that risk would fall if Council did not approve the budget amendment.

Mayor Dickey stated from her conversation with the League, she was told it was fine that the Assistant City Manager emailed her about being responsible for the registration, but unless she said yes, or she understood that, then that would dictate a contract, and she added that she did not respond.

Mayor Dickey stated she wanted to talk to City Attorney Ward about this statute and then come back and asked if everyone was okay with that.

Council stated it should be paid.

Council Member Young asked the City Manager whether, since a motion was made, interest would need to be added.

City Manager Garner stated there was no interest for non-taxes adopted in the fee schedule, so the answer would be no.

Mayor Dickey stated she would be talking with the City Attorney and report back via email to Council.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Julie Manning, 234 Webster Road, Graham, stated Mayor Dickey had asked for donations and was granted them for the park from Cobb Sign Company in Burlington. She stated she would donate signs and paint the pergola. She asked the Council if they knew you could receive grant funds from the Main Street organization. She shared she was a national Main Street volunteer, and Graham should hire an executive director for Main Street Graham.

Council Member Whitaker asked if she was aware Mayor Dickey never mentioned any of this.

Ms. Manning stated she mentioned it at a Council meeting and spoke with Council Member Whitaker and Council Member Young, saying she was a sign contractor and would happily donate services for this park.

Jeff Benes, 1407 East Gilbreath in Graham, stated certain Council Members rejected working with the citizens who elected you.

Ronnie Isley, 510 Mendell Terrace, Graham, stated he was ashamed of Council and asked if there was any other surplus property in Graham. He mentioned the condition of Culp Mill property and how bad it looked. He also asked about the downtown banners and when they would be replaced. He also mentioned stray dogs he took to Animal Services and was told they had no room.

Patsy Bailey, 6146 Snow Camp Road, said that this community had begged for more time, and each time, Council said no. She asked for a few months.

Alex Stock, 532 Ward Street, spoke about the Flock cameras and did not feel comfortable with cameras following his car. He did not see the necessity and said it would be vulnerable for malicious use and would degrade our constitutional rights.

Susan Ready, 505 Paris Street, Graham, stated she did not understand the Council process regarding declaring the park as surplus property. She asked to keep the covenant with the citizens to keep the land and reestablish the park.

Linda Barnhill, 404 Forest Drive, Graham, questioned the surplus sale and the process. She shared the concern that once it is sold, you would lose control over what is built or how it is built. She asked to maintain Graham's history in that green space.

Charlene Miles, 32 Auto Park Drive, spoke in reference to affordable housing and asked Council to find ways for home ownership. She shared the Neighborhood Assistance Corporation of America (NACA) had created a pathway to affordable home ownership by offering no down payment, no closing costs, and no private mortgage insurance and below-market interest rates for eligible buyers.

Randy Phillips, 130 Burton Street, Graham, spoke in reference to declaring the park as surplus because it was costing the City money and not making the City money. He referenced four other pieces of property in the City that would fall under the same category. He asked how much money Oakley Park, North Marshall Park, Marvin Park, and Greenway Park brought in and how much it cost to maintain them. He asked whether those properties should be put for sale as well.

Sam Cahoon, 219 South Melville Street, Graham, spoke in reference to despising government and making rules for some but not for government.

Rebecca Bench, 125 Montree Lane, Graham, spoke in reference to Mayor and Council disagreeing, and she expected the Mayor she voted for to receive respect. She shared there should be decorum and respect, and the Mayor should be treated better.

CITY STAFF COMMENTS

Assistant City Manager Holland asked if the West Elm Street Park application should be pulled or kept in place. Council consensus was to pull the project.

Public Service Announcement – The City was still in a drought and asked citizens to continue being mindful of water usage.

CITY COUNCIL COMMENTS

Council Member Whitaker stated the Council had rules and procedures and was not making up rules as they go. She shared that when the Mayor came on board, she wanted to have rules of operation, and as a result, they have an 18-page document. She stated if a Council Member was not following these rules, it would be remiss if it were not pointed out. She stated the deed for the property where the Sesquicentennial Park was built showed that Graham paid for that land and it was not donated as the Mayor stated. City Attorney Coleman stated Graham had purchased the land for \$55,000.

Council Member Whitaker thanked Chuck Talley and his crew for putting out US flags on July 3 and also thanked ALCOVETS for asking the County to put out the large US flag on the Courthouse. She shared that the flags were so damaged that ALCOVETS donated flags to be put out.

Council Member Whitaker stated the Council had a chain of command. Council only hires or fires the City Manager and the City Attorneys. She stated Council was not supposed to approach City employees regarding City business without contacting the City Manager or Assistant City Manager. She stated the standard procedure was not interfering with employees doing their jobs. She shared Council should call or email the City Manager to ask if she is available if they needed to speak to a department head. She asked each Council Member to agree this was the standard each should follow. Each Council member stated they agreed.

Council Member Whitaker stated at the last meeting, the Mayor had brought up the powers of the Mayor regarding an issue with proclamations and noted NC General Statute 160A. She stated the Mayor asked Council to look into this statute, and as a result, found NCGS 160A.69 reads in a city where you have a separately elected Mayor: the Mayor shall preside at all Council meetings but shall have the right to vote only when there are an equal number of votes in the affirmative and in the negative. She stated the City's charter was incorrect. She shared that she researched 25 other cities with separately elected Mayors, and 20 of the 25 followed the statute. Council Member Whitaker asked for Council consensus to direct City Staff and Legal to begin the process of amending the charter to align with the Statute.

City Attorney Coleman said he would need to look into this.

Council consensus was to direct staff to look into amending the Charter.

Council Member Chin announced that the Piedmont Triad had a program for winterization of a home, and will post the details to the City of Graham website.

Council Member Young inquired about the banners.

Assistant City Manager Holland stated that the Appearance Commission would receive the designs at its

August meeting for approval and purchase.

Council Member Young apologized if he offended anyone when he got carried away. He said this was not as a Council Member, but on a personal note, regarding the Take Care of Veterans Act. He read the following statement:

“Mayor, fellow Council Members, and those in attendance, I’d like to take a moment to speak not as a representative of the City of Graham, but as a veteran.

Congress is currently considering the Take Care of America’s Veterans Act. While the bill contains provisions that would help many veterans, there are serious concerns that some of those benefits would be funded by reducing or offsetting future disability compensation for other disabled veterans. Several major veterans’ organizations, including the Veterans of Foreign Wars and Disabled American Veterans, have urged Congress to remove those provisions and find another way to pay for the bill.

I believe our nation should never ask one group of disabled veterans to pay for benefits provided to another. Veterans earned these benefits through their service and sacrifice. They are not budget offsets.

If you care about this issue, I encourage you to contact your members of Congress and ask them to protect veterans’ earned disability compensation while continuing to support legislation that strengthens benefits for all who have served.

Veterans kept their promise to America. America should keep its promise to its veterans.”

Mayor Dickey addressed some of the public comments. She asked the City Manager if Burlington Animal Services is full and unable to take the City’s stray animals, and whether the contract included any provision for compensation.

City Manager Garner stated she did not recall specific language in the contract. She also stated the answer at the shelter should never be an outright no, but maybe a not right now response, and if the Council was aware of issues or citizens experienced them, to contact staff so it could be addressed.

Mayor Dickey responded to Flock Cameras and shared the contract the City had entered into, and the Police Department says it helps with their operations. She encouraged those who are upset about the cameras to have a conversation with Council or the Police Department.

Mayor Dickey responded to restrictions on the park property and asked whether we could place restrictions on it.

City Attorney Coleman stated the Council could place restrictions on the property, but the more restrictions you place, the less valuable the property becomes. He shared the property would be restricted anyway because it is located in the historic district and zoned business.

City Manager Garner shared that at the next meeting, staff would bring back a proposed resolution and advertising based on the action taken tonight, and it would be helpful to know any restrictions in advance. She asked Council to think about restrictions they would want to impose at the August meeting.

Mayor Dickey asked for more information on the Neighborhood Assistance Corporation of America.

Mayor Dickey stated the Council had frozen the beautification grants and asked for an update.

Assistant City Manager Holland stated he had been working with planning Staff and was planning to bring something back to Council to consider in August. He shared that if there were going to be internal renovations, it may need to stand on its own. He shared that the criteria that govern how HRC issues COAs have nothing to do with internal changes because they do not go inside the buildings. This could possibly create issues for the two boards that have historically only dealt with exteriors and were not sure these boards were the right boards to consider such a grant. He shared staff would bring something back to Council in August, and Council could direct staff.

Mayor Dickey shared the Thursdays at Seven concert series and August 4th was National Night Out beginning at 5:00 pm to 8:00 pm.

Council Member Chin shared the Mason Lovette Band would be performing at the Colonial Hardware amphitheater at 7:00 pm.

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 Chin to go 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, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Hall. The motion passed unanimously.

The Closed Session was held.

Motion by Mayor Pro Tem Hall to end the closed session, seconded by Council Member Chin. The motion passed unanimously.

Motion by Council Member Young to return to open session, seconded by Council Member Chin. The motion passed unanimously.

City Council reported no action.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Mayor Pro Tem Hall to adjourn, seconded by Council Member Chin. The motion passed unanimously. (9:16 pm)

Renee M. Ward, CMC
City Clerk