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**CITY OF HAMLET REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING
HAMLET CITY HALL- COUNCIL CHAMBERS
201 MAIN STREET, HAMLET, NC 28345
TUESDAY, MAY 12, 2026
6:00 PM
Minutes**

Governing Body Present:

Mayor	Amy Guinn
Mayor Pro-Tem	Abbie Covington
Council Member	Oscar Sellers
Council Member	Eddie Martin
Council Member	Tony Clewis
Council Member	Maurice Stuart

Staff Present:

City Manager	John Terziu
Asst. City Manager	Mackenzie Webb
City Attorney	TC Morphis
City Clerk	Heather Hawks

1. Call to Order

Mayor Guinn called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

2. Invocation/Moment of Silence

Bishop McDonald provided the invocation.

3. Adoption of Agenda

Mayor Pro-Tem Covington motioned to adopt the agenda. Council Member Clewis provided the second. The motion passed unanimously.

4. Consent Agenda

Council Member Clewis made a motion to adopt the Consent Agenda. Mayor Pro-Tem Covington provided the second. The motion passed unanimously.

New Business

5. Lupus Awareness Month Proclamation

Mayor Guinn read the proclamation declaring May 2026 Lupus Awareness Month in the City of Hamlet.

6. Doc Hills Family Care Home, Inc Presentation

Denise Cozart stated that Doc Hills Family Care Home, Inc. is a licensed 6-bed Adult Care Home located at 302 Spring Street in Hamlet, North Carolina, serving Richmond County. The facility operates as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit and is owned and co-operated by Edward and Luarleen Hill, whose combined backgrounds in military service, clinical healthcare, and organizational leadership distinguish Doc Hills as one of the most credentialed small care facilities in the Sandhills region. Doc Hills maintains continuous licensure with the NC Division of Health Service Regulation (DHSR) and is in full good standing with all regulatory agencies. The facility provides 24-hour supervised residential care to elderly and disabled adults who have no other housing options, delivering a consistently high standard of care in a warm, home-like setting.

She stated Doc Hills Family Care Home is currently pursuing a \$175,000 NC CDBG Neighborhood Revitalization — Rural Community Development Set-Aside grant through the City of Hamlet for a nine-component exterior campus rehabilitation. The estimated total project cost is \$185,685, with a projected match of \$10,685 from the operating reserves of Doc Hills and there will be no cost from the City. This submission reflects the scope, purpose, and organizational readiness of the project as it currently stands. Detailed cost estimates for each component are being finalized with licensed contractors and will accompany the formal application.

Nine-Component Scope of Work (Cost Estimates to Be Finalized at Formal Submission):

- Components 1 & 2: ADA-Compliant Exterior Staircase Replacement (2 units)
- Component 3: Main House Porch Structural Rehabilitation
- Component 4: ENERGY STAR Double-Pane Window Replacement (10–14 units)
- Component 5: Insulated Exterior Siding Replacement — All Three Campus Buildings
- Component 6: Insulated Steel Garage Door Replacement (2 units)
- Component 7: Security Perimeter Fencing with ADA-Compliant Gates
- Component 8: Professional Campus Landscaping
- Component 9: Standby Emergency Backup Generator.

She stated Doc Hills respectfully requests that the City of Hamlet consider serving as the CDBG grantee and lead administrative entity on behalf of this project. The City's participation is essential to moving the application forward, and Doc Hills is prepared to support the City's administrative process in every way possible. A qualified architect will be identified and engaged prior to formal application submission. Environmental review is positioned to launch immediately upon grant execution. Contractor walkthroughs are underway, and final cost estimates will be completed and certified prior to formal application submission. She stated the City of Hamlet will not have any financial responsibility for the project but will only serve as the lead applicant on the grant on behalf of Doc Hills Family Care Home.

Mayor Pro-Tem Covington inquired what type of fencing would be used for the improvements. Denise Cozart responded that metal fencing would be installed.

Council Member Clewis asked whether the siding would be replaced, and if so, what color would be used.

Denise Cozart responded that the siding would be replaced and would be either white or dark gray.

Council Member Clewis asked about the current use of the garage.

Denise Cozart stated that the garage is currently being used for additional storage.

Council Member Sellers asked what benefits the City would receive from having Doc Hills located in Hamlet.

Denise Cozart stated the project would provide additional jobs and economic stability. She stated that new staff would need to be hired and residents would spend money within the City of Hamlet.

Council Member Stuart requested clarification regarding the City serving as the lead applicant for the grant.

Denise Cozart explained that the role of the lead applicant ensures that grant funds are administered and spent correctly.

Mayor Pro-Tem Covington stated that the City of Hamlet would receive the funds from the grant and disperse them. She stated the grant funds would be classified as a Special Project and would be subject to audit requirements.

Denise Cozart responded that is correct.

Council Member Stuart stated that he was in favor of the City of Hamlet providing support for Doc Hills in obtaining the grant.

Council Member Clewis inquired about potential consequences if grant funds were not used properly.

City Attorney Morphis stated that a contract would exist between the City of Hamlet, the State, and Doc Hills. He stated that additional clarification would be needed regarding the State's obligation before proceeding further.

Denise Cozart stated Doc Hills has an electronic system in place to ensure proper administration of funds.

Mayor Pro-Tem Covington made a motion to provide fiduciary support for Doc Hills Family Care Home pending the City Attorney gaining clarification of the State's role with the CDBG Program Grant. Council Member Stuart provided the second. The motion passed unanimously.

7. Hamlet Hub Presentation

Wendi Hinson stated the Hamlet Hub is a \$1.1 million redevelopment project converting the industrial warehouse space of the previous Bobby's Furniture property located on Raleigh Street into a dual-purpose community anchor. Our mission is to provide a "Third Space" that fosters literacy, mental wellness, and economic vibrancy through two primary wings: The Gathering Hub (Retail and Community Anchor) and The Oasis (Wellness and Recreation). The Hamlet Hub is a 3-building destination campus designed to revitalize downtown Hamlet without municipal debt. She stated that their modular approach will allow them to scale operations and manage roof and HVAC modernizations in distinct independent cash flow necessary to sustain the entire campus.

She stated the Hamlet Hub requests a formal Resolution of Support from the City of Hamlet Council today. This authorizes the City to act as the Fiscal Agent (Administrative Middleman) for federal and state grant applications, at no cost to the City. This partnership is the critical key required to unlock over \$1M in debt-free capital for the 218 Raliegh Street campus. She stated the Resolution of Support is a non-binding document required by federal grantors (like the USDA and EPA) to confirm that the project aligns with the City's long-term master plan. It is a "vote of confidence", not a financial contract.

Council Member Martin stated his primary concern was the location and limited parking availability.

Wendi Hinson responded that discussions are ongoing with engineers regarding parking improvements and that bids are being obtained from local contractors for renovations.

Mayor Pro-Tem Covington inquired about the anticipated revenue sources for Hamlet Hub.

Wendi Hinson stated that revenue would come from grant funding as well as fees associated with various services and memberships offered through Hamlet Hub.

Mayor Pro-Tem Covington asked whether participants in the afterschool program would be charged a fee.

Wendi Hinson stated that membership pricing might apply to afterschool programs, but some participants may attend free of charge depending on grant funding.

Council Member Clewis asked if the Hamlet Hub would be a non-profit.

Wendi Hinson responded they are registered as a non-profit and any profit made would go back into the community of Hamlet.

Council Member Clewis asked whether funding had been secured to begin the project.

Wendi Hinson responded that startup funding had not yet been secured. She stated applications for grant funding through the Cole Foundation have been submitted, and additional support is requested from the City of Hamlet and the County.

Mayor Pro-Tem Covington asked whether Ms. Hinson believed Hamlet Hub would generate enough revenue to support staff salaries.

Wendi Hinson stated that she believed the organization would generate enough revenue to sustain staffing needs.

Council Member Clewis asked what would happen to remaining funds if Hamlet Hub was unsuccessful.

Wendi Hinson stated that any remaining funds would be transferred to another nonprofit organization.

Council Member Stuart asked whether any of the construction companies that submitted bids were minority-owned businesses.

Wendi Hinson responded that three bids had been received, but she was unsure whether any of the companies were minority owned.

Council Member Sellers inquired about insurance coverage for Hamlet Hub.

Wendi Hinson responded that Hamlet Hub would maintain its own insurance coverage.

Council Member Clewis asked how much of a liability policy would be required for Hamlet Hub.

Wendi Hinson stated that she believed the required policy amount would be approximately \$250,000.

City Attorney Morphis inquired about grant application deadlines and whether there was an option to purchase the property.

Wendi Hinson stated that the deadline for the Cole Foundation grant application was May 1 and they have already applied for it. She stated the other grants are on rolling applications that start over in October. She confirmed that there was an option to purchase the property.

Mayor Pro-Tem Covington asked how the remaining costs of the project would be funded if only partial grant funding was received.

Wendi Hinson responded that the project would be completed in phases to address potential funding limitations.

Council Member Stuart stated that he supports the concept and believes it would be beneficial to Hamlet. He stated that his main concern is obtaining additional information and ensuring minority-owned companies are included in the construction process.

Council Member Martin stated that he believes the proposal is a good idea, but he is concerned about the proposed location and limited parking.

Mayor Pro-Tem Covington stated she believes this is a great plan, but the development of the plan isn't far enough along for Council to support at this time. She suggested that alternate locations for Hamlet Hub should be considered due to parking and traffic concerns.

Wendi Hinson stated that the County has expressed interest in the project, but she wanted to provide the City of Hamlet with the opportunity to participate because she would like Hamlet Hub to remain in Hamlet. She stated that support from the City is needed before moving forward with the grant process.

Council Member Clewis made a motion to table fiduciary support of Hamlet Hub until additional information was provided, Mayor Pro-Tem Covington provided the second. The motion passed unanimously.

8. Discussion of City of Hamlet Ordinance 4-3 "Restrictions on Keeping Livestock Animals"

Assistant City Manager Webb read the City of Hamlet Ordinance 4-3 "Restrictions on Keeping Livestock Animals" and stated the ordinance was adopted in June 2021. She stated that the City recently received an inquiry regarding the allowance of chickens within the city limits.

City Manager Terziu stated that the matter was brought before Council to obtain feedback and direction. He stated that Rockingham recently updated its ordinance to allow chickens and stated that the City will have an intern this summer to assist with updates to Hamlet's ordinances.

Council Member Clewis asked which zoning districts currently allow chickens in Hamlet.

Assistant City Manager Webb responded that chickens are permitted in two zoning districts, R-20 and RA-20 Residential Agriculture, but only in the City's ETJ.

Council Member Sellers raised concerns about issues involving dogs within the City of Hamlet.

Mayor Guinn responded that the current discussion pertained specifically to the allowance of chickens in Hamlet.

Council Member Stuart asked whether the summer intern would be responsible for updating City ordinances.

City Manager Terziu responded that the intern would review the City of Hamlet's ordinances to identify sections requiring updates. He stated that any recommended revisions would be brought before Council for review and approval.

City Attorney Morphis responded to Council Member Sellers by stating that the City's ordinances already contain a separate section addressing dangerous dogs and regulations pertaining to dogs in Hamlet. He stated that the ordinance currently before Council should remain focused on livestock-related matters.

Council Member Sellers responded that he understood.

Council Member Martin made a motion to table changing Ordinance 4-3, "Restrictions on Keeping Livestock Animals" until the City of Hamlet's Ordinances can be reviewed, Council Member Stuart provided the second. The motion passed unanimously.

9. Presentation of the FY 2026-2027 Recommended Budget

City Manager Terziu thanked Council, employees, and directors on their hard work to get the budget ready to present. He stated that the Public Hearing will be June 9th at 6:00 pm to approve Budget 2026-2027.

He presented for Council's review and consideration the Recommended Budget for the Fiscal Year 2026–2027, as prepared by City staff. The Recommended Budget for FY2026–2027 is balanced at \$11,370,050. It is comprised of the following components: General Fund: \$7,252,050, Powell Bill Fund: \$241,000, and Enterprise Fund: \$3,877,000. The proposed budget includes a property tax rate decrease from the current \$0.76 per \$100 of assessed value to \$0.74 per \$100 of assessed value, generating an estimated \$2,550,000 in revenue. To support one-time capital and non-recurring needs, the budget includes the appropriation of \$556,500 from fund balance.

In conclusion, the Recommended Budget is balanced and has been prepared in full compliance with North Carolina General Statute §159-11. It reflects the City's ongoing commitment to restoring, renovating, and repairing critical infrastructure and facilities throughout Hamlet. A public hearing on the Recommended Budget is scheduled for Tuesday, June 9, 2026, during the Regular Monthly Hamlet City Council Meeting at 6:00 p.m. Any member of the public wishing to offer comments or ask questions may do so during this hearing, prior to the adoption of the Budget Ordinance. The Recommended Budget is available for public review at Hamlet City Hall during normal business hours. A public notice regarding both the document's availability and the scheduled hearing will be published in the Richmond County Daily Journal. He extended his sincere thanks to the City Council for their thoughtful input throughout the budget process, and to the city staff, whose dedication and hard work have been instrumental in preparing this Recommended Budget. Their collaboration and professionalism continue to be the cornerstone of our collective success.

Mayor Pro-Tem Covington made a motion to set a June 9, 2026, public hearing date for consideration and adoption of the proposed budget ordinance, Council Member Clewis provided the second. The motion passed unanimously.

Other Business

10. Public Comments

Esco Latimer stated that he had concerns regarding an internal email he received related to events at the AARP meeting he attended at the Hamlet Senior Center. He stated that he plans to file an ethics complaint against Mayor Pro-Tem Covington. He also stated that "Pipelines to Pantries" was established by him to assist senior adults who are not receiving meals seven days per week.

Gerard Morrison asked to speak during public comments.

Mayor Guinn informed Mr. Morrison that a public comment form must be completed before speaking.

Gerard Morrison asked when the policy was put in place and the reason behind the new policy.

Mayor Guinn stated it had been in effect for about three months.

Sean Smith interrupted and yelled, "Thanks to this douche right there!", pointing at City Manager Terziu.

City Manager Terziu responded, "Excuse me, if you want to say that to my face outside, you can."

Gerard Morrison said, "He's been doing that too much."

Sean Smith pointed at the door.

Sonja Latimer said, "Is that a threat."

Esco Latimer yelled, "That's a threat and defamation."

City Manager Terziu said to Sean Smith, "I will meet you out back after this."

Mayor Guinn called the meeting back to order and stated if citizens can't remain calm, they will be asked to leave.

Esco Latimer yelled, "Does that include a threat from the City Manager."

11. City Manager's Report

City Manager Terziu stated that The City of Hamlet continues to move from planning to execution across multiple fronts. This month reflects tangible progress in infrastructure, disciplined financial management, and economic development momentum. We are not just planning the future; we are building it.

He stated that the primary effort this month has been finalizing the recommended budget. He presented, for the second consecutive year, a balanced and conservative budget that is ready for Council adoption June 9, 2026. He also gave updates on other key areas including Public Safety, Community Engagement, Water Treatment Plant updates, Wastewater Treatment Plant progress, and Economic Development – 64-acre property.

(Continued whispering and laughing from Esco Latimer and Sean Smith interrupting the City Manager's Report).

12. Comments of Council

Council Member Martin informed citizens that the Richmond Senior High baseball team is currently participating in playoffs and stated that American Legion baseball season will begin in Hamlet once the high school season concludes.

Council Member Sellers had no comments.

Council Member Clewis informed Mr. Latimer that he did not have him removed from the Planning Board (*Esco Latimer interrupted Council Member Clewis arguing with him*), all of Council voted on that decision. He encouraged citizens to contact Council Members directly with concerns and cautioned against relying solely on information shared online by others because it is not accurate. He also requested prayers for a young girl in Rockingham who had been bitten by a dog and airlifted to the hospital.

Council Member Stuart had no comments.

Mayor Pro-Tem Covington had no comments.

13. Mayor's Comments

Mayor Guinn thanked the Hamlet Police Department for their service to the community in recognition of National Police Week.

14. Motion to go into Closed Session per NCGS § 143-318.11 (a)(3)(6) for attorney-client privilege and personnel.

At 7:13 pm, Council Member Clewis motioned, seconded by Mayor Pro-Tem Covington, to go into closed session for attorney-client privilege and personnel. The motion passed unanimously.

Return to Open Session

At 7:23 pm, Mayor Pro-Tem Covington motioned to return to Open Session, seconded by Council Member Sellers. The motion passed unanimously.

15. Motion to Adjourn

Mayor Pro-Tem Covington motioned, seconded by Council Member Sellers to adjourn. The motion passed unanimously at 7:23 pm.