

**MAYOR**  
Jessie Bellflowers

**MAYOR PRO TEM**  
Hope Page

**TOWN MANAGER**  
Chancer McLaughlin



**TOWN BOARD**  
Cynthia Hamilton  
Grilley Mitchell  
Bryan Marley  
Lisa Tremmel

**TOWN CLERK**  
Ashley Wyatt

**TOWN OF HOPE MILLS BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**  
**Meeting Agenda –February 16, 2026**  
**7:00 p.m. Regular Meeting**

Mayor Bellflowers called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM and welcomed those in attendance.

**NOTE:** Commissioner Marley arrived at 7:26pm

**STAFF PRESENT**

Town Manager Chancer McLaughlin, Town Clerk Ashley Wyatt, Police Chief Stephen Dollinger, Deputy Fire Chief Robbie Hurlburt, Director of Planning Emily Weidner, Public Works Director Don Sisko, Parks and Recreation Director Lamarco Morrison, and Town Attorney Dan Hartzog.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Mayor Bellflowers led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA – ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS**

*Commissioner Hamilton moved to add Dr. Deborah Harris, the Continuum of Care (COC) Chair, to the presentations section of the agenda. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Mitchell and unanimously approved.*

*Mayor Pro Tem Page moved to approve the agenda as amended. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Tremmel and unanimously approved.*

**OFFICIAL COMMENTS**

Town Manager Chancer McLaughlin presented his report highlighting:

- An update on the basketball court vandalism from January 13, noting contact with the Department of Public Safety through a juvenile court counselor
- The upcoming Women Mean Business Seminar on March 19 at Gates 4
- The FAST facility feasibility study which offers three alternative transportation routes
- Recognition of the HR team for receiving the North Carolina Public Sector Human Resources Association 2025-2026 recognition
- A recent partnership video with the police chief and Cumberland County Sheriff Morgan
- Updates on upcoming community events including the Fourth of July celebration registration, spring litter sweep, and community yard sales

Commissioner Mitchell encouraged citizens to review the manager's report for answers to questions before contacting board members.

Commissioner Hamilton thanked those attending the meeting and acknowledged the police and fire department presentations. She expressed enthusiasm about Rosie, the new police horse, noting the animal can access areas patrol cars cannot reach.

Commissioner Tremmel thanked everyone for attending and expressed appreciation for being welcomed back after an absence.

Mayor Pro Tem Hope Page welcomed Commissioner Tremmel back and expressed excitement about progress being made on transportation options for town citizens.

Mayor Bellflowers welcomed committee chairs and members present to present their budgets. He highlighted the collaborative partnership between municipalities, Cumberland County, and public safety agencies during recent weather events. The Mayor also acknowledged the former Mayor Pro Tem for six years of advocating for the transit proposal that was being presented.

## **PRESENTATIONS**

### **PROCLAMATION RECOGNIZING BLACK HISTORY MONTH**

Mayor Bellflowers read the proclamation recognizing February 2026 as Black History Month in the Town of Hope Mills.

### **POLICE OFFICER PROMOTIONS**

Police Chief Dollinger presented Officer Justin Jones with a promotion to the rank of Sergeant.

### **CERTIFICATES OF APPRECIATION FOR HOMELESSNESS ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

Commissioner Hamilton and Mayor Bellflowers presented certificates of appreciation to members of the Homelessness Advisory Committee for their service to the community.

### **CONTINUATION OF CARE PRESENTATION**

Dr. Deborah Harris, Chair of the Fayetteville Cumberland County Continuum of Care on Homelessness, presented on the COC's mission and activities. She emphasized the importance of collaboration, communication, and relationships in addressing homelessness. Dr. Harris shared data showing that while the 2025 point-in-time count identified 383 homeless individuals in Cumberland County, the coordinated entry system assisted 845 individuals in a seven-month period, demonstrating the greater scope of the issue. She outlined challenges including the need for more volunteers, public misconceptions about data interpretation, and how city ordinances can sometimes compromise accurate counts of homeless populations.

### **FY 24-25 ANNUAL AUDIT PRESENTATION**

Jay Sharp from Sharp and Patel presented the town's annual audit for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2025. He reported that:

- The audit was completed and submitted to the Local Government Commission by the deadline
- The town received a clean (unmodified) audit opinion with no findings

- Two financial performance indicators were noted: fund balance available was at 23.48% of expenditures (slightly below the LGC's 25% target), and the town had used prior year fund balances for operations
- Cash reserves dropped to 91 days (still within the recommended 3-6 month range)
- Public safety remained the largest expenditure category at 49% of total expenditures, increasing from \$8.6 million to \$12.8 million, primarily due to increases in salaries, benefits, and capital outlay

### **HOPE MILLS LAKE PARK IMPROVEMENTS FINAL CONCEPT**

Andrew Harrell and Colleen Bandel from the East Group presented the revised concept for the Hope Mills Lake Park improvements. The final concept (option 3) incorporated feedback from public engagement meetings and included:

- Addition of permanent restroom facilities instead of porta-potties
- Integration of features from previous concepts including a gazebo layout, seat wall, swing arbors, and open pavilion
- Relocation of the playground away from the lake
- Addition of a crosswalk at the intersection of Main Street and the exit drive
- 50 parking spaces with a stormwater bioretention island
- Three boat trailer parking spaces
- A fenced playground area
- Public art and potential crosswalk from Main Street
- Retention of existing elements like the boat ramp and "Big T"
- New features including picnic seating, a pergola, and seat walls for erosion control

The updated cost estimate totaled \$2,360,000, an increase from the previous \$1,550,000 estimate, largely due to the addition of two permanent restroom facilities at \$650,000.

Board members expressed concerns about the playground's proximity to the road and boat trailer parking.

Parks and Recreation Director Lamarco Mitchell addressed these concerns, noting there would be a 35-40 foot buffer between the road and playground with landscaping and a 6-foot fence.

The board also discussed potentially relocating the boat trailer parking to reduce safety concerns.

*Commissioner Marley made a motion to approve concept 3 for the Hope Mills Lake Park improvements, which was seconded by Commissioner Mitchell and unanimously approved.*

*Commissioner Marley made a motion to authorize the Parks and Recreation Director to proceed with starting the RFQ process, which was seconded by Commissioner Mitchell and unanimously approved.*

### **PUBLIC HEARING: CASE SN-0517 CONSIDERATION TO RENAME PINECREST DRIVE TO SUNCREST DR.**

*Commissioner Marley made a motion to open the public hearing to rename Pinecrest drive to Suncrest drive, which was seconded by Mayor Pro Tem page and unanimously approved.*

There were no speakers.

*Commissioner Marley made a motion to close the public hearing, which was seconded by Commissioner Mitchell, and unanimously approved.*

*Commissioner Marley made a motion to rename Pinecrest Drive to Suncrest Drive, which was seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Page, and unanimously approved.*

## **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Sharon Reeves of 3708 South Main Street commended the police chief and officers for their presence during the recent snowstorm. She noted that while walking her dog at 2:30 AM during the storm, she observed three separate police patrol officers, which made her feel safer. She also expressed her appreciation for Rosie, the police horse.

## **CONSENT AGENDA**

Commissioner Marley moved to approve all consent agenda items (A-F). The motion was seconded and unanimously approved.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **COMMITTEE BUDGET PRESENTATIONS FOR FY 26-27**

Representatives from each town committee presented their proposed budgets and activities:

**Appearance Commission:** Marie Callender, co-chair, requested a budget increase from \$5,000 to \$7,000 to enhance the town's appearance and community involvement. She outlined projects including Christmas decorations at the lake, the E-box project featuring artwork like the octopus at Golfview, plans for patriotic holiday decorations, updating town entrance signs, and adding benches and picnic tables at the lake.

**Christmas Decoration Committee:** Mark Hess presented a request for \$20,000 for additional Christmas decorations. He described recent purchases including French horns with holly leaves and holly clusters bought at significant discounts. Future plans include fixing light poles that weren't lit, continuing decorations along Main Street toward Golfview, and potentially adding decorations to the Public Safety Building.

**Arts and Culture Committee:** Vivian Scott, chair, reported the committee has co-sponsored two theatrical productions and received artist sketches for a community mural. Future plans include sponsoring an arts day for a special needs camp, preteen and teen arts camps, and a senior readers theater production. The budget request was \$27,000.

**Historical Preservation Commission:** Sharon Reeves, chair, presented ongoing projects including updating the historic district documentation, developing historic district guidelines, restoration of the chapel doors which have rotted at the bottom, and maintaining flooring at the chapel. She explained that the commission's \$36,000 budget request included many items that might be covered by other departments or planned for future years.

**Homelessness Advisory Committee:** Ms. Connie Parker spoke on intake forms designed to gather information about homeless individuals' current situations, needs, income, housing history, and preferences. The budget request was \$6,000.

**Prime Movers:** Kenny Rogers announced their scholarship program is now active, offering \$1,000 scholarships for two students from Southview High School who demonstrate community service. He requested the board review a Memorandum of Understanding for future expansion of the scholarship through matching funds with North Carolina Providence Schools and FTCC. Other initiatives include adopting teachers by providing school supplies, a Thanksgiving meal program (planning to double from 10 to 20 complete meals this year), and Women's History Month recognition activities planned in collaboration with the Arts and Culture Committee. He stated he would provide the MOU to the board. The budget request was \$5,000.

### **REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF HOMELESSNESS ADVISORY COMMITTEE PROPOSED EVENT SCHEDULE FOR USE OF TOWN HALL PARKING LOT**

*The board unanimously approved the proposed event schedule for the Homelessness Advisory Committee's use of the Town Hall parking lot on the following days:*

(March 14, 2026) 9:00 AM – 1:00 PM

(June 13, 2026) 9:00 AM – 1:00 PM

(September 12, 2026) 9:00 AM – 1:00 PM

(December 12, 2026) 9:00 AM – 1:00 PM

### **ACCEPTANCE OF WITT O'BRIEN 1ST QUARTER REPORT**

Town Manager McLaughlin noted this was a quarterly report from the grant writing program, with no action required beyond acceptance. The report indicated they may have extra hours within their current allocation to pursue the mural grant.

Mayor Bellflowers emphasized the importance of the grant writing services, particularly for funding projects like the Lake Park improvements.

*The board unanimously accepted the report.*

### **CLOSED SESSION PURSUANT TO NORTH CAROLINA GENERAL STATUTE 143-318.11(A)(6)**

*Motion by Mayor Pro Tem Hope Page, seconded by Commissioner Marley, to conduct a closed session pursuant to North Carolina General Statute 143-318.11(A)(6) to discuss personnel matters. Motion carried unanimously.*

The Board returned from closed session.

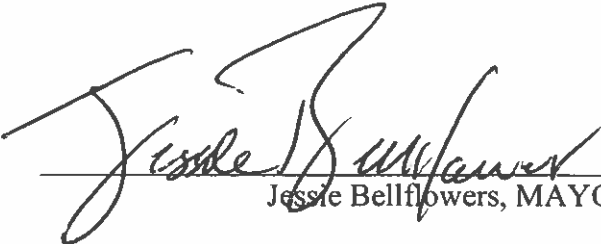
*Motion by Mayor Pro Tem Hope Page to seal the minutes of the closed session until such time as the release of the information would no longer frustrate the purpose of the closed session and further no action was taken. Motion carried unanimously.*

### **ADJOURNMENT**

Seeing no additional business to come before the board, the meeting was adjourned at 9:59 pm.

*Motion by Commissioner Mitchell, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Page, and carried unanimously to adjourn the meeting.*

**ADOPTED this 2<sup>nd</sup> Day of March 2026.**

  
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Jesse Bellflowers, MAYOR

**ATTEST:**



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Ashley Wyatt, MMC Town Clerk

