

Town of Rich Square
Board of Commissioners Regular Meeting Minutes
Thursday, September 4, 2025 – 6:00 pm
Town Annex Building

The Rich Square Board of Commissioners held a regular meeting in the Town's Commissioners Meeting Room at 112 East Jackson St, Rich Square, North Carolina. Mayor Victoria Newcombe called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

Elected officials in attendance were Mayor Victoria Newcombe, Commissioner Ennis Williams, Commissioner Charles Eason, Commissioner Reggie White, and Commissioner Peggy Cary. Commissioner Joyner was absent.

Town official in attendance were Town Clerk Christine Bass, Police Chief William Smith, and Town Attorney Jarrette Pittman.

Invocation

Commissioner Charles Eason provided the invocation.

Public Comment

Marcia Majett – Had a comment directed to the Chief of Police William Smith. She asked what was the Northampton County Sheriff's Department position as to the robbery that happened December of 2023 on Highway 305 going towards Jackson, North Carolina. End of public comment.

Approval of the Agenda

Keedra Whitaker asked to be added to the agenda to discuss some of the information being handled by the Northampton County Board of Commissioners. Mayor Newcombe asked the Board if they would like to amend the agenda to allow County Commissioner Whitaker to speak.

Commissioner Eason made a motion to allow and amend the request for County Commissioner Keedra Whitaker to be added to the agenda. The motion was seconded by Commissioner White. All in favor, motion carried.

Consent Agenda

Board approval of April 3, 2025 Town Board Meeting minutes.

Commissioner Williams made a motion to approve the minutes from the April 3, 2025 Town Board Meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Eason. All in favor, motion carried.

Agenda

- a. Coming before the Board was Northampton County Commissioner Keedra Whitaker. Ms. Whitaker said the while the Northampton County Board of Commissioners held a retreat some of the topics that were discussed were the Creecy Project wherein they discussed some possible remodel to the building such as a multi-purpose room, vandalism, boarding up the windows, and even discussed the possible of demolition of a part of the building. She said that they were given a quote of \$17,000 to clean-up the brush and debris along

the entire fence of the old school grounds. She said that she has not been able to locate a signed Memorandum of Agreement between the Town of Rich Square and Northampton County Board of Commissioners as to the responsibilities of the county and the town for the Creecy property which is owned by Northampton County. There was a comment made between Commissioners Eason and White that they did not sign the agreement because the County wanted the town to handle most of the work.

Ms. Whitaker said that there was some discussion in reference to the drainage work that was done through a grant entirely handled and funded by the Northampton County Board of Commissioners and there was no information as to if there were any funds left over from that project to help redirect to the Creecy Clean-up Project. She said that she would investigate that as well.

Ms. Whitaker did express a request to hold a County Commissioner Board meeting here in Rich Square at the Town Annex Building so that town citizens that are not able to make it to a County Board of Commissioner meeting could attend here. End of report.

- b. Board to approve the Town of Rich Square Policy for Property Management (ARPA) as part of the policies required under the funding agency. There was some discussion. Commissioner Eason made a motion to approve the Town of Rich Square Policy for Property Management (ARPA) as part of the policies required under the funding agency. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Williams. All in favor, motion carried.
- c. Coming before the Board was Paula Greatheart as a response to the letter sent to her in reference to a sewage line at 800 Creecy Street. Ms. Greatheart expressed all her issued in reference to her sewer line are all do to when Waverly was working for the Town. Commissioner Eason said I do recall there was an issue about a tree in that area several years ago. Ms. Greatheart said that CADA was going to pay to have the line repaired many years ago but someone from the state said it was not her problem but a town issue. She said I when the home was being built over 20 years ago Kee Builders came to the Board to get permission to run the sewer line to where it would be tied into a manhole on Casterlowe Street since there were no sewer lines on Creecy Street. She said we were not told that we needed to get permission from the property owner of the lot next to us that we needed to go across. It was discussed further wherein the sewer line in question belongs to the property owner of 800 Creecy Street and it is the responsibility of that owner to make sure the line is in good working order so not to cause any undue harm to the land and the public. Ms. Greatheart said that she will work on getting it repaired and would like to have someone from the town there when it is being discussed.
- d. Board to review the LGC Staff Recommendation Denying the Town of Rich Square's Appeal for the Notice of Compliance. Ms. Bass stated that the Town's appeal was denied and that we would hear the fate of the town's monthly sales and use tax distribution at a publicly recorded meeting with the LGC Staff and the NC Treasury Department. She said Mayor Newcombe and I have already responded that we would be present for this hearing and that we could allow one more commissioner to sit in on the meeting so that we comply with open meeting laws. Attorney Pittman asked if we checked with other towns as to how they handled their appeal. Mayor Newcombe said I did request your input on the reply and when we did not hear from you we had a deadline that was needed

and I even went through all the extraordinary circumstances that would apply to the Town of Rich Square but we did address some of these same issues on the last appeal for which we were approved and they are taking the stance that the Town Board of Commissioners had a whole year to fix their issues and did nothing to help remedy the situation.

- e. Board to review and ratify an invoice paid to James Boone for the purchase and delivery of rocks, gravel, and sand for the Town of Rich Square. Mayor Newcombe said as you see in an email conversation with the Town Attorney that the Town needs to vote to ratify the contract/invoice so that we are ensuring that we the Board are operating within the law. There was some discussion.
Commissioner Eason made a motion to ratify the invoice to James Boone for the purchase and delivery of rocks, gravel, and sand to and for the Town of Rich Square and for those funds to come from the Powell Bill Department Supplies line item #10-5700-3300. The motion was seconded by Commissioner White. All in favor, motion carried.
- f. Board to review and approve the Martin Starnes & Associates 2025 Amended Audit Contract. Ms. Bass stated the amended contract says 2025 because this is the fiscal year that is supposed to be worked on currently. She said this must be on file to be able to submit, approve, and complete the 2022 Audit since the funds are being paid out of the 2025-2026 budget year.
Commissioner Williams made a motion to approve the Martin Starnes & Associates 2025 Amended Audit Contract. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Eason. All in favor, motion carried.
- g. Board review and approve to amend the contract with Uni-First Corporation. Ms. Bass explained that the Town entered a five-year contract with Uni-First to supply rugs at the Town Hall and the Annex building weekly for a cost of \$125.00 per week resulting in an annual fee of \$6,500 and for the entire time of the contract a fee of \$32,500. She said I have spoken with the representative with Uni-First and it would cost us over \$7,500 to get out of our contract and with reducing the service to once month we will reduce the cost to \$900 annually until contract can be canceled in March 2027. There was some discussion among the Board.
Commissioner Eason made a motion to amend the contract with Uni-First Corporation until the contract can be cancelled in March 2027. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Williams. All in favor, motion carried.
Attorney Pittman asked if we had to notify them of a cancelation in advance of the contract renewal date. Ms. Bass said we must notify them 90 days in advance of the cancellation.
- h. Board to review and discuss the Bid for Grave Services by Davis Caskets for the Cedar Lawn Cemetery. Ms. Bass explained that we are trying to alleviate some of the issues that we are having at the Cedar Lawn Cemetery wherein there is not a proper accounting of who is to be buried and who is already buried at the Cedar Lawn Cemetery. We are trying to streamline this process and there will be no costs to the town. Currently the funeral homes are charging for the opening and closing of the graves and making money while they are doing this services but they are not making sure that the grounds are being

maintained after the digging is done. She said the funeral homes are not checking with us before they go in there to dig and it has caused several issues. She said this would make it so that no one can bury anyone in the Cedar Lawn Cemetery. She said only David Caskets would be handling all the opening and closings of the graves, and they would maintain every site that they do the opening and closing of the ground. Commissioner Williams asked if we could bid the entire process out so that someone else could be handling the day-to-day operations of the cemetery so that it could be brought back into some compliance and move forward with some direction. Attorney Pittman said we can look for some quotes for that purpose as well. He did state that the Board of Commissioners also has an option to re-appoint a Board of Trustees to oversee the Cedar Lawn Cemetery. The Board said we will investigate that as well.

Commissioner Williams made a motion to table this matter until we can get more information and investigate other quotes and bids to handle the entire cemetery process if able to do so. The Motion was seconded by Commissioner White. All in favor, motion carried.

Mayor Newcombe asked for volunteers to assist the office staff with getting and updating the information at the Cedar Lawn Cemetery. No one volunteered.

- i. Board to review and discuss several quotes for street paving and sidewalk repairs using 2025 remaining Powell Bill funds. The quotes received all went over the amount left in the Powell Bill fund account. The Board had a discussion as to what should and could be done with the remaining amount of funds available. Citizens complained about streets not being taken care of and the Board explained that there just was not enough money available to complete even one street and explained that the Board of Commissioners also must do some much needed budget cuts due to the state taking a portion of the Town's monthly sales and use tax distribution.

Commissioner Eason made a motion to wait for more quotes to possibly complete some small repairs around town or to just wait on the next Powell Bill allocation to complete at least one of the Town Streets. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Williams. All in favor, motion carried.

- j. Board to review and approve an offer to purchase the old bush hog from the W/S and Street department. Commissioner Williams said there was an offer on the table to purchase the old bush hog for \$50. There was some discussion.

Commissioner Eason made the motion to accept the bid to purchase the old bush hog for \$50. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Williams. All in favor. Motion carried.

- k. Board to approve the cancellation of the October Bulk Pick-up due to financial restraints. There was some discussion.

Commissioner Eason made a motion to cancel the October Bulk Pick-up due to financial restraints. The Motion was seconded by Commissioner Williams. All in favor, motion carried.

Old Business

Commissioner Eason brought up 200 Judith Street reference to the bushes and limbs needing to be cut back for the safety of the citizens that drive up Judith to Drew Street. He said

he read the letter and asked that another letter be sent to thank them for what was done and too asked if they can cut it back some more. Ms. Bass said she will follow up with the request. End of old business.

Staff & Council Reports

- a. Police Chief Report - Chief William Smith gave his report to the Board. He said there has been an issue of phantom 911 calls going to central dispatch. He said they are even coming from the town hall's number. He said I checked and there was no one at the town hall at the time of the call being made. He said there is an issue with the phone lines, and we are not sure if it is just Bright Speed or all phone services. He asked Ms. Bass to make a call to Bright Speed to see if they can figure out the issue at the town hall. Chief Smith said it is still warm out and we are having issues of citizens property no being locked up, not being properly put up, and not having the serial numbers to the property you own. He said if you noticed something of yours has been taken you need to have something to be able to identify it is your personal property. He asked citizens to please take inventory and get all serial numbers for all your equipment. He said this would help into assisting you to possibly getting your equipment back sooner. Chief Smith said he is a member of the ALE & Down East Task Force and 5 of our kids have been arrested for murder as early as last week. He said these kids are from Rich Square and surrounding towns. He said be cautious and if you hear something say something. End of report.

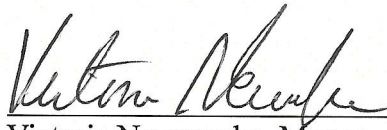
- b. Police Commissioner Report – Commissioner Williams gave his report. He said that we as a town need to make sure that our IT is secure and we have the proper remote access portals in place. He said before we go and work on laptops and other computers, we need to make sure that our information is secure. Commissioner Williams said that he is went to the NAACP meeting and they have grants for \$300,000 and the Town cannot even apply for it because we are so far behind on our audits. He said this is money the Town can use but cannot touch. He said we just must keep working together for one common goal and that is to get the foot from our necks so that we can get some of this funding that is needed in Rich Square instead of it going to other towns. Commissioner Williams said since we are on the subject when are we going to know how much money we need to cut the budget by and when will we meet to discuss the short fall on the Budget. Ms. Bass replied we should know the exact amount shortly after the September 9, 2025, meeting. She said we all will get an email that will advise the Board of the amount that we will be losing for the budget. She said we can go ahead and schedule a Special Called meeting now so that we will all be prepared to review and discuss the reductions in both the General Fund and the Water/Sewer Fund because the auditing process affects both funds and all departments. There was some discussion among the Board. The Board scheduled a Special Called meeting for September 23, 2025, at 1 pm. for budget revisions for the 2025-2026 Fiscal Year End. End of report.

- c. Water/Sewer ORC report –Jeffrey Long was absent. No report.

- d. Water/Sewer Commissioner report – Commissioner White spoke about the grant that is in process at the WWTP and that everything was going well.
Ms. Bass said that she has completed an audit on the Water Billing accounts and the staff has identified 13 locations that has been using water but has not been paying for services. She said those citizens have been given a notice that states that their water service will be turned off on September 8, 2025, if we do not hear from them by September 5, 2025. She said this is giving them 30 days to get an application and deposit on file. She said we are doing everything in our power to make sure that the citizens continue to have the best quality water and service and be able to have the waste disposed of properly by state regulations. End of report.
- e. Street Commissioner report – Commissioner Eason passed the street lights outage report down to Mayor Newcombe. End of report.
- f. Recreation and Events Commissioner report – Commissioner Joyner absent. No report.
- g. Finance Officer report – Ms. Bass went over the Revenue & Expenditure report for fiscal year 2025-2026 with the Board. She said we are tracking well and knowing that we need to reduce some line items is going to be some work, but we will get through this. She did point out that the Deputy Contract Services was over budget \$7,628 and Chief Smith needs to reduce some of the part-time work to bring it in line for the remainder of the year.
Ms. Bass presented to the Board the draft of the 2022 Audit Financial Statement prepared by Martin Starnes & Associates. End of report.
- h. Town Clerk report – No report.
- i. Administrative Commissioner report – Peggy Cary said she was tasked with making sure that all the town employee personnel files were for the completion of the 2022 auditing process and for the future audits to come. She said that she has reached out to town staff to make sure that the necessary items were in the employees' files. End of report.
- j. Mayor's report – Victoria Newcombe said the Community College in Ahooskie is offering small business class, please visit their site to get more information.
Mayor Newcombe said we need volunteers to assist with the Right for Revival Mobile market that is scheduled to be in Rich Square every Tuesday from 10 am to 11:30 am.
Mayor Newcombe said the Rich Square Rockers will be holding their Fall Festival October 24, 2025, from 4 pm to 6 pm at the Rich Square Volunteer Fire Department (RSVFD). She said the event is free to attend and we are having vendors that offer free services. She said there is no fee to be a vendor.
Mayor Newcombe said do not forget the free diabetes awareness class that is being offered by the Northampton County Cooperative Extension will be held each Thursday for the next 6 weeks here at the Annex building from 1 pm to 2 pm. End of report.

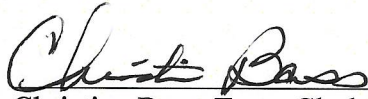
Adjournment

Commissioner Eason moved, and Commissioner Willaims seconded the motion to adjourn the September 4, 2025, regular meeting. The motion passed unanimously, and the meeting was adjourned at 8:28 pm.



Victoria Newcombe, Mayor

ATTEST:



Christine Bass, Town Clerk