CITY OF WILMINGTON
REGULAR CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
TUESDAY, AUGUST 4, 2026

The Council of the City of Wilmington met in regular session on the above date at 6:30 p.m. at City Hall, Skyline Center, Council Chambers, 929 North Front Street, Wilmington, North Carolina.

Those present were: Mayor Saffo, presiding; Mayor Pro-Tem Kevin Spears; Councilmembers David Joyner, Salette Andrews, J.C. Lyle, Cassidy Santaguida, and Chakema Clinton-Quintana; City Clerk Penelope Spicer-Sidbury; City Attorney Meredith Everhart; and City Manager Becky Hawke.

Ms. Natasha Torres, Firefighter, Wilmington Fire Department, gave the invocation, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

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PRESENTATION

Mayor Saffo read the Proclamation honoring the 236th United States Coast Guard Anniversary and Proclaiming August 4, 2026, as U.S. Coast Guard Day and along with the City Council, presented it to Captain Timothy List, Commander of the U.S. Coast Guard Sector North Carolina. Captain List gave brief remarks and stated that the Coast Guard cutter original diligence was one of the first revenue cutters in our organization. He stated that this is still a strong Coast Guard City and Council's support of the Coast Guard is impressive with a bright future ahead as one of the few Coast Guard Cities in our Nation.

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CONSENT AGENDA

Items on the Consent Agenda were acted upon and unanimously adopted on motion of Councilmember Andrews, seconded by Councilmember Clinton-Quintana as presented as follows:

Adopted Resolution Authorizing the City Manager to Enter into an Agreement with Patterson Pope, Inc. for $170,557 for Additional High-Density Mobile Storage System Components for the WPD Property and Evidence Division.

Adopted Resolution Authorizing the City Manager to Enter into an Agreement to Purchase 208 Sets of Mission-Ready Gear from C.W. Williams and Company LLC for $157,200.

Adopted Resolution Authorizing the City Manager to Apply for a FY26 Community Oriented Policing Services Office Law Enforcement Mental Health and Wellness Act Grant in the Amount of $250,000.

Approved the Minutes of Council's Agenda Briefing meeting on July 20, 2026, and the Regular Council Meeting on July 21, 2026.

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PUBLIC INFORMATION

Ms. Tracy Bannon spoke to Council regarding benches placed by the Democrat Socialists of America. She noted that you can't allow one without allowing all. She noted that since permits aren't needed and the benches don't need to be up to Wilmington codes and regulations, this will be easy to accomplish.

Mr. Travis Gilbert was scheduled to speak to Council regarding the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge replacement but was not present.

Mr. Renegade Cherokee was schedule to speak to Council regarding making Wilmington great again but was not present.

Mr. Cameron Strickland spoke to Council regarding questions and concerns about Wilmington. He stated that his family has been in North Carolina since the 1600's and he inquired about the growing population in Wilmington, stating it's been a concern for over a decade. He stated that he is an actor and filmmaker starting at Cape Fear Community College in the Fall and likely getting an undergraduate degree in Economics. Mr. Strickland stated that there has been a lot of unrest even in the Film Community with different politics leading to divisiveness. He inquired about any advice from Council regarding pursuing politics as he would like to serve his Country as best as possible, as well, to see more patriotism across our Country. Lastly, he stated his concern regarding U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (I.C.E.) and our level of preparedness.

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PUBLIC HEARINGS

Public Hearing was held on **Ordinance Amending the Official Zoning Maps of the City of Wilmington to Rezone Property Containing 1.76 Acres Located at 524 S. College Road from O&I, Office and Institutional District, to CB (CD), Community Business (Conditional District) for a Convenience Store and Fuel Station.**

Ms. Haley Hopkins, Long Range Planner, gave the Staff report and reviewed the timeline of the application which began in December 2025. She stated that the applicant received two variances for this site in May 2026 for tree preservation and a drive-thru facility. The Planning Commission heard the item and recommended approval in July 2026. The site is currently zoned O&I, Office and Institutional District, with a proposal for a Conditional District with a specific use as a Wawa convenience store with fuel pumps in the CB (CD) Community Business Zoning District.

Ms. Hopkins stated that the site is located on South College Road near the UNCW campus and currently includes the vacant Furniture Fair building which is proposed to be removed. She stated that the applicant has provided an updated site plan and elevations, as a landscape buffer is required along the rear of the site adjacent to the residential MD17 to the west. Forty-three parking spaces are proposed. Ms. Hopkins stated that this redevelopment would decrease the amount of impervious coverage on the site by a little more than 900 sq. ft. and stated the site-specific conditions recommendations.

Ms. Hopkins stated that Staff has reviewed this application’s alignment with relevant adopted plans and the Create Wilmington Comprehensive Plan is the only plan that applies to this site. She stated that this site is not located in an area of opportunity but is along a major corridor, regional parkway, and high-capacity transit route. She stated that Staff assessed this application with relevant policies and found modest support for the application’s alignment with the plan. Key policies that support rezoning the site to CB (CD), highlight the need to improve access to goods and services through infill and redevelopment and to increase connectivity to sites along major roadways through frontage and backage roads.

Ms. Hopkins stated that while no comments have been received in support of the application, three comments were submitted in opposition. She gave a brief summary and recommendations stating that the Planning Commission voted to recommend a conditional approval, six to zero, with a modification to condition five related to tree preservation and relocation to reflect circumstances under which preservation and relocation may not be possible. She stated that Staff finds the request to be consistent with the Create Wilmington Comprehensive Plan and in the public interest, and recommends approval.

Councilmember Joyner inquired as to why this property would have an easement whereas he’s not necessarily seeing easements at other adjacent properties on College Road. Ms. Hopkins responded that the area in reference was the portion on University Drive where it stops being maintained by the City and becomes a private easement that is owned by the adjacent parcel to the west, MD17. She stated that would be up to the applicant to find a way to make that connection as it would be conditioned by the site plan.

Mr. Sam Frank, representing the applicant, spoke to Council and stated that this project is a redevelopment site that is not currently occupied and is located on a popular section of College Road across from UNCW. He stated that the proposed use is a Wawa store together with fuel sales, that sits on 1.76 acres and is currently zoned O&I with the proposed rezoning to support the new use as CB conditional.

Mr. Frank stated that the orientation of the store and fuel pumps for the site plan have been carefully designed in cooperation with and through guidance from Staff, and is organized in a way that is consistent with the current requirements of the code. Mr. Frank pointed out the additional streetscape landscaping and loading zone stating that the added landscaping will help make that façade more attractive. He stated that the site has two access points for vehicles with the primary access point being along College Road. He stated that they will be eliminating one of the curb cuts as it is inconsistent with the T.I.A requirements, extending the length of the turn lane in front of the site. He stated that the secondary access connects to University Drive. Mr. Frank stated that it is the applicant's obligation and risk to create whatever roads are necessary to establish the two points of connection.

Mr. Frank stated that there are some large trees and shrub lines with a condition that contemplates relocation of some trees that are currently in the North Carolina Department of Transportation (N.C.D.O.T.) right-of-way. He stated that some of the factors surrounding whether the trees can be relocated center around the fact that the trees belong to the N.C.D.O.T. and no one has the right to tell them what they can or can't do with their trees, but there is hope they'll be cooperative. Secondly, it is not uncommon for significant utilities to be located along the edge of the road and within the right-of-way, and if there are utilities that are intertwined with the roots, that may inhibit our ability to relocate those trees.

Mr. Frank stated that all variances must be obtained prior to seeking rezoning and the two requests were approved by the Board of Adjustment in April 2026. He stated that one request was removal of the specimen tree and the second request is the fly-thru window setback that is consistent with the definition of a drive-thru in our code. Therefore, we need relief for that fly-thru to be located less than 200 ft. from the boundary with the residentially-zoned property. He stated that in this case it's 138 ft. away.

Mr. Frank discussed with Council condition seven that the neighboring landowner brought to their attention. He stated that it's about pedestrian interconnectivity between this site and the residential property located immediately to the west and states that pedestrian connection shall be provided for the applicant's sake. He stated that what was raised by the representatives of that piece of property to the west is that nothing about the conditions on this approval should bind another property owner. He stated that it's not fair for us to agree to a condition that burdens an imposition on a neighboring property owner. Therefore, the neighbor has asked that you strike condition seven altogether. Mr. Frank stated that was fine with them if that is the will of the Council and an acceptable solution. He stated that a revision to the condition that required this applicant's cooperation subject to the agreement of a neighboring landowner would also be fine as well. He stated that there doesn't have to be a condition for there to be pedestrian connectivity.

A question/answer and discussion period was held.

Mr. Frank stated that there is not a direct connection between the southern end of the property and the public right of way that is University Drive, as the applicant is on the hook to establish the public right-of-way from that end of the property. He stated that if Council approves this zoning, they're approving it with two points of access. He stated that the neighbor has asked that Council include a condition that does two things. One, that this applicant acquire legal rights that are necessary by way of easement, or otherwise, and physically construct the connection between the south end of the property and the public right-of-way. He stated that the second condition is a requirement that this applicant agree to pay for 50% of the cost of the improvements to that section of the right-of-way. Mr. Frank stated that he does not think it is fair to ask the City to dictate what financial terms two developers will agree to with regard to a collaboration on development. To that end, in response to that suggestion from our neighbor, the applicant is agreeable to a condition that requires the applicant to connect the southern end of its property to the public section of University Drive and request that Council decline to get involved in the economic factors that are discussions between the two developers.

Mayor Saffo stated that he believes that is fair and in all these years he doesn't think he's ever resolved an issue regarding two private property owners.

Councilmember Joyner stated that he doesn't think Wilmington is looking to build more gas stations as a Community need versus building more housing, and that is a general observation about this project and the neighbor's procedural stance and the applicant's stance. Mr. Frank stated that in the neighbor's communication to Council, they communicated that they did not object to this use in this location. Second, he stated that the improvement of this road will ultimately be required for and will benefit both developments.

Mayor Pro-Tem Spears inquired if condition seven is concerning the western portion of the subject property. Mr. Frank responded that is correct.

A lengthy question/answer and discussion period was held.

Mayor Pro-Tem Spears inquired as to why a Wawa is needed at that location. Mr. Frank responded that Wawa, Inc. knows what they are doing when it comes to site selection and they would not be seeking to put a store here unless they were confident the demand was there to utilize it.

Mr. Payman Nadimi, Project Engineer at Wawa, stated that they do their due diligence when they do their site selection and this site was identified as a great site for them and for the Wilmington Community. He stated that Wawa, Inc. has a full offering of services compared to other gas stations within the same area as the proposed site includes fresh, made-to-order food, cleaner restrooms, a cleaner store, better operations, and the convenience store aspect of their operation. He stated that a typical Wawa employs between 35 to 40 associates that are part of the Wawa Corporation that receive full benefits just like Corporate Staff do.

Councilmember Clinton-Quintana inquired if Wawa, Inc. does some sort of due diligence survey in relation as to where to put a new location. Mr. Nadimi responded that their site selection process involves several factors including traffic counts, demographics, and whether the area can support a convenience store, but they do not do a survey.

Councilmember Joyner inquired if they sell alcohol. Mr. Nadimi responded that they sell beer and wine. Councilmember Joyner inquired if they sell nicotine products. Mr. Nadimi responded yes. Councilmember Joyner inquired if they sell cannabis products. Mr. Nadimi responded that if it is legal and allowed by law, then they do.

Mr. Frank stated that there was a community meeting component where everyone within a meaningful radius was invited to attend, participate, and share comments and this meeting was very lightly attended. He stated that the only folks that showed up were representatives of the owner of the BP gas station and representatives of the Glenn property. He stated that there were concerns in relation to traffic but have yet to hear from anyone to say that they would prefer not to see a Wawa in this location.

A lengthy question/answer and discussion period was held.

Mr. Frank stated that they did hear through Community Engagement some questions about traffic, and that our infrastructure in our City is experiencing the reality of a rapidly growing population. He stated that this use is not particularly intense when compared to the uses permitted by-right. He stated that an important component to this is that traffic engineers recognize that for this particular use, 75% of the people who frequent this store are going to be people who are driving by anyway.

Mr. Frank stated that this is consistent with the comprehensive plan, except for one noted area of inconsistency that was related to mixed use of the site. He stated that this is a 1.7 acre site and realistically, while mixed use is desirable, he encouraged Council to think about mixed use beyond the boundaries of any one-and-a-half-acre lot. He stated that it's not realistic to incorporate office, restaurant, and residential spaces on such a small lot by itself.

Mr. Frank noted that Staff recommended approval, and the Planning Commission recommended approval unanimously. He respectfully requests that Council recommend approval as well and asked that the conditions that came out of the Planning Commission be revised in the manor in which discussed tonight.

A lengthy question/answer and discussion period was held.

Mrs. Penelope Spicer-Sidbury, City Clerk, advised Council that she did not receive any additional comments.

There being no one present to speak in favor or opposition of the Ordinance, the Public Hearing was closed.

Councilmember Lyle made a motion to approve the Ordinance Amending the Official Zoning Maps of the City of Wilmington to Rezone Property Containing 1.76 Acres Located at 524 S. College Road from O&I, Office and Institutional District, to CB (CD), Community Business (Conditional District) for a Convenience Store and Fuel Station and read the consistency statement as follows:

> I move to approve the proposed amendment to rezone property located at 524 South College Road from O&I, Office and Institutional district to CB(CD), Community Business (Conditional District) for a convenience store and fuel station and find it to be consistent with the relevant policies in the Comprehensive Plan, based on the application materials, and the information provided at the public hearing and in the staff report, and to find Approval of the rezoning request is reasonable and in the public interest for the following reason(s): The proposed rezoning is compatible with the existing development pattern and will improve access to goods and services in the area.
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> The Amendment is to Remove Condition Number Seven (7), and Revise Condition Number Four (4) adding “specifically including but not limited to the connection between the southern end of the property and the University Drive public right-of-way”.

The motion was seconded by Councilmember Andrews and carried 5-2 (Mayor Pro-Tem Spears and Councilmember Joyner voted “No”). A second reading of the Ordinance was waived on motion of Councilmember Santaguida, seconded by Councilmember Andrews and carried unanimously.

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Public Hearing was held on **Ordinance Modifying an Existing RB (CD), Regional Business (Conditional District) Located at 1415 & 1417 42nd Street to Allow Additional Commercial Uses.**

Mr. Tucker Cherry, Planner, Planning and Development, gave the Staff report and reviewed the timeline of the application which began in May 2026. He stated that this site is zoned RB (CD) with the existing permitted uses to include a nightclub, personal services, and retail plant shop. He stated that the proposed modification is to allow additional commercial uses including a restaurant, food catering services, artisan food and beverage production, small-scale general retail, offices, studio, and recreational facilities. He stated that there are no changes to the site plan at this time and any future changes would have to be reviewed and approved by Staff. Mr. Tucker stated that this site is located on Trolly Stop Park at Capital Ford of Wilmington and the Audubon community.

Mr. Cherry stated that Staff has reviewed this application’s alignment with the Create Wilmington Comprehensive Plan and has found modest support for the application. He stated that key policies that support the conditional district modification promote compatible infill, commercial development, and a mix of uses that will improve access to goods, services, and amenities. He stated that no comments or testimony have been received in support or opposition to this modification at this time. Mr. Cherry gave a summary and stated that both Staff and the Planning Commission recommended approval.

Mr. Matt Hearn, applicant, stated that he is one of the owners at 1415 & 1417 South 42nd Street and they have been part of the 42nd Street Community since 2004. He stated that this request is to create flexibility for future tenants, to bring in other compatible uses without having to come back to Council each time they have a vacancy in one of their spots. He stated that they appreciated the Planning Commission's recommendation and respectfully ask for Council's support.

Mrs. Penelope Spicer-Sidbury, City Clerk, advised Council that she did receive additional comments. She stated that she received a comment from Mr. Drew Stevens, 4123 Park Avenue, stating that he is in full support of the business as he is a nearby homeowner who could not be happier with the prospect of a locally owned and operated food establishment. Mrs. Spicer-Sidbury also reported she received comments from Mr. Travis Beatty, 1414 42nd Street, that commented that he is in full support of the rezoning request as the current owners have been assets to the community, are excellent neighbors, and he trusts whatever they have planned for their new business. Also, Ms. Elaine Morrison, 1208 42nd Street, submitted comments that she supports this request as Reggie's has been around for a long time and the owners have reached out to inform the surrounding neighbors of their plans.

There being no further comments and no one was present to speak in favor or opposition, the Public Hearing was closed.

Mayor Pro-Tem Spears made a motion to approve the Ordinance Modifying an Existing RB (CD), Regional Business (Conditional District) Located at 1415 & 1417 42nd Street to Allow Additional Commercial Uses and read the consistency statement as follows:

> I move to approve the proposed amendment to rezone property located at 1415 & 1417 42nd Street to modify an existing RB (CD), Regional Business (Conditional District) to allow for additional commercial uses and find it to be consistent with the relevant policies in the Comprehensive Plan, based on the application materials, and the information provided at the public hearing and in the staff report, and to find Approval of the rezoning request is reasonable and in the public interest for the following reason(s): The proposed rezoning will allow for additional neighborhood-scale commercial uses that are compatible with the area.

The motion was seconded by Councilmember Joyner and carried unanimously. A second reading of the Ordinance was waived on motion of Councilmember Joyner, seconded by Mayor Pro-Tem Spears and carried unanimously.

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Ordinance Granting a Special Use Permit for a Private Recreation Facility Located at 4950 Holly Tree Road continued from Council's July 21, 2026 meeting was considered.

Mayor Saffo stated that Staff received a request from the applicant to withdraw this request. He inquired if this has been withdrawn. Mrs. Meredith Everhart informed Council that it has and there is no action required. She noted that it means the current terms of the Special Use Permit are still in place.

Councilmember Joyner inquired if the applicant had abandoned their application for a Special Use Permit. Mr. Brian Chambers responded that they have abandoned the modification request.

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ORDINANCES

Ordinance Appropriating Funds to the Fleet Maintenance/ Replacement Fund in the Amount of $1,004,295 for Purchase of a 2027 Pierce Enforcer Pumper Engine from Atlantic Emergency Solutions, Inc., of Manassas, VA, and **Resolution Authorizing the City Manager to Enter into an Agreement to Purchase a 2027 Pierce Enforcer Pumper Engine from Atlantic Emergency Solutions, Inc., of Manassas, VA, for $1,004,295** were considered.

Mr. Derek Mickler, Assistant Fire Chief, WFD, stated that the Fire Department has worked with both Fleet Maintenance and Finance for the last several years to have a very robust and organized Fleet Fund Replacement Plan that allows the department to plan ahead and try to stay on schedule. He stated that the dealer reached out to the department because they had an order that was cancelled and asked if they would like to take that spot in line to receive the order as early as May of next year.

Mayor Saffo inquired if the department would replace an old pumper or is this an additional pumper. Chief Mickler responded that this pumper would be replacing one. He stated that a 2006 model would be surplus, and the current one that this would be replacing is a 2016 which will go into reserve status. Mayor Saffo inquired as to where the pumper would be stationed. Chief Mickler responded that it would be stationed at Fire Station 8 on Eastwood Road.

Following further consideration, Councilmember Santaguida made a motion to approve the Ordinance Appropriating Funds to the Fleet Maintenance/ Replacement Fund in the Amount of $1,004,295 for Purchase of a 2027 Pierce Enforcer Pumper Engine from Atlantic Emergency Solutions, Inc., of Manassas, VA. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Andrews and carried unanimously. A second reading of the Ordinance was waived on motion of Councilmember Santaguida, seconded by Councilmember Joyner and carried unanimously.

Following further consideration, Councilmember Andrews made a motion to approve the Resolution Authorizing the City Manager to Enter into an Agreement to Purchase a 2027 Pierce Enforcer Pumper Engine from Atlantic Emergency Solutions, Inc., of Manassas, VA, for $1,004,295. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Santaguida and carried unanimously.

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Resolution Authorizing the City Manager to Accept the North Carolina Forest Service Urban and Community Forestry Financial Assistance Program Grant, and **Ordinance Making Supplemental Appropriation in the Amount of $1,475,982 for the North Carolina Forest Service Urban and Community Forestry Financial Assistance Program Grant** were considered.

Ms. Sally Thigpen, Assistant Director of Asset & Property Management, spoke to Council and stated that this award represents a major investment in Wilmington's Urban Forest and gives us the tools to accelerate our proactive management efforts. She stated that this is a no-match assistance package funded through the Federal Inflation Reduction Act and administered by the North Carolina Forest Service. She stated that this $1,475,982 grant is going to catapult our program forward, modernizing our data systems, strengthening our long-term planning, and enabling more sophisticated, proactive approaches to managing the Urban Forest.

Ms. Thigpen gave the scope of the project and stated that we don't currently have a complete inventory. She stated that this is important because the Urban Forest Master Plan identified the inventory as the top priority action because we cannot manage what we cannot measure. She stated that a street tree inventory counts every tree and every planting space using GPS and is performed by professional third-party International Society of Arboriculture (I.S.A.) certified arborists. She stated that this inventory gives us a baseline and informs all the other components of the grant.

Ms. Thigpen stated that the grant will fund the Alliance for Cape Fear Trees for two years for their volunteer planting and maintenance programs. She stated that ultimately this grant positions Wilmington to manage its urban forest more consistently across all neighborhoods, not just where the complaints are occurring.

A question/answer and discussion period was held.

Ms. Thigpen stated that the City maintains trees on all public property to include pruning, removals, stump grinding, planting, and emergency response. She stated that the program also coordinates with our partners and supports the Planning & Development Department, and assists Design & Construction and their team on our capital project planning.

Ms. Thigpen stated that the team consists of the Asset & Property Management Director, Robin Slade, nine tree trimmers, an arborist, and an assistant City arborist. She stated that two of the positions are required to have credentials of ISA certified arborist and ISA tree risk assessment qualifications. Ms. Thigpen stated that the team now has a landscape superintendent who is also a certified arborist. She stated that ISA certified arborists are the international gold standard for tree experts and it's one of the most respected credentials in the tree care industry because it demonstrates expertise, professionalism, and a commitment to best practices that the Community expects and deserves. She stated that this is a tough job that is not only physically demanding but is also highly technical with very little room for error.

Mr. Ben Misleh, Landscape Superintendent, stated that the Urban Forestry team services City trees as well as City properties. He stated that the process starts with a service request that is either proactive or reactive. He stated that proactive requests come from City Arborists and reactive requests come from the public. Mr. Misleh stated that the process consists of the site assessment, contacting the requestor regarding the work needed, and scheduling.

Mr. Misleh gave a brief overview of questions that are asked when performing a tree assessment and possible action steps that would be taken for best care of the tree. He stated that they have been working with our Communications team about our new process to notify the public regarding tree work.

Mr. Misleh stated that to aid in their assessments, they are looking to get a sonic tomograph which measures the inside of a tree which can help in decision-making to know what needs to happen with a particular tree.

Mr. Misleh stated that not all trees are created equally and the Laurel Oak and Live Oak look very similar to each other. He stated the differences of each and stated that Laurel Oaks grow faster, are more susceptible to disease, have weak wood that makes them vulnerable to storms, and they live less than 100 years. He stated that Live Oaks are slower growing, have better resistance to disease, the wood is stronger making them more resilient to storms, and they live hundreds of years. He stated that different species of trees have different characteristics and the City chooses the right tree for the right place.

Mr. Misleh stated that in 2025 there were 142 emergency calls that the Urban Forestry Team responded to, with six incidents of property damage in the last two years. He stated that the reason we do proactive maintenance is to prevent more of those incidents from happening. He stated that if a tree needs to be removed, after the stump goes, we do a replacement tree about six months later. He stated that replacing every tree is a general rule the team tries to follow during the appropriate planting season. Mr. Misleh stated that a service that is provided to residents is requesting a tree be planted and if we can put a tree there, we will. He stated that there were over 1,000 trees planted in 2025 so the City uses an annual tree contractor to help get those trees in the ground. He stated that in terms of tree selection we try to select the right tree for the right site. The species are selected based on site conditions, available space, utilities, long-term health, and Community members are invited to volunteer through the Alliance for Cape Fear Tree Stewards program. Mr. Misleh explained the difference between native versus non-native trees and that native trees are trees that are adapted to the Wilmington area in a natural environment. He stated that non-native trees are any trees not from this region whether elsewhere in the United States or the world. He stated that we also use cultivars and varieties which are bred for specific characteristics like drought tolerance for very dry sites. However, we do not plant invasive trees like a Bradford Pear or a Tree of Heaven as they seed prolifically and take over a natural area after they are established.

A lengthy question/answer and discussion period was held.

Mayor Saffo emphasized the importance of the education process to the public regarding the need to take down a tree and used the project on Wrightsville

Avenue and the forced annexation from the City of Wrightsville Beach, as an example. He stated that he hopes that before any more trees need to be cut down that the community and media is made aware so they can be a part of the community meeting to know why there is a need for that type of action to be taken.

Ms. Amy Willis, Communications Manager, Communications and Engagement Department, stated that it is the City's responsibility to care for our urban forestry and to keep residents informed and educated about the work. She stated that communications has been working closely with the Urban Forestry Team to build out a better process for informing residents and correcting misinformation. She stated that in the same way that we carefully select the types of trees and where we plant them, it's the same way that a communications plan is not a one-size-fits-all approach, but is customized as we go. Ms. Willis stated that the department has many communication tools to build awareness and create opportunities for residents to engage and learn more about our urban forestry initiatives.

Ms. Willis stated that a majority of our efforts are focused on the year-round approach like educational resources and things we can deploy to let the public understand our strategic approach for caring for the urban forest.

Ms. Willis stated that while we have a baseline for routine projects that we will share some sort of information, as the impact increases, we are adding in additional elements to our communication toolbox to create a comprehensive strategy to make sure that people are receiving the information. She stated that the internal collaboration piece of the equation becomes very important with regular meetings to get ahead of projects and build the customized communications plans as needed. Ms. Willis stated that the hope is the community will understand the strategy and see the work in action to remember the bigger picture of caring for our urban forest. She stated that one of our key education tools is our website which is our source of truth for most information pertaining to the City and where we point the public to go to stay informed. She stated that we have created a specific tree maintenance webpage which includes a variety of information that does also link to our Urban Forestry Master Plan. Ms. Willis stated that we are in the midst of building out the website to include some more resident focused content which would also include upcoming tree work and schedules, as well as an interactive project map. She stated that if there is one takeaway from a communications standpoint, it would be to watch the tree maintenance webpage as we continue to refine and adapt new methods and new initiatives.

A question/answer and discussion period was held.

Councilmember Santaguida inquired if we could get a recap of the engagement with the programs annually, an update on how they're working, and the impact they're having. Ms. Willis responded that is all information we track through website analytics and that could be something Council receives annually. Councilmember Santaguida shared a story with Staff regarding a resident contacting her about what they thought was a dangerous tree on their property. She stated that an arborist came out within two days to assess it, realized it was a danger, and had it quickly removed.

Councilmember Clinton-Quintana inquired as to how far in advance we put out the signage with the QR code for potential residents that have questions. Ms. Willis responded that it depends on the project and sometimes the landscape crew will put out doorhangers that has the code on it. She stated that they try to get the information to the public at least a week in advance.

Councilmember Lyle inquired if the interactive project maps are on the same map as the roadway projects or if they are on a separate map. Ms. Willis responded that it hasn't been built out yet, but she believes the idea is for it to be a separate map to be able to track where tree work is being done. Councilmember Lyle requested a link to the Facebook post about the grant so she could share it.

Councilmember Andrews stated that at the Ask the Arborist event she attended, we were very fortunate to have not only our City Arborist, but also Ms. Shepherd there from the Alliance for Cape Fear Trees. She stated that there was also a Duke Arborist on the same street at the same time, and as they collaborated she did not hear any disagreement among the experts.

Councilmember Joyner stated that he wanted to recognize the work being done and that it's a step in the right direction for sharing the positives with our community.

Following further consideration, Councilmember Santaguida made a motion to approve the Resolution Authorizing the City Manager to Accept the North Carolina Forest Service Urban and Community Forestry Financial Assistance Program Grant. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Andrews and carried unanimously.

Following further consideration, Councilmember Joyner made a motion to approve the Ordinance Making Supplemental Appropriation in the Amount of $1,475,982 for the North Carolina Forest Service Urban and Community Forestry Financial Assistance Program Grant. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Santaguida and carried unanimously. A second reading of the Ordinance was waived on motion of Councilmember Lyle, seconded by Councilmember Andrews and carried unanimously.

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RESOLUTIONS

Ms. Linda Painter, Director of Planning and Development, reported to Council that the environmental assessment for the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge Project was approved last week. She stated that the assessment is looking at two alternatives for the bridge with Alternative A being a moveable span with 135 feet of vertical clearance when raised and 65 feet of vertical clearance at all other times, which is the same as it is today. She stated that it would maintain the current on/off ramp locations on Wooster/Dawson at 3rd Street. Ms. Painter stated that Alternative B would be a fixed span, and in order to accommodate 135 ft. of vertical clearance above the river, that means the span gets longer. She stated that the on and off ramps for that fixed span bridge would shift to 5th Avenue under that proposal. She stated that both alternatives would include six 12-foot wide travel lanes, three in each direction, a median, and a multi-use path on the north side.

Ms. Painter stated that there are four principles in the Greater Downtown Plan that the City should advocate for regarding bridge design. Those principles include design that avoids destruction of historic homes and blocks to the maximum extent possible, considering design characteristics that would allow the bridge to maintain current intersections with South 3rd Street, incorporating aesthetic considerations that maintain the bridge's status as an iconic structure for Wilmington and the region, and making sure that walking, biking, and safe connections are part of the design.

Ms. Painter stated that in terms of Historic Preservation, the current bridge, as well as Downtown and a portion of property on the other side of the river, is in what's known as the Wilmington National Historic District. As we consider the potential impacts at the Staff level, we look at Alternative B that would be landing at 5th Avenue and recognize that this would have impact not only to structures in terms of actual demolition and having an overpass above it, but also those traffic changes that would need to occur. She stated that changing that main corridor to 5th Avenue is going to have an impact on that street and on those historic homes. Ms. Painter stated that the department really thinks there should be a larger study area and that we need to be contemplating the true overall impact of that Alternative B and that fixed span alternative on historic resources throughout the National Register District, not just the actual structures that would be within the right-of-way of the bridge.

Ms. Painter stated that programmatic agreements are used by a sponsoring agency when they cannot fully determine how a project may affect and adversely impact historic properties prior to approving a project. She stated that it has been determined that a programmatic agreement is the best pathway for the bridge replacement project. She stated that because there are two alternatives, and because of the toll versus no toll, they don't feel like they can fully identify the impacts on historic resources before an option is selected. She stated that this provides the function that once an option is selected, then that's how we're going to go about assessing the impacts and determining mitigation. Ms. Painter stated that the public comment period on the draft agreement is currently open and they are asking whether the City wants to be a concurring party, which means opening the door for us to participate as they're looking at the impacts and at mitigation measures.

Ms. Painter stated what the recommended comments are. She stated that one of them is that Council should request that FHWA consider extending the timeline for the large bridge funding grant to allow time for preparation of an EIS that evaluates all environmental impacts of the project. She stated that the second recommendation is to authorize the City Manager to sign the agreement as a concurring party and recommend that the draft programmatic agreement be revised. Ms. Painter advised Council of the recommendations.

A lengthy question/answer and discussion period was held.

Following further consideration, Councilmember Andrews made a motion to approve the Resolution Adopting Comments on the Proposed Programmatic Agreement Between the Federal Highway Administration, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, the North Carolina Department of Transportation, and the North Carolina Historic Preservation Office Regarding the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge Project**.** The motion was seconded by Councilmember Lyle and carried unanimously.

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ADDITIONAL ITEMS

Mrs. Everhart wished a happy birthday to Councilmember Andrews.

Ms. Hawke reported to Council that one of the things that has been missing from our website and for our Community is a centralized location if somebody needs to report an issue or put in a request for service. She stated that there is a place now on the website that residents can go to submit a request directly which will go to the correct Staff person. She stated that these will be requests that we can track on the back end and ensure they are followed up on, and this will be launching this week.

Councilmember Santaguida thanked Staff for the changes being made to one particular neighborhood in which a lot of complaints have been submitted. She stated that some of the improvements include increased traffic enforcement, changes to signage, improvements to roadways, and clearing out some of the trees and overgrown vegetation. She expressed her gratitude as the people in that neighborhood are already seeing a difference.

Councilmember Andrews stated that August is National Wellness Month and also National Dog Month, and August 7th is the last day to comment on our newest park off of Greenville Loop Road. She stated that we really want community input by taking the survey on the website.

Mayor Pro-Tem Spears wished a happy belated birthday to his nephew, Noah, a happy birthday to Councilmember Andrews, and a happy belated birthday to Councilmember Clinton-Quintana. Also, he congratulated Councilmember Clinton-Quintana for being elected to the North Carolina Black Elected Municipal Officials Board.

Councilmember Clinton-Quintana thanked Staff for all their hard work. She stated that every Friday she has a Rotary Club meeting that meets at Jungle Rapids and last Friday Marie stopped in to speak to them about Sweet Marie's Diner located in Hampstead. She stated that the diner has a program called Feed a Neighbor and for $8 you can feed someone who doesn't have a meal. She encouraged everyone to go to sweetmariesdiner.com to donate $8 for a meal for someone who cannot afford one.

Councilmember Lyle stated that she would like to congratulate Ashlyn Eisenhower who was in the audience earning her civic responsibility merit badge as a Girl Scout. She also thanked the Wilmington Police Department for arranging a ride-along for her to experience the Downtown Task Force on a Friday evening. She stated that she was impressed with the way our department works with the Sheriff's department to provide safety and teamwork, and to see Kraken, the drug canine, on the job.

Councilmember Joyner stated that since we hired Ms. Hawke, one of the main things that he's brought up at every one-on-one meeting has been about improving the experience at Live Oak Bank Pavilion regarding lawn seats. He stated that we received good news from Live Nation about projectors and screens and asked Ms. Hawke to elaborate as she could regarding that. Ms. Hawke stated that Live Nation has been receptive to the conversations, understanding that a good concert experience helps concertgoers return to future concerts. She stated that they reached out to all the acts that have been signed already to see if they are planning to have screens and if they aren't, to let them know that they want to make temporary screens available for them. She stated that we will be seeing more screens at future concerts either provided by the artist or provided by Live Nation, and there will be future conversations with future acts that have not yet signed contracts, to incorporate them into the agreements as well. She stated that the ultimate work will be to have permanent screens, and that is still underway.

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ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting adjourned at 9:33 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Penelope Spicer-Sidbury, CMC/MMC/NCCMC
City Clerk

THE ABOVE MINUTES ARE NOT A VERBATIM RECORD OF THE PROCEEDINGS. THE ENTIRE PROCEEDINGS ARE RECORDED ON TAPES 1, 2, AND 3, AND ARE INCLUDED AS PART OF THIS OFFICIAL RECORD.