



**TOWN OF ELM CITY  
REGULAR TOWN COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES  
January 13, 2026 at 6:30 PM  
Elm City Train Depot 101 Nash St.**

**In attendance:**

Mayor Gil Wheeler (hereinafter, Mayor Wheeler)  
Mayor Pro Tem Linda O'Boyle (hereinafter, Commissioner O'Boyle)  
Commissioner Julie Branstetter (hereinafter, Commissioner Branstetter)  
Commissioner Lin Jones (hereinafter, Commissioner Jones)  
Commissioner Gabe Merando (hereinafter, Commissioner Merando)  
Commissioner Bud Pittman (hereinafter, Commissioner Pittman)

**Also in Attendance:**

Melissa Younger (hereinafter, Melissa Younger)

**Absent:**

Town Attorney Slade Rand (hereinafter, Slade Rand)  
Zoning Officer Shawn Lucas (hereinafter, Zoning Officer Lucas)

**Call To Order:** Mayor Wheeler called the Regular Council Meeting to order on January 13, 2026 at 6:30pm.

**Invocation:** Mayor Wheeler

**Pledge Of Allegiance:** Mayor Wheeler

**Approval of Agenda:** Mayor Wheeler asked for a motion to approve the agenda for January 13, 2026, with the additions of a quote for the Town entrance sign (by Piggly Wiggly) and a quote for repairing the main path at Cedar Grove Cemetery. Commissioner O'Boyle made a motion to approve the agenda with the additions. Commissioner Pittman seconded the motion. **The motion passed unanimously.**

**Approval of Minutes:** Mayor Wheeler asked for a motion to approve the meeting minutes from the Regular Monthly Council Meeting on December 9, 2025 and the Special Called Meeting on December 16, 2025. Commissioner Jones made a motion to approve the meeting minutes from the Regular Council Meeting on December 9, 2025 and the Special Called Meeting on December 16, 2025. Commissioner Merando seconded the motion. **The motion passed unanimously.**

### **Public Hearings/Comments:**

- **Lawrence Russell** came to speak about 106 N. Railroad St and the current condemnation sign on the property. He stated that the owner of the building has secured the funds to rehabilitate the building and asked what needed to be done to move forward. Mayor Wheeler suggested that Mr. Russell could speak to the Wilson County Building Inspector, or to Shawn Lucas, Elm City's Zoning Officer.
- **Theresa Whitley** of 306 S Branch St. came to express her concern for the need of cameras around town. She offered to help with compiling quotes and to assist in fundraising, if necessary.

### **Presentations/Discussions:**

- **Commissioner Branstetter** presented an outline on a projection screen of what the new website would look like. Once completed, you will be able to get information on the Town Office, and contact lists, the EC Library, and events they provide, general announcements, and notices, the Train Depot and how to book and schedule a tour, pay your utility bill online, view past meeting and minutes, and much more. **Commissioner Branstetter** stated that the goal is to make it as easy as possible to access information.

### **Action Items:**

- **Town Website** – **Commissioner Branstetter** presented the Board with a packet, which included pricing as well as other information for the new website. **Commissioner O'Boyle** inquired about the present website and the cost. **Commissioner Branstetter** stated that she reached out to the former Town Administrator to no avail, and without access to passwords and other information needed, it is hard to tell what has been paid for previously. **Commissioner O'Boyle** made a motion to go with the recommended website, Wix Lite at an estimated cost of \$219-\$363 per year and to shut the current one down. **Commissioner Merando** seconded the motion. **The motion passed unanimously**
- **Email Hosting**- **Commissioner Branstetter** presented the Board with a packet of options for town emails addresses. She gave an overview of those options. The focus of creating new emails is for public record access as well as security. The emails being currently used were controlled by past administration and can no longer be overseen. **Commissioner Merando** made a motion to go with the recommendation of Zoho Mail Lite. **Commissioner Jones** seconded the motion. **The motion passed unanimously.**
- **Resolution Adoption** – **Mayor Wheeler** read the N.E.W Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan out loud. **Mayor Wheeler** asked for a motion to approve the resolution. **Commissioner Branstetter** made a motion to adopt the N.E.W Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan. **Commissioner O'Boyle** seconded the motion. **The motion passed unanimously.**
- **Cedar Grove Cemetery** – **Mayor Wheeler** presented the lowest quote received to repair the main path at Cedar Grove Cemetery, from Owen's Construction Company at the price of \$4,000. **Commissioner O'Boyle** made a motion to accept the lowest quote of \$4,000 from Owen's

Construction Company. **Commissioner Pittman** seconded the motion. **The motion passed unanimously.**

- **Town Welcome Sign** – **Mayor Wheeler** presented the lowest quote received to repair existing welcome sign (located by Piggly Wiggly) at the price of \$900 from Quality Welding and Repair Services. This quote is for repair, installation and painting. Mayor Wheeler asked for a motion to accept the quote. **Commissioner Jones** made a motion to accept the quote from Quality Welding and Repair Services in the amount of \$900 to repair, install and paint existing sign. **Commissioner Merando** seconded the motion. **The motion passed unanimously.**

**Old Business:** None

**New Business:** None

**Town Staff Reports:** None

**Mayor & Commissioner's Reports:**

- **Commissioner Merando** presented a packet to the Board with his report as well as pricing (not including tax and shipping costs) for items that are top priority. The Town's primary lagoon's ramp is deteriorating and there are no safety railings, making it a hazard to walk across. There are also no hand/eye washing stations for employees to use, instead they have been buying bags of ice to rinse themselves. He stated that most items listed in the packet could be reimbursed to the Town through wastewater grant monies. Public Works has been working hard, and several leaks have been fixed, with his assistance, including a main line leak at Fredrick Douglass, and leaks on Cobb Rd. and Tall Oak Ct. Other leaks are scheduled to be fixed once backhoe is operable. He also stated that equipment is in dire need of repair and regular maintenance moving forward.

**Commissioner O'Boyle** made a motion to approve purchasing the items proposed, which included: fire extinguishers & cabinets, safety barricades, eye washing stations, a ramp with safety rails, and a sump pump (knowing that tax and shipping costs would be added). **Commissioner Branstetter** seconded the motion. **The motion passed unanimously.**

- **Commissioner Branstetter** stated that she has been working on building the new website, as well as working with the library to get repairs done and scheduling repairs that need to be completed in the future. Signs that have been previously purchased need to be put out in Town, and an awning may need to be considered to keep water from leaking into windows. A mold testing kit has been purchased and sent out for results.
- **Commissioner Pittman** has spent some time at the Public Works Dept getting to know the staff and assisting with repairing water leaks. He stated that drains have been cleaned out, and while we have a ways to go, progress is being made.
- **Commissioner O'Boyle** has been looking into grant funding and projects that could be done with money we receive. One project would be to make the Town Office ADA accessible. The town

would not be allowed to apply for anything loan related, due to being behind on audits. She stated that the finance team is working hard to get us up to date, and hopefully, at least two audits will be completed by June of this year. She plans to meet with Susan Kellum of North Carolina Mainstreet and plans to attend a conference in New Bern in March; in hopes to gather information on grant funding for downtown development and other ideas. Commissioner O'Boyle also spoke about Meals on Wheels right here in town and urged people to get more information about the program and utilize it. She is also waiting for a call back from Don Davis' office to see how they can help us with getting direct patrol from the Sheriff Dept back in town.

**Mayor Wheeler's Report:**

1. \$80,715.29 in fines – I've held two meetings (or phone conferences) with DEQ's division of Water Resources. We have to address these fines and also have a plan to bring the wastewater system into compliance. They are concerned about spray field management, so we are going to look into this specifically first.
  - a) There are other issues with the wastewater system that have to be addressed, such as backup pumps and flow meters, and sludge removal at the primary lagoon. These are current priorities also.
  - b) We have close to \$2.5 million still there for sprayfield expansion. I will be scheduling a meeting with the NCDEQ on these funds and the path forward with that project, and whether these funds can be used elsewhere.
  - c) I'm going to be finding out if we can enter into SOC (Special Order of Conest) to see whether that would be of use to the Town of Elm City during this time of bringing the system into compliance.
  - d) We will be monitoring our spraying with our operators as well as the State.
2. I have met with the NCRWA, along with Commissioner Merando, twice this month about the high TTHM's at some locations and we are expanding other ways to remedy that, such as putting an aerator in the town water tank and engaging with the City of Wilson about helping to bring this into compliance more than what's being done currently. We have to provide a status report for the Division of Water Resources on all of our actions.
3. We have experienced a rash of equipment breakdowns, due to maintenance issues and we're working to improve this situation.
  - a) Town vehicles are in dire straits due to maintenance issues, and we are going to address this.
4. I'm in the process of getting bonded with the NC League of Municipalities
5. I have filed a claim with the NC League of Municipalities due to another incident in Cedar Grove Cemetery, we may look into putting up cameras due to the activity going on there.
6. Our CPA, along with our Finance Director, are working to bring our Budget to Actual report up to date for this fiscal year, so we can start making budget decisions and amendments. After that, they will turn their attention to catching up our audits. We're currently searching for an auditor as well.
7. I have met with Joe Durham of the NC League of Municipalities, along with Commissioner O'Boyle to explore opportunities available to us.
8. I have spoken to a grant writer from Fayetteville who is waiting for more information from other projects we might want to seek out grant money for. We need to come up with some shovel ready projects for sidewalks, recreation, and downtown.

9. We did receive the \$950,000 CDBG Housing Grant this past month from the North Carolina Department of Commerce.
10. I would like to put a clearance height sign on Pender St pertaining to the cemetery arch.

**Closed Session – Commissioner O’Boyle made a motion to go into closed session. Commissioner Pittman seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.**

**Commissioner O’Boyle made a motion to come out of closed session. Commissioner Merando seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.**

**Adjournment: Mayor Wheeler asked for a motion to adjourn the January 10, 2026 Regular Monthly Council Meeting. Commissioner O’Boyle made a motion to adjourn the January 10, 2026 Regular Monthly Council Meeting. Commissioner Merando seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. Meeting was adjourned at 8:00PM.**