

A Regular Meeting of the City Council of the City of Hickory was held in the Council Chamber of the Municipal Building on Tuesday, February 20, 2024 at 6:00 p.m., with the following members present:

Tony Wood	Hank Guess	
	Aldermen	David P. Zagaroli
Danny Seaver		Jill Patton

A quorum was present.

Also present were City Manager Warren Wood, Deputy City Manager Rodney Miller, Assistant City Manager Rick Beasley, Assistant City Manager Yaidee Fox, Deputy City Attorney Arnita Dula, City Attorney Timothy Swanson, Deputy City Clerk Crystal B. Mundy, and City Clerk Debbie D. Miller

- I. Mayor Guess called the meeting to order. All Council members were present except for Alderwoman Williams and Alderman Freeman
- II. Invocation by Administrative Director, Kyle Cerrito, Hickory Bible Church
- III. Pledge of Allegiance

Mayor Guess mentioned that two Council members were absent due to deaths in their families. He asked for them to be remembered in their thoughts and prayers. He recognized members of Troop 726 from the Church of Ascension who were present. He asked them to stand and introduce themselves and advise why they were attending the Council meeting.

The Scout Leader advised there were three scout members who were working on the communication merit badges and this was one of their requirements. Scout Mason Carlino introduced himself, he attended Hickory Christian Academy. Scouts Andrew Hines and Andrew Hoda introduced themselves. All three of the scouts were working on their communication merit badge.

- IV. Special Presentations
- V. Persons Requesting to Be Heard

- A. Ms. Daria Jackson, 133 17th Street SE, Apt. B, discussed the intersection at the lighter end of Springs Road where Shurtape was, at the new Dollar General. There was going to be an accident, it was going to be bad. Because you got people trying to get into the Dollar General, and then people were coming out of the little convenience store. You got people shooting out of Family Dollar's little parking lot. She almost saw an accident the other day. She advised it was something to be looked at. It was too much trying to come in and out right there.

VI. Approval of Minutes

- A. Regular Meeting of February 6, 2024.

Alderman Seaver moved, seconded by Alderwoman Patton that the Minutes of February 6, 2024 be approved. The motion carried unanimously.

- VII. Reaffirmation and Ratification of Second Readings. Votes recorded on first reading will be reaffirmed and ratified on second reading unless Council Members change their votes and so indicate on second reading.

Alderwoman Patton moved, seconded by Alderman Seaver that the following be reaffirmed and ratified on second reading. The motion carried unanimously.

- A. Approval to Implement an All-Way Stop at the Intersection of 3rd Avenue SE and 1st Street SE. (First Reading Vote: Unanimous)
- B. Consideration of Rezoning Petition 24-02 requested by Gregory Williams for 29.59 acres owned by GTC Investment Properties, LLC, Located on Highway 127 South between Moss Farm Road, and Nello Drive. (First Reading Vote: Unanimous)

- VIII. Consent Agenda: All items below will be enacted by vote of City Council. There will be no separate discussion of these items unless a Council Member so requests. In which event, the item will be removed from the Consent Agenda and considered under Item IX.

Alderwoman Patton moved, seconded by Alderman Seaver approval of the Consent Agenda. The motion carried unanimously.

- A. Approved the Citizens' Advisory Committee's Recommendation for Assistance through the City of Hickory's Housing Programs.

The mission of the City of Hickory's Community Development Division is to preserve the existing housing base, enhance ownership opportunities for all of its citizens to obtain decent housing, and provide a quality environment conducive to the safe and healthy growth of its citizenry. The seven-member Citizens' Advisory Committee was formed to

provide for citizen input in the facilitation of the City's CDBG program, as well as any other similar community enhancement funding the City may receive. The following requests were considered by the Citizens' Advisory Committee at their regular meeting on February 1, 2024:

- Rebecca Abernathy located at 823 2nd Street SE, Hickory was recommended for approval of up to \$12,000 under the City of Hickory's 2023 Urgent Repair Program.
- Gloria Gatrall located at 324 17th Avenue NE, Hickory was recommended for approval of up to \$12,000 under the City of Hickory's 2023 Urgent Repair Program.
- Coleen Derr located at 840 2nd Street SE, Hickory was recommended for approval of up to \$12,000 under the City of Hickory's 2023 Urgent Repair Program.

The Citizens' Advisory Committee recommends approval of the aforementioned requests for assistance through the City of Hickory's housing assistance programs.

- B. Approved on First Reading the Implementation of a Speed Limit Reduction to 25 mph along 5th Avenue NE between Main Avenue NE and 5th Avenue Place NE, and along 4th Street NE between 5th Avenue NE and 5th Avenue Place NE, and along 7th Street NE between 5th Avenue NE and 3rd Avenue NE.

Staff request Council's approval to implement a speed limit reduction to 25mph along 5th Avenue NE between Main Avenue NE and 5th Avenue Place NE, and along 4th Street NE between 5th Avenue NE and 5th Avenue Place NE, and along 7th Street NE between 5th Avenue NE and 3rd Avenue NE. City Council implemented a Neighborhood Traffic Calming Program that enables citizens to request measures to improve traffic safety in the area where they own property. Citizens are required to submit an application to request measures and provide a reason for the request. Then, the City performs analysis to determine what, if any, measures are warranted. Citizens requesting traffic calming measures are required to complete and submit a petition with 75% of properties in favor of implementation for the request to move forward. Traffic Division staff received the completed petition from property owners along 5th Avenue NE with regards to the Neighborhood Traffic Calming Program and have found the property owners to be in compliance with the guidelines. The petition does qualify for a speed limit reduction to 25mph. Thirty-one properties were included in the petition and twenty-four properties signed in favor of implementation. This represents at least 75% approval, which meets the requirement. The necessary sign modifications along the roadway can be performed as a normal part of the Traffic Division's signs/markings shop operations. Staff recommends Council's approval to implement a speed limit reduction to 25mph along 5th Avenue NE between Main Avenue NE and 5th Avenue Place NE, and along 4th Street NE between 5th Avenue NE and 5th Avenue Place NE, and along 7th Street NE between 5th Avenue NE and 3rd Avenue NE.

ORDINANCE NO. 24-07

AN ORDINANCE OF THE HICKORY CITY COUNCIL
AMENDING THE TRAFFIC ORDINANCE AUTHORIZED IN THE
HICKORY CODE OF ORDINANCES – ARTICLE III, SECTION 18-81

WHEREAS, Article III of the City of Hickory Code of Ordinances be and is hereby amended through the modification of the official maps authorized therein as follows, to wit:

Amend the Traffic Ordinance by reducing the speed limit along 5th Avenue NE between Main Avenue NE and 5th Avenue Place NE, and along 4th Street NE between 5th Avenue NE and 5th Avenue Place NE, and along 7th Street NE between 5th Avenue NE and 3rd Avenue NE to 25 mph.

All ordinances or provisions of the Hickory City Code of Ordinances which are not in conformance with the provisions of the Amendment occurring herein are repealed as of the effective date of this Ordinance.

This Ordinance shall become effective immediately upon adoption.

- C. Approved the Mutual Termination and Release Agreement with SOMA.

Staff requests approval of the Mutual Termination and Release Agreement between The City of Hickory and SOMA. In October of 2021, the Hickory Police Department entered into an agreement with SOMA to provide a new records management system and computer aided dispatch system to replace the system used currently. After discussions with SOMA, all parties mutually agreed to terminate the contract. The Mutual Termination and Release Agreement is the result of that decision. Staff recommends approval of the Mutual Termination and Release Agreement with SOMA.

- D. Approved the Annual Contract Renewal for Auditing Services with Martin Starnes & Associates for Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2024.

Staff requests approval of the annual contract renewal for auditing services with Martin Starnes & Associates for fiscal year ending June 30, 2024. The City of Hickory has utilized the services of Martin Starnes & Associates for the past thirteen years with excellent results. Since fiscal year 2012, Martin Starnes & Associates has also been contracted to produce the City’s Annual Comprehensive Financial Report. The North Carolina Local Government Commission (LGC) does not enforce formal bid requirements for auditing services due to the professional relationship formed between auditors and clients over an extended work history. The Secretary of the Local Government Commission approves all local government contracts and invoices for audit or audit-related work. The LGC requires approval of the auditing contract on an annual basis. In 2022, the City of Hickory approved a three-year renewal contract with Martin Starnes & Associates. The annual renewal ending June 30, 2024 will be the final year of this contract with audit fees of \$81,280. Fees include annual financial audit fee, financial statement preparation, Annual Financial Information Report (AFIR), and major program reviews. Staff recommends approval to renew the annual auditing contract with Martin Starnes & Associates for fiscal year ending June 30, 2024.

- E. Approved on First Reading Revised Budget Revision Number 14.

**ORDINANCE NO. 24-05
REVISED BUDGET REVISION NUMBER 14**

BE IT ORDAINED by the Governing Board of the City of Hickory that, pursuant to N.C. General Statutes 159.15 and 159.13.2, the following revision be made to the annual budget ordinance for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2024, and for the duration of the Project Ordinance noted herein.

SECTION 1. To amend the General Fund within the FY 2023-24 Budget Ordinance, the expenditures shall be amended as follows:

FUNCTIONAL AREA	INCREASE	DECREASE
General Government	6,750	385,000
Other Financing Uses	1,490,660	-
Public Safety	300	-
Economic & Community Development	30	-
Transportation	2,340	-
Culture & Recreation	12,000	-
TOTAL	1,512,080	385,000

To provide funding for the above, the General Fund revenues will be amended as follows:

FUNCTIONAL AREA	INCREASE	DECREASE
Sales and Services	11,800	-
Miscellaneous	9,620	-
Other Financing Sources	1,105,660	-
TOTAL	1,127,080	-

SECTION 2. To amend the Solid Waste Fund revenues within the FY 2023-24 Budget Ordinance, the expenditures shall be amended as follows:

FUNCTIONAL AREA	INCREASE	DECREASE
Environmental Protection	385,000	-
TOTAL	385,000	-

To provide funding for the above, Solid Waste Fund revenues will be amended as follows:

FUNCTIONAL AREA	INCREASE	DECREASE
Other Financing Sources	385,000	-
TOTAL	385,000	-

SECTION 3. To amend the Water/Sewer Fund revenues within the FY 2023-24 Budget Ordinance, the expenditures shall be amended as follows:

FUNCTIONAL AREA	INCREASE	DECREASE
Other Financing Uses	1,981,517	-
TOTAL	1,981,517	-

To provide funding for the above, Water/Sewer Fund revenues will be amended as follows:

FUNCTIONAL AREA	INCREASE	DECREASE
Other Financing Sources	1,981,517	-
TOTAL	1,981,517	-

SECTION 4. To amend the City Walk (#B1C001) Capital Project Ordinance, the expenditures shall be amended as follows:

FUNCTIONAL AREA	INCREASE	DECREASE
General Capital Projects	86,627	339,507
TOTAL	86,627	339,507

To provide funding for the above, City Walk (#B1C001) revenues will be amended as follows:

FUNCTIONAL AREA	INCREASE	DECREASE
Investment Earnings	86,627	86,627
Other Financing Sources	-	252,880
TOTAL	86,627	339,507

SECTION 5. To amend the Union Square/Streetscapes (#B1C002) Capital Project Ordinance, the expenditures shall be amended as follows:

FUNCTIONAL AREA	INCREASE	DECREASE
General Capital Projects	-	62,613
TOTAL	-	62,613

To provide funding for the above, Union Square/Streetscapes (#B1C002) revenues will be amended as follows:

FUNCTIONAL AREA	INCREASE	DECREASE
Other Financing Sources	-	62,613
TOTAL	-	62,613

SECTION 6. To amend the Downtown Camera Systems (#BLC003) Capital Project Ordinance, the expenditures shall be amended as follows:

FUNCTIONAL AREA	INCREASE	DECREASE
General Capital Projects	221	14,621
TOTAL	221	14,621

To provide funding for the above, Downtown Camera Systems (#BLC003) revenues will be amended as follows:

FUNCTIONAL AREA	INCREASE	DECREASE
Other Financing Sources	-	14,400
Investment Earnings	221	221
TOTAL	221	14,621

SECTION 7. To amend the Historic Ridgeview Walk (#B1L001) Capital Project Ordinance, the expenditures shall be amended as follows:

FUNCTIONAL AREA	INCREASE	DECREASE
General Capital Projects	22,907	22,907
TOTAL	22,907	22,907

To provide funding for the above, the Historic Ridgeview Walk (#B1L001) revenues will be amended as follows:

FUNCTIONAL AREA	INCREASE	DECREASE
Investment Earnings	22,907	22,907
TOTAL	22,907	22,907

SECTION 8. To amend the Book Walk South (#B1L002) Capital Project Ordinance, the expenditures shall be amended as follows:

FUNCTIONAL AREA	INCREASE	DECREASE
General Capital Projects	37,256	37,256
TOTAL	37,256	37,256

To provide funding for the above, the Book Walk South (#B1L002) revenues will be amended as follows:

FUNCTIONAL AREA	INCREASE	DECREASE
Investment Earnings	37,256	37,256
TOTAL	37,256	37,256

SECTION 9. To amend the Riverwalk (#B1R001) Capital Project Ordinance, the expenditures shall be amended as follows:

FUNCTIONAL AREA	INCREASE	DECREASE
General Capital Projects	144,068	144,068
TOTAL	144,068	144,068

To provide funding for the above, the Riverwalk (#B1R001) revenues will be amended as follows:

FUNCTIONAL AREA	INCREASE	DECREASE
Investment Earnings	144,068	144,068
TOTAL	144,068	144,068

SECTION 10. To amend the Aviation Walk (#B1N001) Capital Project Ordinance, the expenditures shall be amended as follows:

FUNCTIONAL AREA	INCREASE	DECREASE
General Capital Projects	24,837	24,837
TOTAL	24,837	24,837

To provide funding for the above, the Aviation Walk (#B1N001) revenues will be amended as follows:

FUNCTIONAL AREA	INCREASE	DECREASE
Investment Earnings	24,837	24,837
TOTAL	24,837	24,837

SECTION 11. To amend the Trivium Corporate Center (#B1B001) Capital Project Ordinance, the expenditures shall be amended as follows:

FUNCTIONAL AREA	INCREASE	DECREASE
General Capital Projects	98,877	98,877
TOTAL	98,877	98,877

To provide funding for the above, the Trivium Corporate Center (#B1B001) revenues will be amended as follows:

FUNCTIONAL AREA	INCREASE	DECREASE
Investment Earnings	98,877	98,877
TOTAL	98,877	98,877

SECTION 12. To amend the Trivium Corporate Center Project Enzyme (#B1B003) Capital Project Ordinance, the expenditures shall be amended as follows:

FUNCTIONAL AREA	INCREASE	DECREASE
General Capital Projects	6,663	6,663
TOTAL	6,663	6,663

To provide funding for the above, the Trivium Corporate Center Project Enzyme (#B1B003) revenues will be amended as follows:

FUNCTIONAL AREA	INCREASE	DECREASE
Investment Earnings	6,663	6,663
TOTAL	6,663	6,663

SECTION 13. To amend the Trivium Corporate Center East (#B1B004) Capital Project Ordinance, the expenditures shall be amended as follows:

FUNCTIONAL AREA	INCREASE	DECREASE
General Capital Projects	24,414	4,414
TOTAL	24,414	4,414

To provide funding for the above, the Trivium Corporate Center East (#B1B004) revenues will be amended as follows:

FUNCTIONAL AREA	INCREASE	DECREASE
Investment Earnings	4,414	4,414
Other Financing Sources	10,000	-
Restricted Intergovernmental	10,000	-
TOTAL	24,414	4,414

SECTION 14. To amend the Trivium Court Extension (#B1B005) Capital Project Ordinance, the expenditures shall be amended as follows:

FUNCTIONAL AREA	INCREASE	DECREASE
General Capital Projects	2,533	2,533
TOTAL	2,533	2,533

To provide funding for the above, the Trivium Court Extension (#B1B005) revenues will be amended as follows:

FUNCTIONAL AREA	INCREASE	DECREASE
Investment Earnings	2,533	2,533
TOTAL	2,533	2,533

SECTION 15. To amend the One North Center (#700013) Capital Project Ordinance, the expenditures shall be amended as follows:

FUNCTIONAL AREA	INCREASE	DECREASE
General Government	261,228	261,228
TOTAL	261,228	261,228

To provide funding for the above, the One North Center (#700013) revenues will be amended as follows:

FUNCTIONAL AREA	INCREASE	DECREASE
Miscellaneous	238,341	238,341
Investment Earnings	22,887	22,887
TOTAL	261,228	261,228

SECTION 16. To amend the Old Lenoir Road (#B1O001) Capital Project Ordinance, the expenditures shall be amended as follows:

FUNCTIONAL AREA	INCREASE	DECREASE
General Capital Projects	10,607,465	-
TOTAL	10,607,465	-

To provide funding for the above, the Old Lenoir Road (#B1O001) revenues will be amended as follows:

FUNCTIONAL AREA	INCREASE	DECREASE
Miscellaneous	1,179,482	-
Restricted Intergovernmental	7,000,000	-
Other Financing Sources	2,343,503	-
Investment Earnings	84,480	-
TOTAL	10,607,465	-

SECTION 17. To amend the 9th Street Streetscape EB-5977 (#B1O002) Capital Project Ordinance, the expenditures shall be amended as follows:

FUNCTIONAL AREA	INCREASE	DECREASE
General Capital Projects	1,209,651	-
TOTAL	1,209,651	-

To provide funding for the above, the 9th Street Streetscape EB-5977 (#B1O002) revenues will be amended as follows:

FUNCTIONAL AREA	INCREASE	DECREASE
Other Financing Sources	537,958	-
Miscellaneous	220,403	-
Investments Earnings	451,290	-
TOTAL	1,209,651	-

SECTION 18. To amend the ARC Grant – 9th Av Dr NW (#546016) Capital Project Ordinance, the expenditures shall be amended as follows:

FUNCTIONAL AREA	INCREASE	DECREASE
Environmental Protection	-	60,000
General Capital Projects	1,339,148	41,122
TOTAL	1,339,148	101,122

To provide funding for the above, the ARC Grant – 9th Av Dr NW (#546016) revenues will be amended as follows:

FUNCTIONAL AREA	INCREASE	DECREASE
Miscellaneous	1,104,597	-
Other Financing Sources	133,429	-
TOTAL	1,238,026	-

SECTION 19. Copies of the budget revision shall be furnished to the Clerk of the Governing Board, and to the City Manager (Budget Officer) and the Finance Officer for their direction.

F. Approved on First Reading Budget Revision Number 15.

ORDINANCE NO. 24-08
BUDGET REVISION NUMBER 15

BE IT ORDAINED by the Governing Board of the City of Hickory that, pursuant to N.C. General Statutes 159.15 and 159.13.2, the following revision be made to the annual budget ordinance for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2024, and for the duration of the Project Ordinance noted herein.

SECTION 1. To amend the General Fund within the FY 2023-24 Budget Ordinance, the expenditures shall be amended as follows:

FUNCTIONAL AREA	INCREASE	DECREASE
Public Safety	27,428	-
Culture & Recreation	63,010	-
TOTAL	90,468	-

To provide funding for the above, the General Fund revenues will be amended as follows:

FUNCTIONAL AREA	INCREASE	DECREASE
Miscellaneous	13,549	-
Sales and Services	7,875	-
Restricted Intergovernmental	54,835	-
Other Financing Sources	14,179	-
TOTAL	90,438	-

SECTION 2. To amend the Water/Sewer Fund within the FY 2023-24 Budget Ordinance the expenditures shall be amended as follows:

FUNCTIONAL AREA	INCREASE	DECREASE
Environmental Protection	-	830,490
Other Financing Uses	830,490	-
TOTAL	830,490	830,490

SECTION 3. To amend the Airport Fund within the FY 2023-24 Budget Ordinance the expenditures shall be amended as follows:

FUNCTIONAL AREA	INCREASE	DECREASE
Transportation	950	-
TOTAL	950	-

To provide funding for the above, the Airport Fund revenues will be amended as follows:

FUNCTIONAL AREA	INCREASE	DECREASE
Miscellaneous	950	-
TOTAL	950	-

SECTION 4. To amend the City Walk (#B1C001) Capital Project Ordinance the expenditures shall be amended as follows:

FUNCTIONAL AREA	INCREASE	DECREASE
General Capital Projects	600,000	600,000
TOTAL	600,000	600,000

To provide funding for the above, the City Walk (#B1C001) revenues will be amended as follows:

FUNCTIONAL AREA	INCREASE	DECREASE
Other Financing Sources	-	600,000

TOTAL	-	600,000
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SECTION 5. To amend the Historic Ridgeview Walk (#B1L001) Capital Project Ordinance the expenditures shall be amended as follows:

FUNCTIONAL AREA	INCREASE	DECREASE
General Capital Projects	752,882	752,882
TOTAL	752,882	752,882

To provide funding for the above, the Historic Ridgeview Walk (#B1L001) revenues will be amended as follows:

FUNCTIONAL AREA	INCREASE	DECREASE
Other Financing Sources	600,000	-
TOTAL	600,000	-

SECTION 6. To amend the Book Walk South (#B1L002) Capital Project Ordinance the expenditures shall be amended as follows:

FUNCTIONAL AREA	INCREASE	DECREASE
General Capital Projects	1,447,118	1,447,118
TOTAL	1,447,118	1,447,118

To provide funding for the above, the Book Walk South (#B1L002) revenues will be amended as follows:

FUNCTIONAL AREA	INCREASE	DECREASE
Restricted Intergovernmental	1,600,000	1,600,000
TOTAL	1,600,000	1,600,000

SECTION 7. To establish the AMI Radio Read Meters (#803313) Capital Project Ordinance the expenditures shall be amended as follows:

FUNCTIONAL AREA	INCREASE	DECREASE
Water and Sewer Capital Projects	830,490	-
TOTAL	830,490	-

To provide funding for the above, the AMI Radio Read Meters (#803313) revenues will be amended as follows:

FUNCTIONAL AREA	INCREASE	DECREASE
Other Financing Sources	830,490	-
TOTAL	830,490	-

SECTION 8. Copies of the budget revision shall be furnished to the Clerk of the Governing Board, and to the City Manager (Budget Officer) and the Finance Officer for their direction.

IX. Items Removed from Consent Agenda – None

X. Informational Item

XI. New Business:

A. Public Hearings

B. Departmental Reports:

1. Update on the Expansion and Renovations at Hickory Metro Convention Center Expansion and Visit Hickory – Presentation by CEO Mandy Hildebrand.

Hickory Metro Convention Center CEO Mandy Hildebrand will give a construction update on the Hickory Metro Convention Center which includes news on the first booked event in the sports venue/exhibit hall space. She will also give an update on some recent marketing successes which includes a story about Hickory in the 2024 Visit North Carolina Destination Guide.

City Manager Warren Wood asked Hickory Metro Convention Center CEO Mandy Hildebrand to the podium to update Council on the expansion and renovations at the Hickory Metro Convention Center.

Hickory Metro Convention Center CEO Mandy Hildebrand gave a PowerPoint presentation. She commented it was always fun to be in this Chamber and it looked beautiful and was updated tremendously well. She also introduced in

attendance Ms. Sarah Davis Jones, who was their Director of Sales and Marketing, but also was known with a lot of other community hats that she wore.

CEO Mandy Hildebrand advised this was an update, it had been nine months since they broke ground when they were all there with hard hats on. That seemed like yesterday, and it had been five months to the day since she came and gave a presentation about where they were. That was when they had videos and they talked about how excited they were about concrete and other things like that. They had moved quite forward since then. She focused on three things to give Council an update, as City Manager Warren Wood said, on the renovation and the addition. She would also give an update on the Convention Center updates. She thought they would be pleasantly surprised when she gave them an update on the events that were happening there and their numbers. She would update them on some marketing successes they had that she thought they would all be excited about as well.

CEO Mandy Hildebrand referred to the PowerPoint and displayed pictures which had been taken Thursday of last week. She noted there had already been a lot of progress since then. She advised the photos were of the Hickory Hallway meeting room. She explained the location of the meeting room area. In the original part of the building, they had this big hallway which could also be used as a hallway where vendors set up. There was some underutilized space that had some natural light. She referred to the photo and advised this was an additional meeting room. It would probably seat anywhere between 16 and 26 people, depending on how it was setup. It was going to be a great small room that was very much needed. It would have especially been great today as they had the North Carolina Cattlemen association there, and that was a space that they would definitely be able to use in the future. She referred to the PowerPoint and advised that this was a display screen which would be located where you come into the Convention Center. They wanted to match the updated part of the Catawba space and the expansion space, and to look all as one group. They were going to add some ship lap, and the carpenter was coming in to put ship lap on as they were leaving the building this evening to get that ready to go so, they would have their display screen. They had until Thursday at lunchtime to do that. That was pretty exciting there.

CEO Mandy Hildebrand referred to the PowerPoint and displayed pictures of the Catawba meeting room. That was the room they were in the day of the groundbreaking. That was the addition in 2005 because the City of Hickory wanted to host the North Carolina League of Municipalities. Since they came in 2005, they had been three times, and they wanted to come again in a couple of years. That was how much that organization enjoyed coming to the community. In this space she pointed out the lighting grids. What was really going to be beneficial in that space was the ceilings would not be so tall, and also the lighting would be much better, and the sound would be much better. She referred to the color scheme of the paint and the molding. It looked really well and was coming along. She displayed a photo of the Catawba meeting rooms. There was going to be two meeting rooms. One of the things Ms. Sarah Davis talked to meeting planners about on a routine basis was they need meeting spaces, and they want them already set up a lot of times with the great technology where you plug in and go. That was going to happen in those two meeting rooms as well. She noted it was going to be much more upscale and the carpet was going to be beautiful. The lighting was going to work really well in there.

CEO Mandy Hildebrand referred to the PowerPoint and displayed pictures of the Catawba Hallway restrooms. They were really excited about these restrooms. She noted how beautiful and stunning they were with the marble work and the tile. She mentioned the people that had been working on this restroom, they took it as their own. She advised because of the expansion, they had to add actually 18 more women restroom stalls and nine men stalls. That was the number from the code. They would have plenty of restrooms to service the Catawba section as well as the new expansion. She referred to the PowerPoint and displayed a photo of a skylight and the hallway. She explained the location of the area. She advised this was one of two skylights that were going to be on that hallway. That was the northwest entrance. She mentioned, as they were leaving, all the windows were being put up in the Furniture Hall of Fame. This would be where they were going to have a lot of different receptions. A lot of things had happened in the past three days. She referred to the PowerPoint and compared the Grand Canyon to this expansion space. It was 35,000 square feet and had 30-foot ceilings. It was going to have twelve pickleball courts, four basketball courts, and eight volleyball courts. As they were leaving, Ms. Jones was also talking to someone about future volleyball tournaments that could come in the future. This space was really going to be a busy space. The first event had been booked for that space in 2025, a cheer group from the Midwest. They were excited about that, a whole weekend to bring lots of cheer groups here. Not only could it be all those different sports, but it could also

be about anything. Expo space as well. She mentioned on the photo the basketball arms coming down for basketball, so they would not actually have to set up basketball. They just hit a button and it comes down out of the ceiling as well as volleyball.

Alderman Seaver asked if they could set up for like one big basketball game.

CEO Mandy Hildebrand advised it was four courts. They would not have a lot of bleachers. It was not going to be like CVCC. That was what she meant. Well, it could be just one, like the championship game. They do not have the bleachers like CVCC, but they were going to get bleachers. She pointed out the multipurpose space, also like a pre-function space. The late Mr. Leroy Lail, who they all knew and honored, and as they remembered him as he passed away a couple weeks ago, this was a space he talked about for years. In this space, he and his family wanted to really focus on the walls and tell the story of the community, especially the furniture part. They were working on how that was going to end up. But the whole purpose of that space was it was going to be used for a lot of other things as well. Free function space. Like she mentioned, an association may have a President's reception in there before they go into the exhibit hall. She mentioned the space had a beautiful window that the last pane went in today. She suggested they come by and see it. It was pretty remarkable. She noted this space could be shut up on its own side. The door locked so it could have its own event in there as well. There was restrooms in that area, catering area, and kitchen, another meeting room, which was great, and a door that goes to an outdoor terrace. They had not had an outdoor terrace yet so that would be a nice addition to the Convention Center.

Mayor Guess asked how many folks the outdoor terrace would accommodate.

CEO Mandy Hildebrand estimated a dozen to 20. It was not a huge patio, but it was a way where someone could get nice fresh air. And it was really close to the courtyard as well. She referred to the PowerPoint and displayed a photo of grading taking place last week and the installation of curb and guttering. She noted if they drove by today that it looked completely different and that was three or four days ago. She asked for questions.

City Manager Warren Wood advised the parking on the right was along 13th Avenue. He mentioned they were adding 60 some odd spaces in there to try to accommodate some of what they were losing with the expansion.

Mayor Guess commented that was a space where people were parking anyway. He was glad to see that they were utilizing that in an orderly fashion.

CEO Mandy Hildebrand mentioned that they were going to bring some pictures. She knew that people already parked there anyway. This was in addition to their project. They were thankful for Steve Miller and Caroline Kone, and Assistant City Manager Rick Beasley who had been giving her updates each week about this project, and like Mr. Wood said, 60 additional spots. Also, they were looking at other possible spots in that area that could be parallel parking, and other parking opportunities they may have in the future, because they were going to need additional parking. That was going to be extremely beneficial. It should be ready, she thought by Easter, the end of March. She explained a few other things that they were doing in the original part of their building. It was a positive problem to have when you have so many people coming. Right? What was the solution? When a lot of people move into shows, move out of shows, it was a lot of traffic congestion in the back. They were going to add a loading zone, again, getting help from Caroline Kone, Steve Miller, and Assistant City Manager Rick Beasley helping with this company to get an additional loading zone. It was going to be beneficial for their customers that were coming in and moving in.

CEO Mandy Hildebrand advised at their board meeting about two weeks ago, the TDA (Tourism Development Authority), had been talking about this. They needed the money to obviously pay off the debt in 20 years or less, hopefully 15, but they would pay off that debt. In their fund balance, they had been working on a budget that was going to help them do things in addition. This was in the TDA, it was about \$2 million in addition to what they were doing. They were going to redo the entire audio visual on the whole building. In the original building the audio was getting a little worn, 1997, that had been a while. And then also adding on to the new space, too. They actually got some bids and were working with the same company that made this space as well. They were going to redo the entire building so they could hear things better. They would not hear the air conditioner coming on in the middle of an event. They would have more speakers and it was going to be excellent. It was going to be state of the art and was going to be one of the best places as well.

Alderman Wood commented in terms of budget, he thought there were some opportunities to make a more impactful first impression when you arrive at the Convention Center in terms of landscaping and how it looks outside. He asked what the plans were there.

CEO Mandy Hildebrand advised they were working on landscape. That was part of their additional project as well. Update their landscaping. Fortunately, they were working with a great company, but they also have someone on staff who also developed all the landscaping at the SALT Block as well. They were working on different plans to have a more colorful look and in the fall season as well. They were also going to update around the parking deck as it needs a little freshening up.

Alderman Wood commented on the east side, when you go back to the upper parking deck, along that road, there was a lot of opportunity.

CEO Mandy Hildebrand agreed. They had talked about the area they owned beside the CarMax where they have a parking lot, and then trying to figure out a way they could add some wildflowers back there or something. That was one of their projects as well.

Mayor Guess asked if she knew if there was any discussion or conversation with DOT (Department of Transportation) related to the fence between the interstate and the new 60 spaces. He knew some of that fence looked kind of dilapidated. He did not know if there had been any conversations with DOT about maybe fixing some pieces of that fence or making it sturdier looking.

CEO Mandy Hildebrand commented they would work on that with Mr. Beasley on connecting with the NCDOT. That would be a good safety net too.

Mayor Guess commented that fence needs some attention as well.

CEO Mandy Hildebrand commented on other things they were going to update. She did not have pictures. Once they were doing the work in this building, and they were so thankful for the opportunity to do the expansion and the renovation, but now they need the old buildings to match. The board approved replacing a lot of the carpet, update the painting in the Hickory section, and the Conover rooms to make it all match and work well together. It was going to be a brand-new building, basically. In addition, they were replacing the original roof on the building and were happy to do that. Now their job was to keep it full, get people in the hotels, build a building, which she was confident that their team could do that. And as they added to their team, they were going to do that. They had to make these changes for them to keep bringing people here.

City Manager Warren Wood mentioned they have two more hotels teed up to come forward, one by Bob Evans and one near the Convention Center. Everything that she just went over was funded through the hotel/motel occupancy tax, which was a 6% tax on every dollar spent in a hotel or motel room here in Hickory. Those were not City property tax dollars going towards that. It was a good model that they had. It was really unique for the State.

Alderwoman Patton commented that with the two hotels going up and the number of rooms that each one would have, could they project how much more additional revenue that they were going to be receiving from these two new hotels.

CEO Mandy Hildebrand mentioned it was 190 rooms between those two. There was conversations of some others on the block eventually, which were needed not only to help them, just like City Manager Warren Wood said, that occupancy tax pays for their building, not the property taxes, as they pay it off and operate. But adding those new hotels was not only going to help that, but they were talking with meeting planners that need 2,000 room nights, one night, 2,000 rooms. That was a lot of hotel rooms. They were hoping to build to that because that was going to help them as they bring larger events here. They would like all the guests that were staying and attending stuff at the Convention Center to stay in the area. That was also another benefit.

Alderman Seaver asked how many hotel rooms there were in Hickory now.

CEO Mandy Hildebrand estimated 1,200-ish in Hickory/Conover. That was where they collected the occupancy tax from those properties.

City Manager Warren Wood explained how the mechanics of all that work with the money. The City of Hickory owns the building, and then the TDA's lease payment equates to what the debt service payment was on the building.

Mayor Guess commented as City Manager Warren Wood alluded to, when this expansion was done, he believed he had said that it would be larger than Winston-Salem's.

City Manager Warren Wood commented he had been corrected. That was what somebody told him. He had been going around for two years saying that, it would be larger than Winston-Salem on one floor. There was a little caveat there.

CEO Mandy Hildebrand commented with their competitors, which they were tier two, they do have similar events sometimes, but not Greensboro, not Charlotte, not Raleigh. but she meant Winston-Salem and Greenville, North Carolina, and other places.

City Manager Warren Wood advised their niche was smaller than some of those big ones. One of the best events they had was the septic haulers. That was a really good event that they had. People come from all over and stay for the weekend, and that was just one example of a good niche kind of event that they have.

Alderman Wood assumed that hotel/motel was the strict definition of those terms or of those structures. They were not talking about Airbnb's, or anything like that.

CEO Mandy Hildebrand advised they do collect, Airbnb, Vrbo, Priceline, all that was part of the occupancy tax, yes.

Alderman Wood commented 6% on all of that.

CEO Mandy Hildebrand noted within Hickory and Conover. The first six months of occupancy taxes were in for July to December, and it was at \$1.2 million. They were where they thought they would be this time of year and where they budgeted. She believed they would probably end up at about \$2.5 to \$2.6. That should be the highest that they had collected. Again, the average daily rate was much higher, and there was a lot of different factors, but as long as they stayed on their budget.

City Manager Warren Wood mentioned they had done a really good job of balancing the construction with continuing to have events and drive the revenue in those hotel rooms.

Mayor Guess commented that was unique to this municipality as well. Most other municipalities, their motel tax does not go for the Convention Center. Was that correct?

City Manager Warren Wood responded yes; their legislation allowed them to spend a certain percentage on it.

CEO Mandy Hildebrand advised that was one of the things that was set up in the 80s, because she had said this before, their Convention Center was a destination. It was like the field of dreams in the 80s when their cities came together and developed this, it happened. This was the third expansion, if you count another, smaller in the parking deck. It was a destination. They talked to their tourism partners; it was like their Panther Stadium. It was like the Atlantic Ocean. It was a destination. They have a lot of other leisure destinations as well that were adding to the reasons people were coming here. She mentioned they had 133 events since they broke ground, same time period, 150, the year before when they had the entire building open, not half the building open now. Their staff was a little tired, but they kept smiling and working. She mentioned the North Carolina Cattlemen Association had been there ever since they opened. People wanted them to go to other places across the State, but they liked it here and they kept coming here. It was a little challenging, but they could overcome that and were happy that they were going to be here for the next couple of days.

CEO Mandy Hildebrand discussed marketing and how they market their area. A lot of times some people may not. Their job was to really market outside their area, to bring visitors here. But of course, they had done marketing, really educating people about the importance of tourism dollars in the community and how it benefits us all, not just them at the Convention Center, but it was going to benefit the restaurants, the gas stations, they all knew that. They had really been trying to push that locally, that message. She referred to the PowerPoint and advised it was a digital ad that went out, obviously, that really was pushing their new amenities at the Convention Center. Once this goes out, the phone rings, the

emails pile up. It was making a difference. She always liked to share what their messages looked like. Unless they were on a sports media list, they may not be getting this. It was going out every day. She referred to the PowerPoint and advised it was the North Carolina Travel Guide. This had been around for decades, and they always placed an ad in there because it was important. This goes to a million people or more across the world, not just across the United States. They always buy an ad, and it was a pretty expensive ad. A lot of times their partners help pay for that. As they know, everything was about relationships and generally getting to know people. They will be attending a Visit North Carolina conference next month in Greenville. But Sarah Jones sits with a different media and the people that actually put this travel guide together and pitches stories about the whole area. This year they came back and said they really wanted to come to Hickory and the area, and they wanted to maybe do a story on them and do some pictures. She thought Sarah Jones got a two or three-day notice they were going to come into town, and they needed to take pictures. They could not promise anything to them, but she was excited to say that there is a full story about Hickory in the Travel Guide for North Carolina, and it was on page 78. She mentioned she was Chair of the CVB board years ago. This was something they always talked about, and they had been talking about it for years. They were thankful. She did not think this was going to be the last time. It was not going to take forever to do this again. As they knew there was a lot of buzz about Hickory, people moving here, people wanting to come here for so many different reasons. That was pretty good news. When they were somewhere and someone said, hey, I saw your downtown, I saw what you're doing in the Riverwalk in the travel guide. They would know all about it because it was in there. She commented as City Manager Warren Wood already mentioned about their two new hotels. And the good news was they did a study recently and the study concluded they did need hotels. They had already talked about that. They talked about the occupancy tax and the Visit North Carolina tourism conference, just like they have, the League of Municipalities conference, when all the elected officials come together in North Carolina, and they were so excited when they were here. They were going to be in Greenville, North Carolina, in March, but that group was coming to Hickory in April of 2025. They expect not only their peers across the State, in tourism, but they would also have media writers from across the southeast and beyond coming here, experiencing this place for the first time. They were really excited about that. They would invite Council to be a part of that as well because they would want to meet everybody in the tourism industry. Of course, it was a lot of fun, and they always enjoyed experiencing new things. She asked for questions.

Mayor Guess thought they asked them as she had gone along. He asked if anybody else had any other questions.

Alderwoman Patton asked the date that they were going to be complete.

CEO Mandy Hildebrand summer of 2024. She did not know if that was going to be June or if it was going to be September, but Hickory Construction was really wanting to complete it by July 1st, so that was the goal.

Mayor Guess commented that was not too far away.

CEO Mandy Hildebrand commented Council may have a meeting at their place sometime soon. And when they were there, they would make sure that they had their hard hats out so they all could look at it. At any time if they were in the neighborhood and wanted to stop by, just come by.

Mayor Guess thanked Mandy Hildebrand and her team. Her enthusiasm was contagious. They could tell that she was really passionate about this project, and not just this project but the community, and what this was going to do for not only our community but the surrounding communities. They appreciated her and Sarah Jones, and all the staff, everybody that worked there. He knew they all visit routinely. On behalf of the Council, he commented on everybody, from the staff, from the custodians, everybody was always pleasant. Everybody seemed to be enjoying what they were doing there, and they were extremely helpful. And they thanked them for everything that goes on there.

CEO Mandy Hildebrand thanked Mayor Guess.

Alderman Seaver commented she used words he had not heard used in a while, about all this stuff going on in Hickory, it was truly an inspiring space.

Mayor Guess commented that it was not very often that they got to see slides of restrooms and people being enthusiastic about it. That was very informative and interesting.

2. Appointments to Boards and Commissions

COMMUNITY APPEARANCE COMMISSION

(Terms Expiring 6-30; 3-Year Terms) (Appointed by City Council)
At-Large (Outside City but within HRP) (Council Appoints) VACANT

COMMUNITY RELATIONS COUNCIL

(Terms Expiring 6-30; 3-Year Terms) (Appointed by City Council)
Caucasian (Council Appoints) Cliff Moone Resigned VACANT
Other Minority (Council Appoints) VACANT
Other Minority (Council Appoints) VACANT
Other Minority (Council Appoints) VACANT

HICKORY REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

(Term Expiring 6-30; 3-Year Terms With Unlimited Appointments) (Appointed by City Council)
Burke County Representative (Mayor Appoints with Recommendation from Burke County) VACANT

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

(Terms Expiring 6-30; 3-Year Terms) (Appointed by City Council)
Historic Properties Owner (Council Appoints) VACANT
Building Trades Profession (Council Appoints) VACANT

RECYCLING ADVISORY BOARD

(Terms Expiring 6-30; 3-Year Terms) (Appointed by City Council)
Ward 6 (Patton Appoints) VACANT
At-Large (Council Appoints) VACANT

Mayor Guess reminded those in attendance, and those that may be watching later that they do have opportunities from time to time on all of the boards and commissions, they were all listed on the website. If they had any interest in any of those, they could certainly find out more about them on the website. And if they were interested in an appointment, there was also an application available on the website and any of the Council members would be more than happy to speak to them about the vacancies that they may have on those various boards or commissions.

C. Presentation of Petitions and Requests

XII. Matters Not on Agenda (requires majority vote of Council to consider)

XIII. General Comments by Members of Council, City Manager or City Attorney of a Non-Business Nature

Alderman Seaver commented that Hickory High was hosting the Conference Tournament tonight and also the rest of the week.

Mayor Guess mentioned the football team got their rings. He had not seen one in person; he was sure City Manager Warren Wood had seen one.

City Manager Warren Wood commented they were impressive. They were bigger than the '96 rings.

Mayor Guess thought they were bigger than the Super Bowl rings. They looked really impressive.

XIV. There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 6:35 p.m.

Mayor

City Clerk