



## CITY SNIPPETS

Information. Well Crafted.

### Public Utilities Director Retires

After 30 years of service to the Hickory community, City of Hickory Public Utilities Director Shawn Pennell will officially retire on May 31.

Pennell started working for the City of Hickory Public Services Department in June 1994, making traffic signs and markers before transitioning to electrical and maintenance work. He then moved to Public Utilities, serving as Collections Manager for over a decade. He was promoted to Environmental Manager and then to Assistant Public Services Director, overseeing Public Utilities, in July 2017. Pennell became Public Utilities Director in November 2020.



Shawn Pennell

During his tenure with the City of Hickory, Pennell has been involved in many notable projects and infrastructure investments for public utilities. He oversaw the construction of the Northwest Wastewater Treatment Facility, the Hickory-Catawba Wastewater Treatment Facility, and a new one-million-gallon elevated water tank on Springs Road.

Pennell spearheaded significant enhancements to the City's water treatment operations, including the conversion from chlorine gas to sodium hypochlorite generation and replacement of the treatment facility's emergency generator. These efforts improved operational efficiencies while lowering costs and safeguarding the community.

He led extensive water and sewer infrastructure replacements within the City's Central Business District as well as in the Murray, Geitner, and Henry River basins. He also managed the City's \$37 million project to build the new Henry Fork Biosolids Facility, which is currently nearing completion.

As part of the City's bond program, he served as the project manager for the Riverwalk segment of the Hickory Trail and for Trivium Corporate Center, a 378-acre Class A business park developed by the City of Hickory and Catawba County. Pennell was also instrumental in designing the water and sewer infrastructure needed for Microsoft's \$1 billion investment toward four data centers in Catawba County.

Pennell has served as the City of Hickory's primary representative for the Catawba-Wateree Water Management Group, which works to help preserve, extend, and enhance the capabilities of the Catawba-Wateree River Basin to provide water resources for human needs, while maintaining the ecological integrity of the waterway.

Under Pennell's leadership, the City of Hickory has earned numerous water quality awards from the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality.

Pennell has also been an active member of NC One Water (and the North Carolina Waterworks Operators Association).

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ISSUE

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## HICKORY CITY COUNCIL

Tuesday, July 16  
6 p.m.

Julian G. Whitener  
Municipal Building (City Hall)  
[HickoryNC.gov](http://HickoryNC.gov)



## INDEPENDENCE DAY

Thursday, July 4  
City Offices Closed



## SUMMER LEARNING PROGRAM

Now through August 3  
Hickory Public Library

## INDEPENDENCE DAY EXTRAVAGANZA

Wednesday, July 3  
Game: 6:30 p.m.  
Fireworks after the game  
L.P. Frans Stadium  
[HickoryCrawdads.com](http://HickoryCrawdads.com)

## SATURDAY SCREENINGS

July 13: Little Giants  
July 27: Homeward Bound  
August 10: TMNT (1990)  
August 24: The Princess Bride  
8:30 p.m.  
Union Square  
Downtown Hickory

## FALL SPORTS REGISTRATION

Fall Soccer - ages 4-13  
Fall Baseball/Softball - ages 5-12  
Tackle Football - ages 7-12  
Deadline July 24  
[Hickory.RecDesk.com](http://Hickory.RecDesk.com)

## LIGHTNING BUG BOOGIE 5K TRAIL RUN

Friday, August 16  
9 p.m.  
Registration Required  
[RunSignUp.com](http://RunSignUp.com)

[HickoryEventsCalendar.com](http://HickoryEventsCalendar.com)



## New Finance Director

The City of Hickory has hired Kari Dunlap as its new finance director. Dunlap started her new role with the City of Hickory on May 6, taking over as head of the Finance department as former Finance Officer Melissa Miller transitions into a new position with the City ahead of her planned retirement later this year.

As a Certified Public Accountant (CPA), Dunlap has an extensive background in professional accounting and governmental auditing. She previously worked as an accountant for Carolinas Healthcare System and Lowe's Home Improvement. She spent 11 years of her professional accounting experience with Martin Starnes & Associates, CPAs, P.A. in Hickory, where she most recently served as a senior audit manager.

During her tenure with Martin Starnes & Associates, Dunlap conducted the City of Hickory's annual financial audits for the past nine years.

"We are excited to officially welcome Kari to the City of Hickory team," said City Manager Warren Wood. "As our longtime auditor, she is very familiar with the City of Hickory's financials and works well with our finance staff. Kari brings her incredible accounting expertise and is sure to quickly adapt to her new role with the City."

Dunlap added, "I look forward to the opportunity to maintain the financial excellence of the City. I plan to work with City management and partners in our community to ensure sound financial management and sustainable growth for many years to come."

Dunlap holds Bachelor's degrees in Management and Sociology and a Master's degree in Accounting from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.



Kari Dunlap

A recent graduate of Leadership Catawba, Dunlap is also active in the community and with professional organizations. She currently serves on the Board of Directors for the YMCA of Catawba Valley and as Treasurer for the Council on Adolescents of Catawba County. She is a member of the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA) and the North Carolina Association of CPAs (NCACPA).

A Caldwell County native and longtime Hickory resident, Dunlap lives in Hickory with her husband, Bradley, and their two children, Sage and Summer.

## New Utility Payment Software Coming Soon

Exciting news for City of Hickory customers! The City of Hickory is in the process of transitioning from Paymentus to Tyler Payments for utility billing and online payment processing. Detailed instructions will be provided to City of Hickory customers in the near future. Stay tuned to the City website, [www.hickorync.gov](http://www.hickorync.gov), social media, and other communications about this software enhancement.