

Regular Meeting – January 20, 2026

The Fairmont Board of Commissioners held their regular meeting on Tuesday, January 20, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. in the Fairmont-South Robeson Heritage Center with Mayor Charles Kemp presiding. Commissioners present were J.J. McCree, Heather Seibles, Jan Tedder-Rogers, Felecia McLean, and Rasheena Graham. Commissioner Melvin Ellison was absent. Staff present included Town Manager Jerome Chestnut, Town Clerk Jenny Larson, Deputy Town Clerk Rodney Cain, Public Works Director Ronnie Seals, Fire Chief Veronica Hunt and Police Chief Jon Edwards. Others in attendance included Joshua Outlaw, Ry'ana McRae, Casyn Summerford, Xavier McNeill, Henry Bernacki, and several citizens.

Call to Order and Invocation

Mayor Charles Kemp called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m. and gave the invocation, which was followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mayor's Presentations

Proclamation – Fairmont's Birthday

Mayor Kemp read a proclamation declaring February 7, 1907, as the town's official birth date. A signed copy of this proclamation is hereby incorporated by reference and made a part of these minutes.

Recognition of MLK Unity Award winners

Mayor Kemp recognized the 2026 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Unity Award winners: Ry'ana McRae, Rosenwald Elementary School, Casyn Summerford, Fairmont Middle School and Xavier McNeill, Fairmont High School.

Recognition of Citizen Volunteers

Mayor Kemp recognized the following citizen volunteers:

- Downtown Revitalization – Matt Moore
- Clean Sweep Team – Elaine Nance, Winona Gause and Toni Grimsley
- Industrial Recruitment – Jimmy Haselden

Public Hearing – Closeout of 2022 CDBG-NR Project

Commissioner Seibles made a motion to go into Public Hearing at 6:23 p.m. Commissioner Tedder-Rogers seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

Mayor Kemp stated the purpose of the public hearing is to discuss the closeout of the 2022 CDBG-NR Project. Mr. Joshua Outlaw, of the Adams Company, gave a summary of the \$950,000 grant project:

- Town was originally funded \$950,000
- Original project included
 - \$855,000 to rehabilitate/reconstruct 5 homes
 - \$95,000 for grant administration
- 2 homes dropped out due to NC Rebuild program. Used 2 alternates from application.
- Final project included
 - \$857,000.0 to rehabilitate/reconstruct 4 homes and rehabilitate 1 home
 - \$93,000.00 Administration
 - Total grant funds expended \$950,000.00
 - LMI of completed project 100%

Commissioner Tedder-Rogers made a motion to come out of Public Hearing at 6:28 p.m. Commissioner Graham seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

Approval of Agenda

Commissioner McLean made a motion to approve the agenda. Commissioner Seibles seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

Public Comment Period/Citizens Appearance

Henry Bernacki - Progress

Mr. Henry Bernacki asked about the progress of several projects including the Youth Center and The Reserve apartment complex.

Consent Agenda

Upon motion by Commissioner Tedder-Rogers and seconded by Commissioner McLean, it was unanimously voted to adopt the following consent agenda items:

- a. Approval of Minutes – Regular Meeting, December 16, 2025.
- b. Ordinance 26-287 – Fiscal Year 2025-2026 Budget Amendment #2
- c. Ordinance 26-288 – Golden Leaf Project Budget Amendment
- d. Resolution 26-01 – First Bank signatures
- e. Resolution 26-02 – Truist bank signatures

Signed copies of the ordinances and resolutions are hereby incorporated by reference and made a part of these minutes.

Unfinished Business

There was no unfinished business this month.

New Business

Resolution 26-03 – Tentative Award for the Golden Leaf Foundation Pump Station Flood Protection project.

The Golden Leaf Foundation has increased the funding for the Pump Station Flood Protection project, which will elevate or rebuild 3 sewer lift stations located in the flood plain. Step Construction Inc. was the lowest bidder for this project with a bid of \$1,408,000 and LKC Engineering recommends tentatively awarding this contract to them. Commissioner Seibles made a motion to adopt Resolution 26-03 – Tentative Award for the Golden Leaf Foundation Pump Station Flood Protection project. Commissioner Graham seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously. A copy of this resolution is hereby incorporated by reference and made a part of these minutes.

Proposed speed bumps for MLK Drive near Star of Bethlehem church

Reverend Sammy Shropshire, the lead pastor at Star of Bethlehem Baptist Church, has submitted a request to address speeding on Martin Luther King Drive, in the vicinity of the church. The Pastor, his congregation, and citizens on the street would like to see measures in place to reduce speeding and the likelihood of accidents.

Options to address this issue:

- More patrols in the area during Sunday services
- Increase Speed Limit signage. There's only one "20mph" sign on street near Wilton Street Intersection
- The employment of four temporary speed bumps at a cost of \$2,000
- The installation of four permanent speed bumps at a cost of \$6,000

The Town Manager requests the Board of Commissioners approve the installation of four permanent speed bumps to be installed between Wilton Street and Marion Stage Road.

Commissioner McCree made a motion to approve the installation of four permanent speed bumps on Martin Luther King Drive between Wilton Street and Marion Stage Road. Commissioner Seibles seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

Water/Sewer regionalization

The Town of Fairmont, along with Proctorville, Boardman, Cerro Gordo, and Fair Bluff, continues to evaluate options for regionalizing water and sewer services. The following alternatives have been considered:

- **Independent Sewer Authority:** Not feasible due to insufficient revenue to support a standalone entity.
- **Sewer-Only Regionalization:** Currently in place; however, the existing cost structure penalizes towns for stormwater and groundwater infiltration, creating financial strain.
- **Fairmont as Regional Provider:** Fairmont would assume ownership of water systems in Fair Bluff and Cerro Gordo and sewer collection systems in all five towns. This approach would enable direct billing to customers across the region.

Key Concerns:

- **System Maintenance:** An estimated \$60–80 million is required over the next decade for repairs and upgrades. Funding remains unavailable, and deferred maintenance is likely until population or economic growth improves.
- **Equipment Needs:** Immediate investment is required for operational efficiency, including a flusher truck (\$800,000) and sewer camera (\$200,000).
- **Personnel:** Recruitment and retention of certified operators is a priority due to high demand and rising salaries.
- **Economic Development:** The region has not seen significant economic growth in the past decade. Efforts must focus on attracting housing and industry to support the system.

Town Manager updates

Town Manager Jerome Chestnut updated the board on the following Town Projects:

- Town Hall Project – draft of the plans should be ready by February 3.
- Youth Center Project – a concept video has been produced and will be shared with the board.
- Code Enforcement – 75 properties on list, hope to start again in February.
- Street Paving – Powell Bill funds will cover cost of speed bumps on MLK Drive.
- Sewer Rehab Projects - four projects to start soon as part of \$15 million VUR grant.
- Drainage Projects – 30 to 40 trees that cause issues need to be removed near Food Lion, Pine Street and North Fairmont
- Economic Development - working with JOBS Team to get businesses open and operational.
- Housing Activities – 8 subdivisions have been approved in the past two years
- Grant Activities – bids will be opened on January 22 for sediment removal in the Old Field Pittman Canal as part of the \$150,000 StRAP grant.

Mayor and Commissioner Comments

Commissioner Seibles thanked everyone who supported the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day event.

Commissioner Tedder-Rogers said it is tough to be a small business in a small town because our area is too poor to support them.

Commissioners McLean and Graham thanked the citizens for coming and encouraged everyone to support one another.

Mayor Kemp thanked Commissioner Seibles and the Stop the Violence Organization for the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day event. He invited everyone to come to the Town Talk Citizen Forum on Tuesday, January 27 at 6:00 p.m. in the Heritage Center.

Announcements

Wednesday, January 21 – Job Fair, 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., Heritage Center.

Tuesday, January 27 – Town Talk Citizen Forum, 6:00 p.m., Heritage Center.

Wednesday, February 11 – Town Employees lunch, 12:30 p.m., Heritage Center.

Saturday, February 14 – Senior Bingo, 12:00 noon to 2:00 p.m., Heritage Center.

Tuesday, February 17 - Regular Town Board meeting, 6:00 p.m., Heritage Center.

Adjournment

There being no further business, Commissioner Tedder-Rogers made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:27 p.m. Commissioner McLean seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

Jennifer H. Larson, NCCMC
Town Clerk