

Regular Meeting – May 20, 2025

The Fairmont Board of Commissioners held their regular meeting on Tuesday, May 20, 2025, at 6:00 p.m. in the Fairmont-South Robeson Heritage Center with Mayor Charles Kemp presiding. Commissioners present were Jan Tedder-Rogers, Terry Evans, Heather Seibles, Melvin Ellison and J.J. McCree. Commissioner Clarence McNeill, Jr. was absent. Staff present included Town Manager Jerome Chestnut, Town Attorney Jessica Scott, Town Clerk Jenny Larson, Deputy Town Clerk Rodney Cain, Lead for NC Fellow Madison Johns, UNCP Intern Kyndall Gordon, Police Chief Jon Edwards, Captain Jonathan Evans, and Public Works Director Ronnie Seals. Others in attendance included Arthur Snipes, Vanessa Abernathy, Henry Bernacki, and several citizens.

Call to Order and Invocation

Mayor Charles Kemp called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. Mr. Arthur Snipes, Chairman of Deacons at Baltimore Baptist Church, gave the invitation which was followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Public Hearing – Zoning Text Amendments

Commissioner Seibles made a motion to go into Public Hearing at 6:03 p.m. for the purpose of discussing zoning text amendments. Commissioner Tedder-Rogers seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Town Manager Jerome Chestnut and the Fairmont Planning Board recommend the following text amendments to the town's zoning ordinance:

Section 1. That Section 154.235 (B) (formerly Zoning Ordinance Section 11.6.2), Adult Business and Entertainment Establishments (Including Bookstores), of the Fairmont Code of Ordinances, is amended to strike the following language from the definition:

(B) As one of its principal business purposes or as a significant portion of its business

The removal of this language closes a loophole in the definition.

Section 2. That Section 154.279 (formerly Zoning Ordinance Section 11.50), Any Use Not Otherwise Prohibited by Law or by This Chapter, of the Fairmont Code of Ordinances, is amended to add the following language:

(C)(3) Businesses applying for ABC On-Premises Consumption Permit shall also require a Special Use Permit, in all districts.

Requiring a special use permit for businesses with ABC on-premises consumption will allow the town to plan for adequate resources such as police staffing.

Ms. Vanessa Abernathy suggested the town consider making Thompson Street an Arts & Culture district. Mr. Henry Bernacki feels the amendments will minimize issues in the future.

Commissioner Tedder-Rogers made a motion to come out of the Public Hearing at 6:15 p.m. Commissioner Seibles seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

Mayor Presentations

Proclamation – Memory of former Mayor Nedward Gaddy

Mayor Kemp read a proclamation in memory of former Mayor Nedward Gaddy. A signed copy of this proclamation is hereby incorporated by reference and made a part of these minutes.

Proclamation – National Public Works Week – May 18-24, 2025

Mayor Kemp read a proclamation in honor of National Public Works Week, May 18-24, 2025, and Public Works Director Ronnie Seals. A signed copy of this proclamation is hereby incorporated by reference and made a part of these minutes.

Approval of Agenda

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

Public Comment Period/Citizens Appearance

There was no public comment this month.

Consent Agenda

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

- a. Approval of Minutes – Regular Meeting, April 15, 2025.
- b. Ordinance 25-272 – FY 2024-2025 Budget Amendment #5
- c. Ordinance 25-273 – BJA grant
- d. Ordinance 25-274 – LISC Budget amendment and closeout
- e. Ordinance 25-275 – NCYVP Budget amendment and closeout

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

Old Business

There was no old business this month.

New Business

Planning Board Vacancy/Appointment

Planning Board member Winona Gause has served on the Fairmont Planning Board for nine years and has decided not to seek reappointment. Town Manager Jerome Chestnut asked the board to appoint someone to the Planning Board to serve for a three-year term expiring in May 2028. Commissioner Evans nominated Kevin Floyd for the Fairmont Planning Board. Commissioner Ellison seconded the nomination, and it passed unanimously.

Planning Board Vacancy/Reappointment

Planning Board member Dwayne McCormick is up for reappointment and would like to serve another three-year term expiring in May 2028. Commissioner Evans made a motion to reappoint Dwayne McCormick to the Fairmont Planning Board. Commissioner Seibles seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

Resolution 25-04 – Worley offer for 200 Iona Street property

Mr. James Worley has offered \$1,000 for the vacant lot located at 200 Iona Street, Parcel# 300504052. The property has a current tax value of \$7,000 and has been owned by the town for over a decade. Commissioner Tedder-Rogers made a motion to adopt Resolution 25-04 – Worley offer for 200 Iona Street property. Commissioner Seibles seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously. A signed copy of the resolution is hereby incorporated by reference and made a part of these minutes.

Ordinance 25-276 - Zoning text amendments

Commissioner Evans made a motion to adopt Ordinance 25-276 - Zoning text amendments. Commissioner Tedder-Rogers seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously. A signed copy of the ordinance is hereby incorporated by reference and made a part of these minutes.

Regional Utilities Discussion

Town Manager Jerome Chestnut stated the Town of Fairmont currently serves as a Regional Provider of Wastewater Services for the towns of Fairmont, Proctorville, Boardman, Cerro Gordo, and Fair Bluff. The current method of operation is not sustainable and a new authority or agreement with the towns needs to be reached. Over the past year, every system has been studied, and Asset Management Plans have been completed. Entities taking part in this study have been members of each town's boards, the LRCOG, UNC SOG, UNC Environmental Finance Center, the NCLM, and NCDEQ. All towns currently own the assets of their water and sewer system. Whichever direction Fairmont leads, authority or amending current agreements, collaboration must take between all the towns for a way forward.

The Official Response from the Town of Boardman from their April meeting is:

1. Their first preference is a regional authority. The system being owned and operated by Fairmont is their second preference.
2. If a regional agreement is reached - Boardman will only sign up when there is a guarantee that the rates in the five towns will all be the same.
3. If a regional agreement is reached - Boardman will only sign up if the ability to tap on to the water and/or sewer systems is non-mandatory.

The Council is aware that rates will have to be increased, and they will have to explain that to their customers. Their best explanation would be that all five towns are paying the same and will always pay the same. Currently in Boardman, structures can go on private wells or septic tanks, or they can connect to the municipal utility system. The Council wants to make sure that ability remains the same. The towns of Proctorville, Cerro Gordo, and Fair Bluff will discuss it at their May meetings.

The Official Response from the Town of Cerro Gordo from their May meeting is:

1. Their first preference is a regional authority. The system being owned and operated by Fairmont is their second preference.
2. If a regional agreement is reached---Cerro Gordo will only sign up when there is a guarantee that the rates in the five towns will all be the same.
3. If a regional agreement is reached---Cerro Gordo will only sign up if the ability to tap on to the water and/or sewer systems is non-mandatory.
4. If a regional agreement is reached---Cerro Gordo will only sign up if there is a clause added that should the system management reach a detrimental state to the point of having to relinquish the systems that Cerro Gordo would be offered the option to regain control of its system.

The Council is aware that rates will have to be increased, and they will have to explain that to their customers. Their best explanation would be that all five towns are paying the same and will always pay the same.

Currently in Cerro Gordo, structures can go on private wells or septic tanks, or they can connect to the municipal utility system. The Council wants to make sure that the ability remains the same.

The Official Response from the Town of Fair Bluff from their May meeting is:

The Fair Bluff Council voted unanimously to adopt the exact same positions as adopted by the Town of Boardman.

1. Their Preference is a Regional Authority. If that is not an option, their second preference is for the Town of Fairmont to own, operate, and maintain the water and sewer systems.
2. The rates charged in Fair Bluff must at all times be the same rates as charged inside the corporate limits of Fairmont.
3. That connecting to the utility systems is voluntary, and not mandatory.

Town Manager Jerome Chestnut explained that Proctorville has not taken an official position yet and reminded the board that they do not own their water lines. Mr. Chestnut plans to work with Fairmont board members to come up with a consolidated plan for the future of the regional utility system. The plan is to have an updated agreement adopted and put into effect by January 1, 2026.

Farewell to LFNC Fellow, Madison Johns

Ms. Madison Johns has served as Fairmont's Lead for North Carolina Program Fellow since August 1, 2024. Madison's last day of duty will be June 10, 2025. Town Manager Jerome Chestnut presented her with a certificate of appreciation thanking her for her exceptional performance over the last 10 months, especially on the Brownfield grant project.

Introduction of UNCP Intern, Kyndall Gordon

On April 7, 2025, the Town of Fairmont was selected to host an intern through the SECU Public Fellows Internship Program in collaboration with UNC-Pembroke. The Intern selected for this program is Ms. Kyndall Gordon, a psychology and legal studies major.

Recognition of Captain Jonathan Evans for Advanced Law Enforcement Certification

Police Chief Jon Evans presented Police Captain Jonathan Evans with his Advanced Law Enforcement Certificate, which is the highest award given by NC Department of Justice. The Board of Commissioners, Town Manager, and Staff recognized Captain Evans and thanked him for his dedication to Fairmont and law enforcement.

Manager Comments

Town Manager Chestnut gave the following report to the board and citizens on current issues and projects in town:

- The Town of Fairmont is requesting Statements of Qualifications from interested architectural, design, or engineering firms for planning, design, and construction management services related to a new Town Hall Complex, housing the Administrative, Water, and Police departments as well as youth services. The town was awarded a grant of \$3.25 million for the project.
- Sediment removal, courtesy of a \$150,000 grant, will take place over the next 2-3 months in the Old Field canal.
- The old masonic lodge next to Rosenwald Elementary School is crumbling and falling and the estimated cost of demolition is \$20,000. This building must be removed before the street can be paved.
- An old brick building on Iona Street is tied up with 72 heirs. The town is working with a family member to come up with a solution so the property can be demolished and used as a parking lot.
- The board will need to decide about the future use of the old library and FCX building during the budget workshops.
- The pedestrian bridge at the community park needs to be replaced and Mr. Chestnut is hoping to get a steel bridge from the NCDOT.

Mayor Comments

Mayor Kemp made the following comments to the board and citizens:

- He thanked Mr. Timmy Bass for installing the flag display on the museum grounds.
- He invited everyone to the Memorial Day Ceremony on Monday at 12:00 noon in the Heritage Center with guest speaker Rev. Sammy Shropshire.
- Fundraising will start this week for a new mural highlighting Fairmont's historic downtown that will be placed on the side of Fairmont Tire.
- Mayor Kemp looks forward to seeing the plans for the Town Hall and Youth Center complex because he feels the single most important town initiative for the future is the building and opening of a youth center.

Announcements

Monday, May 26 – Memorial Day Ceremony, 12:00 noon, Heritage Center.

Monday, May 26 – Town offices closed for Memorial Day.

Tuesday, May 27 – Budget Workshop, 6:00 p.m., Heritage Center.

Saturday, May 31 – Community Yard Sale, Town Hall Parking lot, 7:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Tuesday, June 3 – Budget Workshop, 6:00 p.m. Heritage Center.

Thursday, June 5 – Fairmont Planning Board, 6:00 p.m., Town Hall.

Saturday, June 7 – Senior Bingo, 12:00 to 2:00 p.m., Heritage Center.

Tuesday, June 10 – Budget Workshop (if needed), 6:00 p.m., Heritage Center.

Tuesday, June 17 – Regular Town Board Meeting and Fiscal Year 2025-2026 Budget Public Hearing, 6:00 p.m., Heritage Center.

Wednesday, June 18 – Job Fair/Career Expo, 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., Heritage Center.

Thursday, June 19 – Town offices closed in observance of Juneteenth.

Saturday, June 21 - Juneteenth “Free” Community Day at the Park Celebration, 12:00 – 6:00 p.m., Fairmont Community Park.

Saturday, June 29 – Fantastic Fourth Fireworks celebration

Monday, June 30 – Special Town Board Meeting to adopt Fiscal Year 2025-2026 budget (if not approved on June 17) and to adopt amended Fiscal Year 2024-2025 budget, 6:00 p.m., Heritage Center.

Adjournment

There being no further business, Commissioner Evans made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:10 p.m. Commissioner Tedder-Rogers seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

Jennifer H. Larson
Town Clerk