

Town of Spring Lake  
Work Session Meeting of the Board of Commissioners  
Municipal Building  
300 Ruth Street  
Spring Lake, NC 28390

February 23, 2026

**MINUTES**

6:00 pm

The Spring Lake Board of Commissioners held a Work Session meeting in the Grady Howard Conference Room of the Spring Lake Municipal Building with Mayor Kia Anthony presiding.

**Board Members Present:** Mayor Pro Tem Fredricka Sutherland  
Commissioner Tony Burgess  
Commissioner Soña L. Cooper  
Commissioner Jackie Jackson  
Commissioner Adrian Thompson

**Others Present:**

Carly Autry, Town Clerk  
Nicole Barry, Payroll  
Interim Town Manager Dennis English Jr.  
Officer Charles Fernandez, Spring Lake Police Department  
Elizabeth Gray, HR Manager  
Detective Chelsey Hunt, Spring Lake Police Department  
Stephanie Hutchins, Building Inspector  
Police Chief Errol Jarman, Spring Lake Police Department  
Officer Malik Passmore, Spring Lake Police Department  
James Overton, Finance Director  
Evelyn Robinson, Accounts Payable  
Deanna Rosario, Stormwater Administrator  
Lieutenant Danny Sutton, Spring Lake Police Department  
Detective Keshore Taylor, Spring Lake Police Department  
Lieutenant Gregory Wilkerson, Spring Lake Police Department  
Steve Wing, Building Superintendent

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Anthony declared a quorum and called the meeting to order.

**2. INOVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Pastor Baker gave the Invocation and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**3. ADDITIONS AND DELETIONS**

Mayor Pro Tem Sutherland requested to add Budget Amendment (BA-15) FY2026 under New Business. Mayor Anthony requested to add Closed Session for Attorney-Client Privilege and Personnel to the agenda if Town Attorney Michael Porter is available.

#### **4. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

**Action:** Motion to approve the February 23, 2026, Work Session agenda with the additions.

**Motion by:** Commissioner Thompson

**Second by:** Commissioner Cooper

**Vote:** Unanimous

#### **5. APPROVAL OF CONSENT ITEMS**

None.

#### **6. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Frank Alexander, Spring Lake resident, raised concerns about the deteriorated condition of a portion of Regina Drive, noting significant potholes that created difficult driving conditions, while acknowledging that most roads in the Town, including much of Regina Drive, are paved. He also referenced prior discussions regarding infrastructure financing and inquired whether the Town could seek State assistance for extending water and sewer services along state-maintained roads in order to reduce the financial burden on the Town.

Marvin Lackman, Spring Lake resident, public comments are attached as **ATTACHMENT ONE**.

Juanita Bonds, Spring Lake resident, raised concerns about the absence of a specific individuals for Board meetings over the past two (2) years and stated that this issue warranted attention. She expressed dissatisfaction with the Town's infrastructure planning, while acknowledging the Mayor's efforts to identify budgetary resources for infrastructure needs. Mrs. Bonds also questioned whether the Open Meetings Law had been violated in the hiring of the Interim Town Manager, asking why the process was not conducted publicly. Additionally, she raised concerns about high service-related costs and questioned how those expenses would be funded. She concluded by emphasizing the need for transparency, oversight, and accountability in the use of taxpayer funds.

Derrick Montgomery, Spring Lake resident, provided historical context regarding the Town's water and sewer infrastructure, noting that a 20-year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) was established approximately 26 years ago to address long-term utility needs. He stated that more than two (2) decades after the 1999 plan, issues such as leaking water lines were identified and the need for future repair planning was recognized. He explained that significant progress began about five (5) years ago, when major projects were identified, Grant funding was secured, and a strategic plan was implemented. He credited the prior Board and former Town Manager for advancing this work, while expressing concern that recent leadership changes had disrupted that momentum. He further clarified that although water bills and taxes were discussed during campaigns, the Town did not increase its property tax rate, as the increase was enacted by the County. He raised concerns regarding the qualifications and municipal experience of the Interim Town Manager and noted the distinction between managing a business and managing a municipality. He concluded by asking the Board to consider the Town's current challenges and how to balance growth and development with preservation of the community's character.

Andrica Rhodes, Spring Lake resident, referenced prior comments she made during a Coffee with the Commissioners meeting, stating that she had expected further discussion regarding recent issues within the Town. She noted that she has raised concerns for several years, particularly regarding the condition of playgrounds, and expressed frustration that those concerns had not been adequately addressed. She emphasized the importance of prioritizing children and stated that the condition of the Town's parks reflected a lack of care for youth. Ms. Rhodes requested that the Board speak openly about recent matters and sought clarification on when her questions could be addressed, acknowledging that responses are not provided during public comment. She concluded her remarks by expressing a desire for her concerns to be addressed at an appropriate time.

Bettye Sanford, Spring Lake resident, expressed appreciation for the large community turnout, while encouraging residents to remain engaged beyond times of controversy. She urged self-reflection among all involved and expressed concern that elected officials were not accessible to constituents. She identified ongoing community needs, including transportation, affordable housing, public safety resources, and youth activities, and noted that these concerns had been raised over many years. She also commented on the high turnover of Town employees and questioned the circumstances surrounding recent personnel changes. She concluded by encouraging the Board to focus on actions that would improve the quality of life in the Town of Spring Lake for its residents.

## **7. PRESENTATIONS**

None.

## **8. OLD BUSINESS**

a. Budget Amendment (BA-10) FY2026 – Finance Director James Overton – Mr. Overton presented Budget Amendment (BA-10), which sought approval for the purchase of a new backhoe for the Streets department. He explained that the amendment was intended to replace a 2001 John Deere backhoe that had reached the end of its useful life.

Mr. Overton described the condition of the existing backhoe using photographs provided to the Board. He noted that while the machine's hour meter read 8,000 hours, the meter was in fact broken, and the backhoe had actually accumulated over 10,000 hours of use. He pointed out visible damage in the photographs, including a transmission that was detached on the left side and simply "dangling." He noted that the backhoe had accumulated approximately \$35,000 in needed repairs and was 25 years old. Mr. Overton expressed his personal opinion that spending \$35,000 on a 25-year-old piece of equipment would be a waste of money, as it would inevitably need to be replaced regardless.

Mr. Overton presented a quote from James River Equipment for a new backhoe totaling \$135,574, and provided the Board with copies of both the new equipment quote and the repair estimate for the old backhoe. He outlined how the purchase would be funded: \$94,000 received from the City of Fayetteville as part of an Interlocal Agreement related to streets that were annexed by Fayetteville rather than the Town years prior – under which Fayetteville pays the Town 30% of Powell Bill revenue collected from those streets – along with \$16,000 from the proceeds of vehicle sales (noting the Town had sold old vehicles for approximately \$23,000 total), and \$22,000 from Fund Balance savings from Powell Bill savings.

He noted that Fayetteville had failed to send the prior year's payment of \$94,000 until this year, and the current year's payment was \$100,000.

Mr. Overton requested that the Board approve the purchase of the new backhoe, approve the budget amendment of \$136,000, and also declare the old backhoe surplus so that it could be listed and sold on GovDeals for whatever amount could be obtained.

Commissioner Burgess asked how many quotes were obtained, to which Mr. Overton indicated three (3) quotes were obtained.

**Action:** Motion to approve Budget Amendment (BA-10) FY2026.

**Motion by:** Commissioner Cooper

**Second by:** Commissioner Thompson

**Vote:** 4-1 **Motion Carried;** Noes: Commissioner Jackson

b. Budget Amendment (BA-11) FY2026 – Finance Director James Overton – Mr. Overton presented Budget Amendment (BA-11), requesting approval to purchase 400 new water meters at \$385 each, for a total cost of \$154,000. He provided context by explaining that the Town has approximately 4,400 meters Town-wide and that meters wear out over time. He stated the goal was to replace approximately 10% of them every year.

Mr. Overton noted that earlier in the fiscal year, meters on Route 23 (Deerfield subdivision) and Route 24 had already been replaced, with approximately 70 to 80 meters still remaining in Deerfield. He identified the next target areas for replacement as Pine Knoll Drive and Vass Road, which had approximately 312 meters, and Route 28, which had approximately 300 to 400 meters. He also noted the need for additional meters to replace broken ones throughout the Town, adding that as of a couple of weeks prior, the Town had only about a dozen meters left in inventory, making the purchase urgent.

To explain how the purchase would be funded, Mr. Overton described several new revenue sources. He detailed that a large commercial master meter at the Overhills Park neighborhood had been broken and was only billing approximately \$3,000 per month. When that meter was replaced and the rates for outside residents at Overhills Park were corrected – bringing them in line with all other outside residents, who are billed at double the rate of inside residents – billing jumped from approximately \$4,300-\$4,500 per month to \$17,000-\$18,000 per month.

Mayor Anthony clarified for the audience that "inside residents" refers to Town of Spring Lake tax-paying residents within the Town limits, while "outside residents" refers to Cumberland County residents who do not pay the same Town taxes.

Mr. Overton explained that the additional revenue from Overhills Park was approximately \$116,000. Combined with revenue from six (6) new house water tap connections (\$6,000) and sewer tap connections (\$5,400), as well as \$12,600 from the sale of one (1) vehicle in the Water/Sewer Fund, the total of these new revenues came to \$154,000 – matching the exact cost of the 400 water meters. He also provided the Board with a copy of the quote from Ferguson Waterworks for 400 meters at \$154,000.

**Action:** Motion to approve Budget Amendment (BA-11) FY2026.

**Motion by:** Mayor Pro Tem Sutherland

**Second by:** Commissioner Jackson

**Vote:** Unanimous

c. Budget Amendment (BA-12) FY2026 – Finance Director James Overton – Mr. Overton presented Budget Amendment (BA-12), which involved the installation of artwork and improvements at Mendoza Park. He noted that the Arts Council had already provided the Town with \$5,600 in Grant funding and that an application had been submitted by the Appearance Committee to the Arts Council outlining the planned use of the funds. Copies of both the approval letter from the Arts Council and the application were included in the Board's materials.

**Action:** Motion to approve Budget Amendment (BA-12) FY2026.

**Motion by:** Mayor Pro Tem Sutherland

**Second by:** Commissioner Cooper

**Vote:** Unanimous

**Please note:** Prior to moving into New Business items, Mayor Anthony noted that confirmation had been received from the Town Attorney stating he would be able to attend Closed Session via phone. She called for a motion to formally add Closed Session to the agenda.

**Action:** Motion to add Closed Session Pursuant to NCGS §143.318.11(a)(3) – Attorney-Client Privilege and pursuant to NCGS §143-318.11(a)(6) – Personnel.

**Motion by:** Commissioner Thompson

**Second by:** Mayor Pro Tem Sutherland

**Vote:** Unanimous

## 9. NEW BUSINESS

a. Budget Amendment (BA-13) FY2026 – Finance Director James Overton – Mr. Overton presented Budget Amendment (BA-13), clarifying at the outset of this amendment involved no increase to the total budget. He explained that the amendment was a reallocation of funds – specifically \$39,000 would be transferred from the Police Department's fuel budget.

Mr. Overton explained that at the beginning of the fiscal year, gasoline had been budgeted at \$4.00 per gallon. However, throughout the year, gas prices had remained between approximately \$2.50 and \$2.89 per gallon – under \$3.00 the entire year. As a result, there was a surplus in the Police Department's fuel budget. He noted that even after the \$39,000 transfer, sufficient funds would remain in that line item to cover the department's gas expenses for the remaining four (4) months of the fiscal year, assuming prices stayed roughly the same.

Mr. Overton stated that the purpose of the transfer was to cover severance pay and accrued vacation owed to the former Town Manager Jon Rorie per his employment contract. He explained that Mr. Rorie's contract entitled him to six (6) months of severance pay, equivalent to \$70,000. However, only four (4)

and a half month of salary remained in the budget for that position, as seven and a half months had already been paid out. He also noted that Mr. Rorie was owed 208 hours of vacation at \$67.31 per hour, totaling approximately \$14,000. Together, the additional salary and vacation amounts required an increase of approximately \$36,000, and when FICA taxes at 7.65% were added, the total budget amendment came to \$39,000.

Mr. Overton noted that a letter from Mr. Rorie requesting that his severance pay be issued by the end of the month had been provided to the Board, along with a copy of his employment contract confirming the six-month severance entitlement of \$70,000. He noted the payroll submission deadline was Wednesday in order to ensure payment by Friday. Copies of both documents were included in the Board's packet.

Mayor Anthony stated that, for clarification, the funds originated from the Police Department's budget, specifically from the line item allocated for fuel costs.

**Action:** Motion to approve Budget Amendment (BA-13) FY2026.

**Motion by:** Mayor Pro Tem Sutherland

**Second by:** Commissioner Burgess

**Vote:** Unanimous

b. Budget Amendment (BA-14) FY2026 – Finance Director James Overton – Mr. Overton presented Budget Amendment (BA-14), which addressed the Town's obligation to reimburse the Employment Security Commission (ESC) for unemployment claims filed by former employees. He explained that several employees had been terminated or laid off and had filed for unemployment benefits. The total of claims filed so far in the current fiscal year was \$6,769.

Mr. Overton explained the context around the Town's approach to unemployment insurance. He noted that most businesses pay an unemployment tax of 1% of salaries – which for the Town would equate to approximately \$27,000 per year. Local governments, however, have the option to instead directly reimburse actual unemployment claims. He stated that last year's total claims of approximately \$6,700 was significantly less than the \$27,000 that would have been owed under the payroll tax method, making the reimbursement approach more cost-effective.

Mr. Overton described the funding mechanism: \$5,500 would be transferred from the contingency fund for unexpected items, and additional savings would come from reducing the group insurance budget for a vacant position in the Planning Department. Combined, these adjustments would provide the \$6,800 needed to cover the unemployment reimbursements, which he emphasized were mandatory – the Town had no choice but to pay.

Mayor Pro Tem Sutherland asked whether the employees in question had won their unemployment cases, since the Town was required to pay.

Mr. Overton confirmed that anytime an employee is terminated, unemployment must be paid for the period until that individual finds' other employment. He also confirmed that claimants are required to actively search for new jobs as a condition of receiving benefits.

**Action:** Motion to approve Budget Amendment (BA-14) FY2026.

**Motion by:** Commissioner Cooper

**Second by:** Commissioner Thompson

**Vote:** Unanimous

c. Budget Amendment (BA-15) FY2026 – Finance Director James Overton – Mr. Overton presented Budget Amendment (BA-15), which was introduced to address the need to fund compensation for the newly hired Interim Town Manager, noting that having already amended the budget for the former Manager's severance, there was no remaining budget appropriation to pay the new Interim Manager.

Mr. Overton stated that he had spoken with Town Attorney Michael Porter that afternoon, who confirmed the new Interim Town Manager's salary was set at \$72.00 per hour, equaling an annualized salary of \$149,760. For the remaining 21 weeks (approximately four and a half months) of the fiscal year at 40 hours per week, the salary cost would be \$60,480. Added to that were employer-paid Social Security and Medicare taxes at 7.65%, totaling \$4,627, and State retirement contributions at 14.41%, totaling approximately \$8,700. The combined total of the budget amendment was \$73,821 – rounded to \$74,000 in the request.

Mr. Overton noted that a \$400 monthly auto allowance was also part of the compensation package, but since the same allowance had been paid to the former Manager, no new budget amendment was needed for that item. Similarly, no amendment was needed for health insurance, as the coverage would shift from the former Manager to the new Interim Manager without a net increase. The funding source for the amendment would be the Fund Balance appropriated, which would increase from \$500,000 to \$574,000.

Mayor Pro Tem Sutherland asked for clarification about the \$149,760 annual salary figure listed in the justification document.

Mr. Overton confirmed that was the annualized rate provided for context, while the actual budget amendment was for the prorated 21-week period only.

Commissioner Cooper raised a concern, questioning whether the Board had explicitly approved a rate of \$72 per hour for the new Interim Manager. She referenced the experience of the former Manager, who had 30 years of local government experience, and expressed uncertainty about whether the current rate was justifiable or had been formally agreed upon by the Board.

Mayor Pro Tem Sutherland responded that the decision regarding the Interim Manager's compensation had already been made, not necessarily because the Board wanted to set it at that rate, but because that was what was established in the contract. However, Mayor Pro Tem Sutherland suggested tabling the budget amendment and discussing the matter further during the upcoming Closed Session to gain clearer understanding.

Mayor Anthony confirmed that the vote on Budget Amendment (BA-15) would be held after the Board returned from Closed Session.

d. Mayor's Report – Mayor Kia Anthony – First, Mayor Anthony recapped "Coffee with the Commissioners" event held on Wednesday, February 18, 2026, where members of the Cumberland County delegation came to speak directly with residents about issues and concerns. She noted that both she and Commissioner Thompson were in attendance and expressed appreciation for those who came. She announced that the delegation planned to hold these sessions regularly and strongly encouraged residents to participate, noting that Cumberland County controls the Town's Parks and Recreation system. Second, Mayor Anthony clarified, regarding Parks and Recreation, that in January 2022, the Town joined the Cumberland County Parks and Recreation Tax District, meaning that the parks are now managed by Fayetteville Cumberland County Parks and Recreation. She explained that any concerns about park updates should be directed to the County level. She noted that there is currently a plan in place to address parks, not just in the Town, but across the entire Fayetteville Cumberland County Parks and Rec system, which includes all municipalities except Fayetteville and Hope Mills. She acknowledged the expense of parks equipment and explained that the County purchases in bulk to save costs across multiple parks systems, which can cause delays. She credited former Commissioner Lackman for being instrumental in pressing the County to ensure the Town's parks were not overlooked. Third, Mayor Anthony reported on a RLUAC (Fort Bragg's Regional Land Use Advisory Commission) meeting that had been held in the Town's boardroom. She explained that RLUAC functions as the planning body for Fort Bragg, and that she chairs the organization. She noted the meeting included a presentation from the Department of Transportation (DOT) regarding Corridor K – a potential highway expansion that would directly affect Spring Lake. She emphasized her intent to ensure the Town remains at the table during these major infrastructure discussions. Fourth, Mayor Anthony reported on public transportation, stating that a fourth feasibility study meeting had been held with FAST Transit regarding the potential return of a bus system to the Town. She noted that several route options had been developed and that an upcoming meeting would allow community members to provide input on route options and times of service, including both internal and external service. She was transparent in cautioning that the Town's ability to bring back public transportation was contingent on the budget, as there would be an annual financial contribution required from the Town. She acknowledged that it was possible the Town might not be able to afford to sustain a transportation system, but stated that the questions were being asked and plans were being developed. She committed to sharing final route layouts as soon as they were available. Fifth, Mayor Anthony announced that Lunch with the Mayor will be held on Wednesday, February 25, 2026, at 12 noon at Ruby Tuesday and invited residents to come out for informal one-on-one conversations. She described it as an opportunity for her to hear concerns and to be accessible as a fellow Town of Spring Lake resident. Sixth, Mayor Anthony announced that Focus Group 4 on economic development would be meeting on Thursday, February 26, 2026, at 6:00pm in the boardroom – shifted from its usual last Wednesday of the month slot. She noted the meeting was open to the public and mentioned that some "very exciting news" would be coming out of that group. Last, Mayor Anthony informed the Board and the public that she would be out of town from March 1-5, 2026, for Advanced Leadership Corps (ALC) training, but would remain available via email and phone.

e. Board of Commissioners Report – Town of Spring Lake Board of Commissioners – First, Mayor Pro Tem Sutherland recognized Pastor Baker regarding his Invocation. Second, Mayor Pro Tem Sutherland raised concerns about the Town's audit situation, noting that the Town had previously been four (4) years behind on audits and expressing concern that it appeared to be falling three (3) years behind again. She also raised the issue of procurement practices, emphasizing the need for Town resources to be utilized correctly and

not misused with taxpayer dollars. Third, Mayor Pro Tem Sutherland acknowledged and thanked Interim Town Manager Dennis English for promptly getting on a phone call with the Local Government Commission (LGC), along with Mr. Overton, during which they worked through invoicing concerns. She stated her commitment to continuing to ensure that tax dollars are utilized correctly. Fourth, Mayor Pro Tem Sutherland shifted to the topic of schools, noting that the Town of Spring Lake may no longer have any schools within the Town limits – a situation she said developed over the past 3-4 years. She recalled that she and Mrs. Perry Harris had gathered over 300 signatures and brought more than 20 individuals to the Board of Education to speak on behalf of keeping Mae Rudd Williams school open. She stated that the absence of schools is a significant barrier to economic development, particularly for military families arriving at Fort Bragg, as she knows from her experience giving briefings about the surrounding area. Fifth, Mayor Pro Tem Sutherland revisited concerns about water bills, referencing a presentation from the prior meeting, and raised the topic of property taxes. She referenced a letter from June 6, 2025, regarding the Town's tax rate and expressed her desire to revisit whether the Town might be able to lower its taxes. She stated her intent to continue standing strong for the people of the Town, noting her 46-year investment in the Town as a property owner. Last, Mayor Pro Tem Sutherland closed by thanking Mr. Overton for his work and his ongoing explanations of the Town's finances, and reaffirmed her commitment to proper oversight of taxpayer dollars.

First, Commissioner Thompson reminded those in attendance that Early Voting was ongoing and would end on this Friday, urging anyone who had not yet voted to do so. Second, Commissioner Thompson shared information about free tutoring available on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 6:00pm at Bethel AME Zion Church at 255 Vass Road, and encouraged anyone with children in need of academic support to take advantage of the program. Third, Commissioner Thompson noted that the White Flag shelter at Cornerstone Christian Empowerment Center, located at 111 N. Bragg Blvd., was still accepting donations for their facility and requested that donors contribute layering clothing items such as sweatshirts and similar garments. Last, Commissioner Thompson announced that the next Town cleanup would be on Saturday, March 7, 2026, recognizing Mr. Charles in the audience as the person in charge of spearheading this event, and directed interested community members to gather at 1137 N. Bragg Blvd., noting that no supplies were needed – only motivation.

First, Commissioner Jackson announced organizing a trip to the Board of Education to advocate for Manchester Elementary and invited community members to join on Tuesday, March 10, 2026. Second, Commissioner Jackson offered a public apology regarding a prior incident in which she had been perceived as dismissive in a public response. She clarified that what she had said at the time was not that she didn't know what was happening, but rather that she didn't know what she was permitted to say publicly because the matter had been discussed in Closed Session. She explained that some of the content of that Closed Session had subsequently been made public by someone, which she characterized as a violation of ethics. She expressed that she genuinely wanted to be transparent with residents but was constrained by the legal obligations tied to Closed Session confidentiality. She stated clearly that she owned her mistake and accepted responsibility for how her words came across. Third, Commissioner Jackson, regarding water bills and infrastructure, noted that the previous Town Manager had anticipated that water bills could reach \$300 within a year if the Town did not address the issue of its water system – specifically referencing the potential sale of the Town's water operations. She acknowledged the Interim Town Manager was doing his best given the circumstances, but raised concerns about whether the personnel currently managing the Water Department had the proper credentials and qualifications to handle that work. Fourth, Commissioner Jackson, regarding the Interim Town Manager Mr. English, acknowledged that while he does not have Town management experience, his extensive State government experience would be valuable in helping the Town access state-level

funding and resources. Last, Commissioner Jackson closed by reiterating her apology and encouraging residents to join the March 10<sup>th</sup> Board of Education visit. Commissioner Burgess thanked those in attendance at the meeting stating the Town will move forward. First, Commissioner Cooper stated that she will attend a webinar on Tuesday, February 24, 2026, regarding ADA compliance for municipal websites. She noted that federal law requires websites to be ADA compliant by 2027 for communities with populations over 50,000, and by 2026 for smaller communities. She stated that the Town's website is not currently ADA compliant and emphasized the need to address this issue. Second, Commissioner Cooper stated that she will attend a code enforcement–related strategic planning session (Focus Group 3) on Wednesday, February 26, 2026, and will announce a future meeting date for that group. Third, Commissioner Cooper clarified comments made regarding the Town's infrastructure needs. She stated that the estimated \$75 million in infrastructure needs did not originate from Chief Williams, but from a professional Asset Inventory Assessment (AIA) conducted by McGill Engineering. She explained that the assessment, funded through a DEQ Grant, took over a year to complete and included an evaluation of roads, underground pipes, and other infrastructure. Last, Commissioner Cooper noted that the Town is facing a projected 21% increase in water costs from PWC, as the Town does not produce its own water and must purchase it. She emphasized the challenge of managing rising infrastructure needs while also addressing increased water rates.

f. Manager's Report – Interim Town Manager Dennis English Jr. – Mr. English thanked the Mayor, Board, and citizens for the opportunity to serve. He introduced himself personally, describing himself as a child of God, a husband, and a father of two (2) young children. He shared his educational background, noting he is a graduate of North Carolina Central University, a Historically Black College and University, with a Master's in Public Administration and a Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration from Saint Augustine's University.

Mr. English acknowledged the concern raised about his experience, confirming that he had worked at the State level as a department head for the Department of Administration, where he helped support approximately 5,000 small and minority businesses registered through his office. He described his experience in economic development, including work in Eastern North Carolina under an Economic Development Administration Grant at the Kenan Institute at Kenan-Flagler Business School at UNC Chapel Hill. He also highlighted his professional relationships across local, State, and federal government as a resource he intended to leverage for the Town's benefit. He noted that over the past nine (9) years he had operated his own government affairs practice, working with local governments to mobilize resources – including taking the Town of Princeville, recognized as the first Black-incorporated Town in North Carolina, to the White House.

Addressing those in the audience who may have researched him online, Mr. English acknowledged that Google and Facebook may not tell the full story of who Dennis English is, and stated that he was still there, still committed, and working hard. He acknowledged that change can be challenging but reaffirmed his commitment to working diligently to develop the Town to its full potential, stating, "We will not be defined by our past challenges. We will distinguish ourselves as a leading community tomorrow and in the future."

Mr. English then shared highlights from his first two (2) weeks on the job. He reported that he had met with a representative from the Local Government Commission (LGC) and had scheduled biweekly

meetings going forward to ensure the Town remains on track with its financial affairs. He had also scheduled weekly meetings with Cherry Bekaert, the firm retained to complete the Town's 2021 audit, and noted that the firm had committed to completing the audit by the following month. He acknowledged that the Town currently has five (5) outstanding audits.

Mr. English reported that he was actively coordinating with all Town Commissioners, staff, engineers, and community stakeholders to identify the top priorities for water infrastructure. He was also in the process of scheduling budget meetings with all departments to assess their needs prior to presenting a formal budget proposal to the Commissioners.

Mr. English noted that he had met individually with the leaders of each Town department, listening to identify ways to support the work being done. He also shared that a meeting was scheduled – describing it as something that had just come across his desk – to explore a partnership with Fayetteville Technical Community College (FTCC) for the H.O.P.E. program, which would provide workforce development opportunities in the Town's water operations department. He acknowledged publicly that the water operations team was critically understaffed, pointing to the water ops leader, Deanna Rosario who present in the audience, and noting he could count on one (1) hand the number of people supporting the entire water operations function. He expressed enthusiasm for the FTCC partnership as a means to develop the local workforce pipeline for that field.

Mr. English expressed gratitude to Mayor Anthony for inviting him to an upcoming meeting with the County Manager and Cumberland County Commissioner Chairman Kirk deViere to discuss areas of mutual cooperation between the County and the Town. He also announced his intention to schedule a meet-and-greet at Town Hall for citizens to get to know him directly and share their thoughts about the Town's future. He additionally committed to coming into the community – to places of business, schools, and churches – to build relationships and hear directly from residents.

Mr. English closed by describing the Town of Spring Lake as "a gem," acknowledging that some edges need to be polished, but affirming that the Town has great potential and that he is fully committed to helping it reach that potential through servant leadership.

Following his report, Mayor Anthony asked Mr. English if he would be willing to address some of the questions that had been raised by audience members during public comments. Mr. English responded that while he wanted to be respectful of the Commissioners' time, he recommended scheduling a dedicated Town Manager conversation – such as a Town Hall or informal meet-and-greet – where those questions could be properly addressed rather than rushing through them at the close of the meeting.

g. Town Attorney Report – Town Attorney Michael Porter – Attorney Porter was not present during Open Session.

## **10. CLOSED SESSION**

**Action:** Motion to approve to go into Closed Session pursuant to NCGS §143-318.11(a)(3) – Attorney-Client Privilege and pursuant to NCGS §143-318.11(a)(6) – Personnel.

**Motion by:** Commissioner Thompson  
**Second by:** Commissioner Cooper  
**Vote:** Unanimous

Mayor Anthony announced a brief recess before entering into Closed Session. It was again noted that a vote on Budget Amendment (BA-15) would take place upon the Board's return from Closed Session.

**Action:** Motion to approve to come back into Open Session. No action was taken.

**Motion by:** Commissioner Thompson  
**Second by:** Commissioner Jackson  
**Vote:** Unanimous

**Action:** Motion to approve Budget Amendment (BA-15) FY2026.

**Motion by:** Mayor Pro Tem Sutherland  
**Second by:** Commissioner Burgess  
**Vote:** 3-2 **Motion Carried;** **Noes:** Commissioner Cooper and Commissioner Thompson

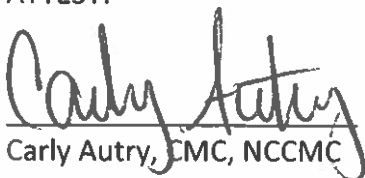
**Action:** Motion to approve the Interim Town Manager's Contract.

**Motion by:** Commissioner Jackson  
**Second by:** Commissioner Burgess  
**Vote:** 3-2 **Motion Carried;** **Noes:** Commissioner Cooper and Commissioner Thompson


**11. ADJOURNMENT**

**Action:** There being no further business to come before the Board, Mayor Anthony adjourned the meeting at 7:36 pm.

ATTEST:

  
Carly Autry, CMC, NCCMC  
Town Clerk



  
Kia Anthony  
Mayor

Mayor Anthony and Board of Commissioners,

Thank you for the opportunity to address you. The momentum this town was experiencing, regaining our standing with the LGC, the State of North Carolina, our other governmental partners and investors, all with eyes wide open, waiting to see what happens next. The residents are saying, "Here we go again".

It has been two weeks since Mr. Rorie was fired by this board. His replacement "in waiting" was sitting here in the audience that night. That was Not Random and these are not the old days nor the old ways.

Many of us saw the news media and read the comments and quotes Penelope Lopez with ABC 11 News interviewed Commissioner Jackson When asked how English's name was selected, Jackson said, "Oh, randomly, randomly. I'm not exactly sure. I can't even remember exactly sure, it came just randomly."

Also, in the same interview, Jackson said "The town's water bills being extremely high, as well as the high property taxes and some other things."

Myron Pitts, Fayetteville Observer quoted Commissioner Jackson as for the why she voted to fire Mr. Rorie, she said; “Basically he just didn’t have the vision that we had. We have a vision to move Spring Lake forward. We have a vision to lower water bills. We have vision of fixing up dilapidated buildings, get rid of them or put new ones up. He just doesn’t have that vision. “

“His vision was not the same as our vision,” Jackson said. “We’re just trying to move the town forward. We want to see changes in Spring Lake.

Board of Commissioners, this was being done with the four focus groups, a full-time code enforcement officer as well as our Minimum Housing Board and town committees.

To the entire board, WHERE is this ADDITIONAL \$70,000 severance package going to come from.....? Raising taxes? Or cutting services? Spring Lake residents pay the HIGHEST tax rate in Cumberland County at \$0.741 cents per \$100? followed by Hope Mills a distant second at \$0.48 and Fayetteville at \$0.4495! Reading the agenda packet, I see “Budget Amendment 13 is being put before this board to MOVE \$39,000 from the police department budget to help pay Mr. Rorie’s \$70,000 severance package.

Treat our tax dollars as if they are a precious resource! Because they are!! And spend them Wisely! \$70,000 which could have went to fund services such as water line repairs or even equipment for our first responders now goes to pay a man who no longer works for Spring Lake!

Lastly, when will we see or hear more about your vision for Spring Lake? Your Priorities? And your plans for implementing this vision?