

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

March 19, 2026

MINUTES

6:00 pm

The Spring Lake Board of Commissioners held a Special 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 Soñia L. Cooper
Commissioner Jackie Jackson
Commissioner Adrian Thompson

Others Present:

Carly Autry, Town Clerk
Dennis English Jr., Interim Town Manager
Stephanie Hutchins, Building Inspector
Police Chief Errol Jarman, Spring Lake Police Department
James Overton, Finance Director
Officer Malik Passmore, Spring Lake Police Department
Michael Porter, Town Attorney
Fire Chief Jason Williams, Spring Lake Fire Department

1. CALL TO ORDER

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

2. INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Evangelist Bettye Sanford gave the Invocation and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Action: Motion to approve the March 19, 2026, Special Meeting agenda.

Motion by: Commissioner Cooper

Second by: Mayor Pro Tem Sutherland

Vote: Unanimous

4. OPEN SESSION

- a. Town Manager Job Listing – Mayor Kia Anthony – Mayor Anthony explained that the Town needed to begin the process of hiring a new Town Manager. She stated that the Board had been provided

with the original job description and the previous Town Manager job listing that was posted before. She also mentioned that recommendations for updating the job listing had been provided.

Mayor Anthony acknowledged that the Board had just received her recommendations and suggested they could take a moment to review them. She explained that she had discussed the matter briefly during the week and talked to Mr. Overton about the salary range and what the Town was currently capable of sustaining. She indicated that the salary range was approximately \$130,000 to \$160,000, but noted they could double-check those numbers with HR, who could run them against the North Carolina League of Municipalities' (NCLM) salary reports for the entire state.

Mr. Overton had also checked into looking for municipalities of similar size but could not find comparable information because the Town was relatively small. Mayor Anthony wanted to begin discussion with the salary range and asked if anyone had additional suggestions or questions.

Mayor Pro Tem Sutherland stated that she had not yet reviewed the document, noting that she had only just received it and had only seen a portion of its contents. She asked for clarification on whether the Board was being asked to approve the item.

Commissioner Jackson also expressed that she had not read the materials as she had just received them. She indicated she needed time to review the information before making decisions or votes.

Mayor Anthony clarified that the recommendations she provided were just her suggestions for convenience and were not part of the official agenda package. She explained they were only discussing the information that had been provided – the original listing from the last posting and the Town Manager job requirements.

During discussion of the salary range, Mayor Anthony confirmed that Mr. Overton had indicated the Town could sustain \$130,000 to \$160,000. She noted they were currently paying Mr. English \$144,000 and that Mr. Rorie had been making \$140,000, so she thought \$130,000 to \$160,000 based on qualifications was a good range.

Mayor Pro Tem Sutherland questioned the salary range, suggesting \$140,000 to \$160,000 instead of \$130,000. She referenced that Mayor Anthony had recommended \$72 per hour for Mr. English as Interim Town Manager based on past practices and what was done previously. She wanted to confirm this was Mayor Anthony's recommendation that the Board had voted on. Mayor Anthony confirmed.

Commissioner Cooper stated that she was generally in favor of the proposed range but recommended adjusting it to begin at the lower end, suggesting a range of \$120,000 to \$160,000 instead of starting at \$130,000.

Mayor Anthony asked if there were any issues with the proposal. Commissioner Jackson reiterated that she would not be voting on the matter at this time, stating that she did not believe decisions

or votes should be made until all members were fully satisfied with the information presented. She acknowledged the item was included in the agenda packet but expressed a desire to further review and compare the details.

Commissioner Jackson then asked whether the Board was being asked to vote or simply provide recommendations at this stage. Mayor Anthony clarified that the item was not final and would not be set in stone until a formal vote was taken, noting that the Board was currently reviewing the matter together.

Mayor Anthony asked whether all members had an opportunity to review the previous salary information and inquired of the Clerk when the information had been distributed.

The Clerk stated that materials in the agenda packet had been sent out the day before, with two (2) additional items provided. One was described as the only Town Manager job description that was on file from HR and noted it was just General Statute rather than a proper job description.

Due to the Board not being prepared to finalize the Town Manager listing discussion, Mayor Anthony suggested that Board could wait and address on Thursday, March 26, 2026, meeting when the League would be coming for Town Manager hiring practices. She confirmed there would be a Special Meeting on March 26th for this purpose.

Mayor Pro Tem Sutherland stated that she would be unable to attend the Special Meeting scheduled for March 26th but acknowledged the Regular Meeting on Monday. Mayor Anthony noted that was acceptable and asked whether the Board was prepared to discuss the Town Manager job listing tonight. Mayor Pro Tem Sutherland indicated she was open to discussion, and Commissioner Jackson concurred, stating she was comfortable discussing the item as long as no vote was being taken at that time. Mayor Anthony responded that it was difficult to have a discussion without members having reviewed the material. Mayor Pro Tem Sutherland reiterated that members had just indicated they had not yet read it. Mayor Anthony then stated that all members had received their agenda packets at the same time.

Mayor Pro Tem Sutherland, Commissioner Burgess, and Commissioner Jackson noted they would not be able to attend the Special Meeting on March 26th.

The discussion concluded with the decision to move on to the next agenda item without finalizing the Town Manager job listing details.

(A copy of Mayor Anthony's suggestions is hereby incorporated by reference and made a part of these minutes – see **ATTACHMENT ONE**)

- b. Resolution 2026-04; To Approve a Municipal Accounting Services, Cybersecurity and Technical Assistance Memorandum of Agreement – Finance Director James Overton – Mr. Overton explained that this agreement was with the North Carolina League of Municipalities (NCLM). He stated that the League had received a Federal Grant to provide training and software to small Towns. The

original Grant was for Towns with populations less than 10,000, so the Town of Spring Lake was initially not eligible because their population was almost 12,000. However, due to past issues the Town had experienced, the Town received an exemption and were now eligible to participate.

Mr. Overton detailed that the Grant provided training to small Towns through free webinars, with about a dozen available that any employees, Board members, or managers could access online beginning April 1, 2026. He noted that Evelyn Robinson in Finance has a schedule of these free classes. He explained that while the webinars were available without an agreement, the League could also provide staff to come in and help train employees, but this required signing the contract.

Mr. Overton mentioned that when this first became available, Mr. Rorie had asked if he needed the League to come in, and initially he thought it wasn't necessary. However, he now believes the training could be very beneficial to younger employees, department heads, and council members. The training was free with no additional cost, and anyone could take as little or as much as they wanted, but the additional in-person training beyond the webinars required the signed contract.

Mr. Overton also explained another component of the agreement involving accounting software. The League had developed accounting software with a company called Black Mountain, providing this software free of cost for three (3) years to many small governments. To participate in this program, even if the Town wanted to in the future, the Town would need to sign the contract. He emphasized that the Town did not have to buy or use the Black Mountain software and would not be changing any software until the Town got audits caught up. However, to have the option to participate in the future, the Town needed to sign the agreement.

Mr. Overton concluded that they could take as little or as much training as the Town wanted with no additional cost, so the Town really had nothing to lose.

Attorney Porter asked Mr. Overton, as the Finance Director, was he recommending approval of the agreement. Mr. Overton confirmed this and added that the training could help train people in his department and other departments to move up and replace him when he retired in two (2) years.

Mayor Anthony expressed appreciation for taking advantage of League services and emphasized that training was definitely important. She asked if there were any questions or discussion from the Board.

Commissioner Jackson asked for clarification stating that if the services were being offered at no cost, she did not understand why Board approval was necessary. She also questioned if the accounting software was being changed.

Mr. Overton stated that the League requires execution of a contract in order to provide the free training, noting that without signing the agreement, the Town would only have access to webinar offerings and not the additional training. He also explained that part of the Grant involved the governmental accounting software developed with Black Mountain, which was being provided and

installed in many small Towns for free. However, the Town already had Harris software and didn't need to change accounting software until the Town was caught up with audits, as it would create problems to move over information until the Town had good beginning balances. He reiterated the Town didn't have to buy or use the software, but needed to sign the contract if the Town ever wanted the option to use it in the future.

Commissioner Jackson asked whether the decision to utilize or not utilize the services would be made by the Board. Mr. Overton confirmed that it would, responding in the affirmative.

Attorney Porter clarified that while it might seem confusing for the League to ask for a signed contract to provide something free, it was similar to signing a waiver before riding a ride – they just wanted something in writing. Mr. Overton added that the requirement was likely due to the Federal Grant funding.

Mayor Pro Tem Sutherland inquired about the cybersecurity and technical assistance components. She noted that she had discussed with the Town Manager about Fayetteville Technical Community College (FTCC) coming to their last meeting for a presentation, and asked about the possibility of collaboration between the League's offering and FTCC.

Mr. English confirmed that when FTCC had presented, he was impressed with their thoroughness and experience working with Hope Mills. Since both services were free, his thought was whether there could be collaboration between the two (2) entities to avoid duplicating efforts or having them work in different directions. He suggested bringing both to the table to let staff get the training they need, with the League and FTCC working together. He offered to facilitate a meeting between the two (2) entities once the Board voted on this Resolution.

Mayor Pro Tem Sutherland stated that she wanted to confirm her understanding that the item was different, noting that she had spoken with Mr. Overton, who provided clarification, including regarding paragraph two. She referenced language indicating a timeframe of up to three (3) years and a deadline of December 31, 2026, along with provisions allowing for additional services as needed. Mayor Pro Tem Sutherland further noted her understanding that the Town would not be required to change its software until the audit process is completed.

Action: Motion to approve Resolution 2026-04; To Approve a Municipal Accounting Services, Cybersecurity and Technical Assistance Memorandum of Agreement.

Motion by: Commissioner Thompson

Second by: Commissioner Cooper

Vote: Unanimous

- c. Manchester Fire District – Interim Town Manager Dennis English Jr. & Finance Director James Overton – Mr. English explained that the Town finally had an opportunity to move forward with the Manchester Fire District after a long process. He indicated that the Town is now in the process of sitting down with the County to work out details, and asked Mr. Overton to walk through the expectations going forward before having a discussion.

Mr. Overton provided the background, explaining that the Town had a contract with Cumberland County to provide fire protection service out of the Manchester Fire Station. That contract expired in June 2025. While they negotiated with the County to renew the contract, they were not successful in reaching a new agreement. Consequently, on September 30, 2025, the Town discontinued service to the Manchester Fire District.

Mr. Overton continued that the County had since contracted with a volunteer fire department in the County to provide the service. However, while that fire department did good work, their fire station was located too far away, affecting the ISO rating in the fire district due to response time issues from having to drive too far. As a result, the County came back to the Town willing to negotiate a new contract.

Mr. Overton reported that at the County's meeting the previous week, they agreed in principle to a contract where the County would pay the Town of Spring Lake \$647,000 per year. His understanding was that it would be a three-year contract starting July 1, 2026. Details still needed to be worked out, such as whether payment would be made all at once or monthly.

Mr. Overton explained that Chief Williams has proposed hiring three (3) additional firemen from positions that had been frozen by the Local Government Commission (LGC) a few years ago. The funding could also be used to give raises to existing firefighters to make their salaries more competitive with surrounding fire departments and to replace some equipment, including all mattresses at the fire station and other items.

Mr. Overton noted that unlike the previous contract which had no increases and was based on whatever the fire district tax was, this new contract would provide \$647,000 every year for three (3) years. He also would like the Town to include renewal options in the contract and determine what increases would be if they renewed.

Additionally, the County would provide \$50,000 immediately for the Town to provide mutual aid from the present time until June 30, 2026. During this period, the Town would not be the primary fire district for the next three (3) months, but would respond on mutual aid if requested. Then the Town would become the primary responders starting July 1, 2026, at \$647,000 per year.

Mr. Overton emphasized that this was substantially more than before, when the Town was only getting about \$160,000 per year while it was costing \$600,000-\$700,000. He described this as a much better contract than the previous one. He requested the Board's blessing to approve this in principle and allow Mr. English and Attorney Porter to work out the details and bring back a formal contract for approval.

Mr. Overton noted that the County needed to let the volunteer fire department know soon whether they were going with the Town of Spring Lake or continuing with the volunteers, so they were requesting an answer soon.

Attorney Porter clarified that there was no formal contract to vote on that evening – they just needed consensus to proceed, and would work out details later with Mr. English. He confirmed they would need consensus on the overall agreement and a formal vote on the mutual aid component, which could be handled at the Monday meeting.

Attorney Porter asked for clarification, stating that there was not a formal contract before the Board for approval and that only a consensus was needed at that time. Mr. Overton confirmed. Attorney Porter further stated that the details would be worked out later with staff, including himself and Mr. English, and reiterated that a consensus was needed, with a formal vote to occur later. He added that the mutual aid item would require a formal vote more promptly, noting a meeting was scheduled for coming Monday, March 23, 2026.

Mr. Overton then asked Chief Williams, who was present in the audience, whether anything further was needed beyond the Board indicating agreement to proceed with mutual aid. Chief Williams responded that no additional action was needed at this time and noted that most fire departments already participate in mutual aid agreements. Attorney Porter asked whether a mutual aid agreement had previously been signed, and Chief Williams stated that he had not signed one previously due to concerns about service demands and use of Town resources.

Mayor Pro Tem Sutherland stated that the department had historically operated in that manner, noting that it was the same approach she had previously discussed and that the Town had been compensated for providing those services.

Mayor Pro Tem Sutherland asked about the \$50,000 mutual aid payment timeline and requirements. Chief Williams stated that participation in the mutual aid program requires fire chiefs to sign an agreement on behalf of their department and noted that the County provides approximately \$50,000 annually to participating agencies. He explained that he declined to participate the previous year because he believed the arrangement would result in an imbalance of calls and strain on Town resources that was not justified by the funding. He stated that he is now willing to participate.

Mayor Pro Tem Sutherland acknowledged that the Town would receive the \$50,000 but questioned whether participation would still result in the department responding frequently outside its jurisdiction, noting that mutual aid inherently involves shared response responsibilities. Chief Williams confirmed that it would.

Mayor Pro Tem Sutherland further asked what had changed from the prior year, given that the same conditions could apply. Chief Williams explained that his previous concern was that another department would receive the majority of the funding while the Town would handle a disproportionate number of calls, placing a burden on Town taxpayers.

Mayor Pro Tem Sutherland then clarified her understanding that the current proposal includes participation for a limited period, with the \$50,000 covering services through the end of the fiscal year, and that mutual aid obligations would continue beyond that as needed. Chief Williams

confirmed that the \$50,000 applies through the current budget period and agreed with her understanding.

Mayor Anthony recommended staff to continue negotiations with the County and return to the Board with recommendations, noting that the outcome would likely need to be communicated to the County by Resolution. Attorney Porter requested that, at a minimum, the Board provide consensus to allow Chief Williams to execute the mutual aid agreement for the three-month period totaling \$50,000, through June 30, 2026. Mr. Overton noted that a new contract would begin July 1, 2026. Attorney Porter clarified that a formal Resolution was not necessary for the interim agreement and that Board consensus would be sufficient. Mayor Anthony agreed and clarified that a Resolution would be used for future formal communication. Mayor Anthony then asked if the Board was willing to provide consensus, and consensus was reached

Board consensus for Chief Williams to proceed with both the Mutual Aid Agreement and to continue negotiations on the main contract.

5. CLOSED SESSION

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

Motion by: Commissioner Cooper

Second by: Commissioner Thompson

Vote: Unanimous

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

Motion by: Commissioner Cooper

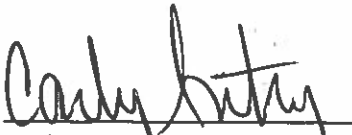
Second by: Commissioner Burgess

Vote: Unanimous

6. ADJOURNMENT

Action: There being no further business to come before the Board, Mayor Anthony adjourned the meeting at 6:54 pm.

ATTEST:


Carly Autry, CMC, NCCMC
Town Clerk




Fredricka Sutherland
Mayor Pro Tem

RECOMMENDED TOWN MANAGER LISTING

Town of Spring Lake, North Carolina

Position	Town Manager
Recommended Salary Range	\$130,000 to \$160,000

The Community

Spring Lake is a full-service council-manager municipality in Cumberland County, North Carolina, located adjacent to Fort Bragg, one of the U.S. Army's largest installations in the world. The Town is governed by a Mayor and five-member Board of Commissioners elected at large on a nonpartisan basis. Spring Lake offers the character of a small town with the connectivity, regional partnerships, and opportunity of a military-connected community in the greater Fayetteville area.

The Opportunity

The Town of Spring Lake is seeking an experienced, steady, and results-oriented executive to serve as its next Town Manager. The Town Manager is the chief administrative official of Town government and is responsible to the Board of Commissioners for the proper administration of the affairs of the Town. The successful candidate will provide executive leadership over municipal operations, personnel, budgeting, service delivery, and intergovernmental coordination while helping the Board carry out its policy direction and community priorities.

Spring Lake's current five-year strategic focus areas are safe, reliable, and sustainable water, sewer, and stormwater systems; revitalized town infrastructure; a safe, vibrant, and healthy community; and economic development. The next Town Manager should be prepared to lead implementation across these priorities with sound administration, strong communication, accountability, and long-range planning.

What We're Looking For

The ideal candidate will bring executive leadership presence, financial depth, sound judgment, and a demonstrated ability to lead a full-service local government organization.

Required Qualifications

- Bachelor's degree in public administration, business administration, finance, political science, planning, or a related field
- At least five years of progressively responsible local government leadership experience with direct responsibility for budgeting, personnel, and multi-department operations
- Demonstrated strength in municipal finance, budget development, organizational management, and service delivery
- Proven ability to build effective working relationships with elected officials, staff, residents, business stakeholders, and partner agencies
- Strong written, verbal, and interpersonal communication skills
- Ability to assume full administrative responsibility quickly upon appointment

Preferred Qualifications

- Master's degree in public administration, business administration, or a related field
- Experience as a Town Manager, City Manager, Assistant Manager, Deputy Manager, or comparable senior executive in North Carolina local government