A Regular Meeting of the City Council of the City of Hickory was held in the Council Chamber of the Municipal Building on Tuesday, May 19, 2026 at 6:00 p.m., with the following members present:

Hank Guess

Tony Wood — Anthony Freeman
Charlotte C. Williams — Aldermen
Danny Seaver — Jill Patton

A quorum was present.

Also present were City Manager Warren Wood, Deputy City Manager Rodney Miller, Assistant City Manager Steve Miller, Assistant City Manager Yaidee Fox, City Attorney Timothy Swanson, Deputy City Clerk Crystal B. Mundy and City Clerk Debbie D. Miller

I. Mayor Guess called the meeting to order. All Council members were present except for Alderwoman Dula

II. Invocation by Cliff Moone, Retired Clergy

III. Pledge of Allegiance

IV. Special Presentations

A. Presentation of a Proclamation for Building Safety Month – May 2026.

Mayor Guess asked Staff from the Police Department, Fire Department and Code Enforcement Division to the podium. Mayor Guess commented on the importance of actually making sure that structures were not only safe, but they were maintained in a safe manner and were crucial to all of them. They certainly wanted to recognize these ladies and gentlemen present, and there were others he was sure that could not be present this evening, probably working or otherwise doing something. They always wanted to take advantage of this time of month in May to recognize Building Safety Month with a proclamation. Mayor Guess read and presented the Proclamation for Building Safety Month to those in attendance. Photos were taken.

Mayor Guess reiterated they wanted to recognize them and thank them because like it said in the proclamation, sometimes those types of things go unnoticed until something happens. They were trying to prevent the something from happening. They appreciated them.

B. Dr. Ric Vandett, Foothills Veterans Helping Veterans to Discuss Mission 22.

Mayor Guess asked Dr. Ric Vandett from Foothills Veterans Helping Veterans to discuss Mission 22. He noted that Dr. Vandett had brought his entire entourage. He asked those who were a part of the Dr. Ric Vandett's entourage, or a veteran, to stand up so they could recognize them. He knew they had a lot of veterans. It went without saying that all these folks were champions of their veterans, but he thought that Dr. Vandett was probably the head cheerleader for their veterans.

Dr. Ric Vandett pointed out their President of their organization Larry McMullen.

Mayor Guess always wanted to take advantage of every opportunity that they have to thank their veterans for their service to our country. He thanked Dr. Vandett and those present that were veterans.

Dr. Ric Vandett appreciated the opportunity to share some thoughts with them this evening. He introduced himself as Ric Vandette and advised he was a Vietnam veteran. He was the Vice President of the Vietnam Veterans of America Hickory Chapter 1136, the Joe Dillard Chapter, and the Treasurer of the Foothills Veterans Helping Veterans. It was a group of volunteer men and women who had given up their time to help the veterans in the greater Foothills region. One of the most glaring challenges they were finding was how they could help those veterans, when they come home, they find that they were depressed and they may be contemplating suicide? Foothills Veterans Helping Veterans had partnered with Mission 22, (he referred to the shirt that he was wearing). It was a national organization that was dedicated to increasing the awareness that 22 veterans a day commit suicide. That was just the number that was in the VA system. Veterans knew it was much higher than the 22 a day. Their organization, Foothills Veterans Helping Veterans, was looking at many ways that they could help their brothers and sisters who have gallantly served our country only to come home to normal situations while being burdened with abnormal feelings of anger, despair, grief, loneliness, and deep depression caused by memories they cannot erase. He asked Council to consider partnering with Foothills Veterans Helping Veterans to install a 22-mile-per-hour speed limit sign. It would serve as a constant reminder to drive safely. They talked about building safely, driving safely was just as important. It would serve as a reminder and would support veterans facing the struggles many bring home with them. He referred to a photo on the screen which showed the 22-mph sign. They actually have one in Hickory, which he pointed out on the photo. It was located near the VFW Hall near the Music Factory. It was a speed limit sign, says 22. They would have to look real, real close underneath to talk about veteran suicide. He referred to the photo on the screen and advised the one he would like to have put in the City of

Hickory. It stood out. It looks right away, says speed limit 22, veteran suicides, 22 veteran suicides per day. They would put a phone number on that sign so that people could call if there was an issue. They would also have their veteran's logo on there and any other veteran organization locally with whom they partner, one of whom was American Legion Post 544. They do a lot of work with them, and also the local DAV chapter. They work with them, and he would love to see the City of Hickory logo on that sign as partners with them. He wanted to share a personal thank you to Mayor Guess. He annually brings greetings from the City to veterans every year during the Foothills Veterans Stand Down. They just completed their 14th event. They were already gearing up to do another one. They do one in the fall in Lenoir and one in the spring at Catawba Valley Community College, and their guests have been wonderful each year to come by. This past year, they gave information, resources, goods and services, as well as food and good coffee to over 380 veterans who came through that day. This was for anybody, they did not have to be a veteran, their group meets every Friday morning at 9 o'clock at the Hickory Soup Kitchen. They were welcome, it was open to anybody. If they stay more than 5 minutes, they were automatically a member. There were no dues or anything like that. They do not charge anybody for the stand-down. They had over 60 different agencies supplying things for their veterans. This was an outstanding community. It had reached out so many times to make a difference for so many people, and they were hoping that they would consider that this particular sign was one more way for the City and veterans to get together to say, slow down, please consider what they could do to help veterans who were going through difficult times. It was not just those who had returned from Afghanistan, Iraq, and Iran. Those of them who were in their '80s like him, were in Vietnam, and still carried things around. The idea of keeping awareness he thought was so important, and he would love for them to be able to partner with the City of Hickory. He thanked them for their time, and he would be glad to answer any questions they might have. He mentioned the reason a lot of people do not know about the one currently up, how often do they drive past the Music Factory? How often do they go past there? If they did go by there, the first thing you see was a 22-mile-an-hour sign that looks just like a regular State sign. Slow down a little bit, keep going, and you see the proposed one, that gives you some information. They wanted people to stop and think about this. That catches their eye. He would love it to be in Union Square. He did not want people to go 22 miles an hour in Union Square, but it could be in a location where people see it and understand, and they could talk about that if they were interested in partnering with them, because the more visible, the more things they do for awareness, the more they help their veterans in need.

Mayor Guess did not think that they needed to discuss it much, but they would certainly consider it and talk about it, and they would have someone to get back in contact with him and his group, and they would figure out the next direction.

Dr. Vandett thanked Mayor Guess, Council members and City Manager Warren Wood. He appreciated that very much. He reiterated that any veteran, non-veterans, were welcome to come to the Hickory Soup Kitchen, at 9 o'clock Friday morning. See you there.

City Manager Warren Wood commented they knew where to find Dr. Vandett, and they would be in touch with him.

C. Assistant Public Works Director Carolina Kone, and Kevin Rogers, City of High Point and NC-APWA Board Representative Recognition.

Mayor Guess advised there was a special, special presentation that was not on the agenda. He asked City Manager Warren Wood to introduce the presentation.

City Manager Warren Wood thought this was the first time that he could ever recall, they knew they were going to do this item, but they did not want to put it on the agenda to let the cat out of the bag. He asked Caroline Kone, Assistant Public Works Director and City Engineer, and a representative for the American Public Works Association to the podium for the special presentation.

Assistant Public Works Director Caroline Kone introduced Kevin Rogers with the City of High Point. They were present on behalf of the North Carolina Chapter of the American Public Works Association. They both served on the State Chapter Board. It was their pleasure to be present tonight. Especially during this American Public Works Week. They were super excited about this. They were present to present an award to somebody who works for the City of Hickory. She gave a little background about the award itself and then she talked about the person that was receiving the award. She noted by the time she got to the person; they would know who it was. This was a Samuel Greeley Local Government Service Award. Samuel Greeley Local Government Service Award gave formal recognition of an honorary character to persons who had continuously served a local public agency in an official capacity for a long term of years and who had contributed to the advancement of public works practice as a member of the American Public Works Association. To be eligible for this award, a person must have honorably and efficiently served a single local public agency in an official capacity continuously for 30 or more years and who had also been members in good standing of the American Public Works Association for at least 15

years. The person receiving this award had demonstrated a career-long commitment to public service and their consistent support for public works operation within the City of Hickory. Through collaborative ethical leadership, this person had championed sound infrastructure planning, cross-department coordination, and fiscally responsible decision-making, which strengthens Public Works delivery and organizational effectiveness. Now they were really going to know who this person was. His recent appointment as Assistant City Manager reflected the trust placed in him in advancing the community priorities while valuing the essential role Public Works plays in public health, safety, and quality of life. Qualities that closely align with the intent and spirit of the Greeley Award. She was proud to present this year's American Public Works Association North Carolina Chapter Greeley Award to Steve Miller. Photos were taken.

Mayor Guess advised that was a hard secret to keep. It was hard to get a surprise over on some people. Steve definitely deserved that award and more. Once again, congratulations. He mentioned that Ward 5 Alderwoman Dula was unable to attend the meeting tonight. He recognized a member of the Hickory City Youth Council that was present, Miss Payton Scronce, she was from Challenger Early High School, and he certainly wanted to recognize her and thank her for being present this evening as well.

V. Persons Requesting to Be Heard

A. Ms. Revonda Lynch advised she was a lifelong resident of Ridgeview community. She preferred not giving her address. Two weeks ago, someone reached out to her regarding a mother and a son. The mom had dementia and the son was low functioning mentally. They had been without hot water for about 2 weeks then. She advised them to contact code enforcement. Yesterday she followed up with her to see if anything had happened, any changes. Nothing has happened, nor have they been contacted by anyone. Now they had gone into 3 weeks without hot water. In addition to that, their stove was not working. Their stove had not been working for approximately 2 weeks now. They were told that they only have one maintenance guy and the work order had been issued. Unfortunately, this was with Nu Dimensions. In addition to that, they had only been there like 3 to 4 months. Their rent increased $70. They were told that that was due to there being a mistake. After reviewing their income, they increased their rent by $70. If they were presenting themselves as low-income housing, were there not guidelines, regulations that were required to be considered low-income housing? Right now, they were not even meeting the basic standards, including hot water and a stove to cook on. She could go on, but she thought she had expressed herself enough where they have the point. Because these people were in such dire need and they were not functional, they were not able to represent themselves. She was told that a family member was coming up this weekend from Atlanta. She was not sure if that was happening, but she did promise them that she would bring this forward to Council. Anything that they could do she would appreciate it. Thank you.

Mayor Guess asked Ms. Lynch if she was able to stay, they would have somebody to get with her and further look into this matter. He asked if there was anyone else that would like to address the Council this evening. No one else appeared.

VI. Approval of Minutes

A. Regular Meeting of May 5, 2026.

Alderman Seaver moved, seconded by Alderwoman Patton that the Minutes of May 5, 2026 be approved. The motion carried unanimously.

VII. Reaffirmation and Ratification of Second Readings. Votes recorded on first reading will be reaffirmed and ratified on second reading unless Council Members change their votes and so indicate on second reading.

Alderwoman Patton moved, seconded by Alderwoman Williams that the following be reaffirmed and ratified on second reading. The motion carried unanimously.

A. Budget Revision Number 18. (First Reading Vote: Unanimous)

VIII. Consent Agenda: All items below will be enacted by vote of City Council. There will be no separate discussion of these items unless a Council Member so requests. In which event, the item will be removed from the Consent Agenda and considered under Item IX.

Alderwoman Patton moved, seconded by Alderman Freeman approval of the Consent Agenda. The motion carried unanimously.

A. Approved the Issuance of a Pyrotechnic Display Permit to PyroStar Entertainment for a Fireworks Display at Hickory Motor Speedway.

Staff request approval to issue a pyrotechnic display permit to PyroStar Entertainment for a fireworks display at the Hickory Motor Speedway for May 9, 2026 (Rain Date, October

17, 2026). Kevin Piercy, General Manager of Hickory Motor Speedway, submitted a request to obtain permission to conduct a public fireworks display. The North Carolina Fire Code requires an operational permit for the use and handling of pyrotechnic special effects material. The Hickory Fire Department Fire & Life Safety Division shall review all required documentation for the event, including Alcohol Tobacco and Firearm's (ATF) License, Operator and Assistant Operators Permits from North Carolina Office of State Fire Marshal (NCOSFM), Site Plan, and the one-million-dollar liability insurance policy. The Fire & Life Safety Division will also inspect the pyrotechnics display area before the event to ensure compliance with NCOSFM Guidelines, National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) NFPA 1123 Code for Fireworks Display, and NFPA 1126 Use of Pyrotechnics Before a Proximate Audience (if applicable). Staff recommend approval of the above pyrotechnics display, subject to drought conditions and the Fire Marshal's final approval.

B. Approved the Purchase of a FINN Mulch Blower in the Amount of $150,324.84 from James River Equipment Utilizing the Sourcewell Contract.

Staff requests Council's approval of the purchase of a FINN mulch blower in the amount of $150,324.84 from James River Equipment. The Parks and Public Properties department regularly installs mulch throughout many different areas of the city. As the amenities and park locations grow, a greater need for efficiency is needed to complete these installations. This piece of equipment is being purchased with funds from the Public Services Parks and Public Properties' Capital Budget. Equipment specifications for this machine have been approved by the Parks and Public Properties and Fleet divisions based on current needs. The equipment will be purchased utilizing Sourcewell contract pricing to ensure the best purchase price. Staff recommend Council's approval of the purchase of a FINN MBH6 mulch blower in the amount of $150,324.84 from James River Equipment.

Notice was advertised in a newspaper having general circulation in the Hickory area on May 2, 2026.

C. Called for a Public Hearing for Consideration of the City Manager's FY2026-2027 Recommended Budget. **(Authorized Public Hearing for June 2, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. in Council Chambers of the Julian G. Whitener Municipal Building).**

D. Approved a Professional Services Agreement with Thomas-Gordon-Shook (TGS) related to the Kenworth Sidewalk Connector (BL-0165) in the Amount of $324,831.20, Contingent on North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) Approval.

Staff requests Council's approval of an Agreement for Professional Services with Thomas-Gordon-Shook (TGS), Consulting Engineers for Preliminary Engineering and Design Services related to the Kenworth Sidewalk Connector – BL-0165 in the amount of $324,831.20, contingent on North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) approval. The City applied for and received Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) funding approval for $2,800,000 (with 20% City match of a $700,000) from the Greater Hickory MPO and NCDOT for the Kenworth sidewalk connector. The project area contains missing sidewalk segments that are critical for connecting NC 127 and Kiwanis Park to surrounding neighborhoods. These gaps currently prevent safe pedestrian access between the park, nearby neighborhoods, and the broader sidewalk network that links residential areas to other areas of the City. Preliminary Engineering is needed to design the Kenworth sidewalk connector. Staff requests Council's approval of an Agreement for Professional Services with TGS in the amount of $324,831.20, contingent on NCDOT approval.

E. Approved an Agreement for Professional Services with Rummel, Klepper, & Kahl, LLP in the Amount of $625,124.72 Related to the Aviation Walk Connector Multi-Use Trail and the Aviation Museum Connector Multi-Use Trail.

Staff requests Council's approval of an Agreement for Professional Services with Rummel, Klepper, & Kahl, LLP for construction, engineering and inspection (CEI) services related to BL-0067 ($312,562.36) – Aviation Walk Connector Multi-Use Trail and BL-0115 ($312,562.36)– Aviation Museum Connector Multi-Use Trail, contingent on North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) concurrence. The City applied for and received State Transportation Block Grant (STBG) funding approval for BL-0067 for $1,600,000 (with 20% City match of $400,000) from the Greater Hickory MPO and NCDOT for Aviation Walk Connector Multi-Use Trail. The multi-use trail will connect 17th Street NW Extension with the Aviation Walk. The City applied for and received Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) funding approval for BL-0115, for $2,400,000 (with 20% City match of $600,000) from the Greater Hickory MPO and NCDOT for the Aviation Museum Connector Multi-Use Trail. The multi-use trail will connect the Aviation Museum to the Aviation Walk Connector and the rest of the Hickory Trail System. Rummel, Klepper, & Kahl, LLP were selected on qualifications-based proposals and was concurred with by NCDOT. Staff recommend Council's approval.

F. Approved a Cemetery Deed from the City of Hickory to Mary King, Located in Southside Cemetery, Containing 80 Square Feet, Designated as Lot No. C, Section 6, Spaces 3 and 4. (Prepared by City of Hickory).

G. Approved Applying for the Safe Streets for All Grant for Road and Intersection Improvements to Highway 127 from 12th Avenue NE to 16th Avenue NE.

Staff requests Council's approval to apply for the Safe Streets for All Grant for road and intersection improvements to Highway 127 from 12th Avenue NE to 16th Avenue NE. The City of Hickory adopted the Hickory Moving Forward Comprehensive Safety Action Plan on April 16, 2026, a plan funded by a 2023 Safe Streets for All (SS4A) Planning Grant. The Hickory Moving Forward Safety Action Plan and the City of Hickory's High Injury Network mapping have identified the intersections of Highway 127 at 12th Avenue NE to 16th Avenue NE as high priorities for addressing with updated safety features for all road users. Staff recommend that City Council approve the application for the Safe Streets for All Implementation grant of $2,500,000, with $2,000,000 from the SS4A federal grant and $500,000 from the City of Hickory as a local match, for improvements to Highway 127 from 12th Avenue NE to 16th Avenue NE.

H. Approved a Professional Engineering Services Agreement with McGill Associates, P.A. for the Henry Fork Streambank and Sewer Improvements in the Amount of $47,636.

Staff requests Council's approval of a Professional Engineering Services Agreement with McGill Associates, P.A. for the Henry Fork Streambank and Sewer Improvements – Engineering Report/Environmental Information Document, in the amount of $47,636. This project will consist of replacement and relocation of sewer lines, the rehabilitation of manholes, and the restoration and hardening of streambanks to prevent future issues and enhance resilience. The Department of Environmental Quality has received over $253 million in appropriations earmarked specifically for wastewater projects in areas affected by Hurricane Helene. The City of Hickory has qualified for a $5 million dollar loan with 100% principal forgiveness. A request for qualifications was issued for this project in January 2026. Statements of qualifications were received from four interested firms: McGill Associates, KCI Technologies, Timmons Group, and McAdams. Proposals were reviewed by City staff and ranked McGill Associates as the firm best positioned to complete the project based on their firm's experience and design team qualifications. Staff recommends Council's approval of the agreement with McGill Associates, P.A.

I. Approved the Citizens' Advisory Committee Recommendation for Assistance through the City of Hickory's Housing Programs.

The mission of the City of Hickory's Community Development Division is to preserve the existing housing base, enhance ownership opportunities for all of its citizens to obtain decent housing, and provide a quality environment conducive to the safe and healthy growth of its citizenry. The seven-member Citizens' Advisory Committee was formed to provide for citizens' input in the facilitation of the City's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program, as well as any other similar community enhancement funding the City may receive. The following requests were considered by the Citizens' Advisory Committee at their regular meeting on May 7, 2026:

- Elissa Collins located at 321 3rd Street SE, Hickory was recommended for approval of up to $25,000 under the City of Hickory's Housing Rehabilitation Program.
- Gloria Montgomery, located at 537 6th Avenue SW, Hickory was recommended for approval of up to $15,000 under the City of Hickory's 2026 Urgent Repair Program

The Citizens' Advisory Committee recommends approval of the aforementioned requests for assistance through the City of Hickory's housing assistance programs.

J. Approved on First Reading Budget Revision Number 19.

ORDINANCE NO. 26-18
BUDGET REVISION NUMBER 19

BE IT ORDAINED by the Governing Board of the City of Hickory that, pursuant to N.C. General Statutes 159.15 and 159.13.2, the following revision be made to the annual budget ordinance for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2026, and for the duration of the Project Ordinance noted herein.

SECTION 1. To amend the General Fund within the FY 2025-26 Budget Ordinance, the expenditures shall be amended as follows:

FUNCTIONAL AREA	INCREASE	DECREASE
Culture & Recreation	39,451	-
Public Safety	17,500	-
Other Financing Uses	1,061,181	-

TOTAL	1,118,132	-

To provide funding for the above, the General Fund revenues will be amended as follows:

FUNCTIONAL AREA	INCREASE	DECREASE
Sales and Services	39,451	-
Miscellaneous	17,500	-
Other Financing Sources	1,061,181	-
TOTAL	1,118,132	-

SECTION 2. To amend the Henry Fork Streambank and Sewer Improvements (#83321) Capital Project Ordinance, the expenditures shall be amended as follows:

FUNCTIONAL AREA	INCREASE	DECREASE
Water & Sewer Capital Projects	47,636	-
TOTAL	47,636	-

To provide funding for the above, the Henry Fork Streambank and Sewer Improvements (#83321) revenues will be amended as follows:

FUNCTIONAL AREA	INCREASE	DECREASE
Other Financing Sources	47,636	-
TOTAL	47,636	-

SECTION 3. To amend the Aviation Walk Connector (#546021) Capital Project Ordinance, the expenditures shall be amended as follows:

FUNCTIONAL AREA	INCREASE	DECREASE
General Capital Projects	1,805,904	-
TOTAL	1,805,904	-

To provide funding for the above, the Aviation Walk Connector (#546021) revenues will be amended as follows:

FUNCTIONAL AREA	INCREASE	DECREASE
Other Financing Sources	361,181	-
Restricted Intergovernmental	1,444,723	-
TOTAL	1,805,904	-

SECTION 4. To amend the Kenworth Sidewalk Connector (#BL165) Grant Project Ordinance, the expenditures shall be amended as follows:

FUNCTIONAL AREA	INCREASE	DECREASE
General Capital Projects	3,500,000	-
TOTAL	3,500,000	-

To provide funding for the above, the Kenworth Sidewalk Connector (#BL-165) revenues will be amended as follows:

FUNCTIONAL AREA	INCREASE	DECREASE
Other Financial Sources	700,000	-
Restricted Intergovernmental	2,800,000	-
TOTAL	3,500,000	-

SECTION 5. Copies of the budget revision shall be furnished to the Clerk of the Governing Board, and to the City Manager (Budget Officer) and the Finance Officer for their direction.

IX. Items Removed from Consent Agenda – None

X. Informational Items

XI. New Business

A. Public Hearings

1. Approved the Community Development Block Grant 2026 Annual Action Plan. – Presentation by Community Development Specialist, Anna Beth Walker.

Staff requests Council's consideration of the Community Development Block Grant 2026 Annual Action Plan, for submission as required by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development requires the City of Hickory, as a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) entitlement funding recipient, to prepare an Annual Action Plan as

an extension of the CDBG Five-Year Consolidated Plan. Funds will be used to develop stronger communities by providing decent housing, creating suitable living environments, and expanding economic opportunities, principally for people of low and moderate incomes. This plan sets priorities among these needs and sets out the action plan for use of available funds on a yearly basis. The City's strategy for administering 2026 federal funds for community development and housing, the proposed budget line items are as follows: Housing Rehab/Purchase Rehab Program - $175,000; Public Infrastructure and Facility Improvements - $150,000; Small Business Assistance Program - $4,000; Public Service Activities - $59,000; Contingency - $10,188; Program Administration and Fair Housing - $63,000; Total CDBG - $461,188. The Citizens Advisory Committee reviewed the draft plan at their May 7, 2026 meeting and recommended approval. Staff recommend approval of the FY 2026-2027 CDBG Annual Action Plan.

Notice of the public hearing was advertised in a newspaper having general circulation in the Hickory area on April 18, May 7, and May 19, 2026.

City Manager Warren Wood asked Community Development Specialist, Anna Beth Walker to the podium to present Council with the Community Development Block Grant 2026 Annual Action Plan.

Community Development Specialist, Anna Beth Walker gave a PowerPoint presentation. She discussed the CDBG Annual Action Plan. The Community Development Block Grant program aims to improve communities by providing housing, a suitable living environment, and expanding economic opportunities, principally for persons of low and moderate incomes. The City of Hickory is an entitlement community and receives an allocation each year directly from the U.S. Housing and Urban Development Department. For this year, the City of Hickory will receive $361,188 through its CDBG allocation. The City also expects to have approximately $100,000 in program income, which was a total budget of $461,188. She discussed the proposed budget details, housing rehabilitation purchase program, $175,000; public infrastructure and facility improvements, $150,000; small business assistance, $4,000; public service activities, $59,000; administration, $61,200; fair housing outreach and education, $1,800; and contingency at $10,188. They had two neighborhood meetings, one on January 29th and one on February 5th. They had extensive conversations with nonprofit providers and City staff. These two meetings and additional research of demographic data and statistics led to the development of this strategic plan. The plan was created using IDIS, which was a required HUD web template. The City's identified needs for this plan were preservation of the City's housing stock, public infrastructure and facility improvements, homelessness services, services for persons with HIV and AIDS, youth education, small business and entrepreneurship, and fair housing outreach and education. Some notable projects during this past year were the Hickory Optimist Park renovations that were currently ongoing, support for 8 local nonprofit public service agencies assisting the homeless, the hungry, and those with HIV and AIDS, and support of local low-to-moderate-income homeowners through the City's housing rehabilitation program. She referred to the PowerPoint presentation and displayed before and after photos of the current Hickory Optimist Park. This should be done by the end of next month. She displayed a before and after of a housing rehabilitation project. For this project they replaced the whole entire HVAC system, plus all of the electricity that needed to go with that. They also replaced windows and addressed lead paint for this home. Their 2026 proposed budget highlights were public infrastructure and facility improvements in low- to moderate-income neighborhoods, support for local nonprofit public service agencies that meet the goals of their consolidated plan, and support of local low-to-moderate-income homeowners through the housing rehabilitation program. She asked if there were any questions.

Mayor Guess asked for any questions. He explained the rules for conducting the public hearing. He declared the public hearing open and asked if there was anyone present to speak in opposition to the proposal. No one appeared. Mayor Guess asked if there was anyone present to speak in favor of the proposal. No one appeared. Mayor Guess closed the public hearing.

Alderwoman Patton moved, seconded by Alderman Seaver approval of the Community Development Block Grant 2026 Annual Action Plan. The motion carried unanimously.

B. Departmental Reports

1. Update on the EMAS and Retaining Wall Projects at Hickory Regional Airport – Presentation by Airport Director Chad Hunsucker.

City Manager Warren Wood asked Airport Director Chad Hunsucker to the podium to update Council on the EMAS and retaining wall projects at the Hickory Regional Airport. He will describe what EMAS actually was and what it does, as well as an update.

Airport Director Chad Hunsucker gave a PowerPoint presentation. He hoped that he would make sense of what EMAS stands for and what it was actually going to do for them at Hickory. Engineered Material Arresting System, EMAS. What an EMAS was, it was manufactured blocks that were strategically placed at the departure end of a runway, normally always at airports that do not have a standard runway safety area or an RSA. He would cover that a little bit later and they would get where they were at in Hickory. He referred to the PowerPoint and advised they could see it was made up of a blocking system. The intent was if an aircraft has an overrun or a runway excursion, they roll into this EMAS system, and it safely stops them. It was kind of like a sophisticated truck runoff ramp up in the mountains. That was how it worked. He advised Runway 24 approach end, the runway safety area, or the departure end of Runway 6, which was more of what they were concerned with in this instance. During a 2022 FAA 139 inspection, the inspector noted that the RSA for Hickory on the Runway 24 end was not standard. A standard runway safety area was supposed to be 1,000 feet long and in their case 400 feet wide. They could see due to the topography, he referred to the PowerPoint and pointed out an angle. Essentially their runway safety area ends there. The first action the FAA took was they said they were going to impose what they call declared distances, which was essentially they do not shorten the runway physically, but they do what they call total operational runway length, total takeoff length available, and they publish that to pilots. When a pilot plans their departure or landing, they have to assume the runway was not 6,401 foot like it was at Hickory. In the case when they declared distances, it made the runway 6,100 feet. Well, that provided a significant operational impact, and they lost a bunch of revenue because some of the larger charter and cargo aircraft could not come to Hickory anymore due to the declared distances. After they took away the declared distances, the FAA said, well, the long-term fix for this was they were going to install an EMAS at Hickory. He referred to the PowerPoint and showed where the EMAS was located, it was about 500 feet and change from the departure end of Runway 6, because ultimately this was designed for an aircraft that would be taking off or landing Runway 6 that would run off the end towards Clement Boulevard. The system, believe it or not, was made up of a little over 2,700 blocks, and by putting that in, their safety area could then be shrunk down to 700 feet. Well, in order to do that, they still have to make their safety area whole here. This area has to be at grade. It cannot have holes, ruts, and no more than a 5% grade off the edge of it. What they had to do was before they could put the EMAS in, they had to build a retaining wall, and it would essentially create an extension of this safety area here. What the City did was they partnered with Catawba Valley Engineering and Testing and Clayton Engineering to come up with two wall designs. To give them some choices. They had 3 responsive bidders. He noted the spread between bids here, and the low bid was from Neill Grading and Construction for a little over $1.3 million. He noted what they were seeing for Option 1 and Option 2, Option 1 was a 2-wall design. It was a lower buttress wall and an upper retaining wall. Option 2 was a single wall design that was backfilled with the aggregate material. Part of that cost was they were going to have to pay for the aggregate material, which was a little over $1.2 million by itself. He referred to the PowerPoint and displayed what the design looked like that they were going to move forward with, the 2-wall design, which was a little over $1.3 million for Neill Grading and Construction. The lower part, as you come up Clement right before you get to the LP Frans entrance, if they looked off to their left, that slope right there, the lower buttress wall would go towards the bottom, towards the road, and then the upper retaining wall up towards the top. Staff was requesting acceptance of the bid for the $1,319,714 from Neill Grading. Additionally, requesting approval for the City Manager to execute the construction contract, and lastly, request approval of a budget revision to transfer the $1,319,714 from remaining funds from the Aviation Walk Project. He asked for any questions.

Mayor Guess asked for any questions.

Alderman Wood commented if a plane, heaven forbid, goes into the block area, it sinks, right? Could emergency vehicles access that plane? Are they going to need to go on those blocks as well to access them in case of an emergency? And would that vehicle sink as well?

Airport Director Chad Hunsucker explained the EMAS blocks could be walked on. Anything as heavy as a vehicle, or obviously an emergency vehicle, it would crush down. Okay. At that point they were basically on foot. Another question that commonly comes up is, okay, an aircraft goes into it, what happens next? Well,

actually, the aircraft operator was responsible for the cost associated with replacing the blocks.

Alderwoman Williams commented to clarify the transfer of money from the Aviation Walk, so there were no new dollars.

City Manager Warren Wood advised that those funds were left over, and they had previously earmarked those, so they did not have to go into fund balance. Actually, the bids came in really low. The low bid came in low. The other bids were closer to what they thought it was going to be.

Airport Director Chad Hunsucker commented if they noticed one of the bids was $6.5 million.

Alderman Wood asked if that was because of physical proximity for Neill, did he think that they were able to come in substantially lower?

Airport Director Chad Hunsucker commented if he was not mistaken, Neill was involved in the retaining wall construction for the aviation wall.

City Manager Warren Wood mentioned that they were mobilized out there now, that was some of it. He asked the same thing, he thought that maybe they missed something, but the engineer went back through it and said, no, they did not miss anything. That was what they thought they could do it for.

Mayor Guess asked if there were any more questions?

Mayor Guess moved, seconded by Alderwoman Patton that they accept the bid and award the contract to Neill Grading, approve the budget revision and also allow their City Manager to execute the documents pertaining to the project.

Alderman Wood brought up one thing. He asked could they clarify this was not associated with any bond project monies for a walk or anything like that, correct?

City Manager Warren Wood commented that was absolutely correct.

Alderman Wood just wanted to make sure that that was stated.

Mayor Guess advised they had a motion and a second. The motion carried unanimously.

Approved on First Reading Budget Revision Number 20.

ORDINANCE NO. 26-19
BUDGET REVISION NUMBER 20

BE IT ORDAINED by the Governing Board of the City of Hickory that, pursuant to N.C. General Statutes 159.15 and 159.13.2, the following revision be made to the annual budget ordinance for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2026, and for the duration of the Project Ordinance noted herein.

SECTION 1. To amend the Aviation Walk (#B1N001) Capital Project Ordinance, the expenditures shall be amended as follows:

FUNCTIONAL AREA	INCREASE	DECREASE
General Capital Projects	1,319,714	1,319,714
TOTAL	1,319,714	1,319,714

SECTION 2. To amend the Airport EMAS Project (#650033) Capital Project Ordinance, the expenditures shall be amended as follows:

FUNCTIONAL AREA	INCREASE	DECREASE
General Capital Projects	1,319,714	-
TOTAL	1,319,714	-

To provide funding for the above, the Airport EMAS Project (#650033) revenues will be amended as follows:

FUNCTIONAL AREA	INCREASE	DECREASE
Other Financing Sources	1,319,714	-
TOTAL	1,319,714	-

SECTION 3. Copies of the budget revision shall be furnished to the Clerk of the Governing Board, and to the City Manager (Budget Officer) and the Finance Officer for their direction.

2. Appointments to Boards and Commissions

CATAWBA COUNTY EDC BOARD OF DIRECTORS FOR HICKORY
(Terms Expiring 6-30; 3-Year Terms) (Appointed by City Council)
Hickory Representative — Jeff Cline Eligible for Reappointment

Mayor Guess nominated Jeff Cline for reappointment as a Hickory Representative on the Catawba County EDC Board of Directors.

COMMUNITY APPEARANCE COMMISSION
(Terms Expiring 6-30; 3-Year Terms) Appointed by City Council
Ward 1(Wood Appoints) (Lynn Sampson Resigned 5-5-2026) — VACANT

COMMUNITY RELATIONS COUNCIL
(Terms Expiring 6-30; 3-Year Terms) (Appointed by City Council)
Caucasian (Council Appoints) — VACANT
Caucasian (Council Appoints) — VACANT
Caucasian (Council Appoints) (Jennifer Seaman Resigned 5-3-2026) — VACANT
Other Minority (Council Appoints) — VACANT
Other Minority (Council Appoints) — VACANT

HICKORY REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION
(Term Expiring 6-30; 3-Year Terms with Unlimited Appointments) (Appointed by City Council)
Burke County Representative (Mayor Appoints with Recommendation from Burke County) — VACANT

LIBRARY ADVISORY BOARD
(Terms Expiring 6-30; 3-Year Terms) (Appointed by City Council)
At-Large (2) (Mayor Appoints) — VACANT

PUBLIC ART COMMISSION
(Terms Expiring 6-30; 3-Year Terms) (Appointed by City Council)
Ward 3 (Seaver Appoints) — VACANT

RECYCLING ADVISORY BOARD
(Terms Expiring 6-30; 3-Year Terms) (Appointed by City Council)
Ward 6 (Patton Appoints) — VACANT
At-Large (Council Appoints) — VACANT

YOUTH COUNCIL
(Terms Expiring 6-30; 1-Year Terms) (Appointed by City Council)
Homeschool Representative — VACANT

Mayor Guess moved seconded by Alderman Wood approval of the above nomination. The motion carried unanimously.

C. Presentation of Petitions and Requests

XII. Matters Not on Agenda (requires majority vote of Council to consider)

XIII. General Comments by Members of Council, City Manager or City Attorney of a Non-Business Nature

Alderwoman Patton commented on the attendance at the Aviation Museum. She understood there were 3,600 visitors on Saturday, and it spoke well to the collaboration that the City did with their State representatives, CVCC, and the volunteers that put thousands of hours into the restoration of the airplanes. She thought it was another Miracle of Hickory, and she thought that it was stated very well.

Mayor Guess thought they were only open 3 or 4 hours on Sunday and they had another 500 on Sunday. Well over 4,000 people in the 2 days. He suspects in the future that there will be thousands more.

Alderman Freeman commented on behalf of the NAACP, they were having what was called a Freedom Unity Dance, at the SALT Block, 243 3rd Avenue NE, Hickory. Single admission was $60. Doors open at 6:00 p.m. and the event was for 21 and over. If they would like to attend, they could grab a ticket from Dr. Ida Clough and other members of the NAACP.

Alderman Wood asked the date of the event.

Alderman Freeman advised June 6th.

City Manager Warren Wood congratulated Steve Miller. He commented that he could not keep a secret, but he kept that one. He asked for Chief Adams or a designee from his staff to meet with Ms. Lynch afterwards as well.

XIV. Closed Session Per NC General Statutes 143-318.11(a)(1)(6) to consult with the attorneys regarding the following: (Action on these items, if any, will occur in Open Session)

Mayor Guess moved, seconded by Alderwoman Patton, that Council go into closed session to consult with the attorneys to discuss the items below. The motion carried unanimously.

1. Approval of Closed Session Minutes of April 7, 2026 - NCGS §143-318.11(a)(1)
2. Discussion of a Personnel Matter - NCGS §143-318.11(a)(6)

Council convened to closed session at approximately 6:41 p.m.

Council reconvened to open session at approximately 7:26 p.m.

No action was taken upon return to open session.

XV. There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 7:26 p.m.

_____
Mayor

_____
City Clerk