

**River Bend Town Council
Regular Meeting Minutes
December 12, 2024
Town Hall
7:00 p.m.**

Present Council Members: Mayor Pro Tempore Buddy Sheffield
Lisa Benton
Brian Leonard
Barbara Maurer
Jeff Weaver

Town Manager: Delane Jackson
Finance Director: Mandy Gilbert
Police Chief: Sean Joll
Town Clerk: Kristie Nobles
Town Attorney: Trey Ferguson

Members of the Public Present: 25

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Pro Tempore Sheffield called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. on Thursday, December 12, 2024 at the River Bend Town Hall with a quorum present.

VOTE – Approval of Agenda

Councilwoman Maurer motioned to accept the agenda as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

No Public Comments

CONSENT AGENDA

The Mayor Pro Tem presented the Council with the Consent Agenda. *Councilman Leonard moved to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. The motion carried unanimously.* Within this motion, the following items were approved:

- A. Approve:
 - Minutes of the November 14, 2024 Work Session*
 - Minutes of the November 21, 2024 Regular Council Meeting*
 - Minutes of the December 5, 2024 Work Session*
 - Minutes of the August 15, 2024 Closed Session*
 - Minutes of the September 12, 2024 Closed Session*
 - Minutes of the November 14, 2024 Closed Session*

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

PARKS & RECREATION – Councilman Weaver

Councilman Weaver stated that the Annual Christmas Tree Lighting Event was a huge success and that Parks and Recreation and CAC have teamed up for a Tinsel Train – Holley Trolley event on December 20, 2024.

RIVER BEND COMMUNITY ORGANIC GARDEN

Councilman Weaver gave the following report from the RBCOG November meeting:
The fall harvest so far totaled ninety-seven pounds. Total harvest for the year to date is 2748 pounds. Interfaith Refugee Ministries has received 316 pounds (11%) of produce and herbs.

Gardeners worked a total of 100 hours in November, with a year-to-date total of 1908 hours. The daily sign-up calendar will be used throughout the winter. Weekend workdays will not be scheduled in December. Planning has started for a spring plant sale. The next meeting is scheduled for January 6, 2025 at 1:30 pm in the Municipal building. Guests are always welcome.

CAC – Councilwoman Maurer

Councilwoman Maurer presented the following report from the CAC December meeting..

If you are enjoying the Christmas lights at town entrance, thank the CAC members and citizens who created them in the CAC workshops. Nominations for the third annual Christmas Festive Award began on Dec 5. Winners will be announced on December 20. In conjunction with Parks & Rec, there will be a Tinsel Train comprised of golf carts and a shuttle bus for community members who want to view the nominated and other decorated homes in River Bend. If you don't have a golf cart and want to ride on the shuttle, be sure to sign up. Seats will go fast. Check the CAC or Parks Facebook pages for more information. The CAC has some exciting plans for 2025. Watch for announcements on their Facebook page and in the town's weekly e-news. They are still looking for board members. Please consider applying to this active and creative advisory board. The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, January 15, 2025. The new liaison will be Councilwoman Benton.

At this time Councilwoman Maurer thanked the town council, employees, volunteers, town residents and the CAC advisory board for their support throughout her term as councilwoman. Mayor Pro Tem Sheffield thanked Councilwoman Maurer for her willingness to serve the town over the years.

FINANCE – Councilman Leonard

Financial Report – Finance Director, Mandy Gilbert, presented the financial statement for the month of November to the Council. She stated the total of the Town's Cash and Investments as of November 30, 2024, were \$2,538,429 and Ad Valorem Tax Collections for FY24-25 were \$182,545 and Vehicle Ad Valorem Tax Collections were \$34,059.


ENVIRONMENTAL AND WATERWAYS ADVISORY BOARD – Councilman Leonard

Councilman Leonard provided the following report from the EWAB November meeting:

Vice Chairman Ackiss called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM. There was a quorum of members present. There were no visitors. The minutes for the October 2024 meeting were approved. Councilman Leonard gave a council update and answered members questions. Old Business: NNO went well several visitors to the table. Weeds from the walking trail have been cleaned up. Still work to provide fishing line recycling containers. New Business: There was no new business, Volunteer Hours: 8 The next meeting will be on January 6th, 2025 at 7 PM in the small conference room in the municipal building. The public is welcome to attend. The meeting adjourned at 7:27 PM.

ADJOURNMENT SINE DIE

There being no further business, Councilman Leonard moved to adjourn sine die. The meeting adjourned at 7:08 p.m.


Kristie J. Nobles, CMC
Town Clerk

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Members of the Public Present: 25

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Pro Tempore Sheffield called the meeting to order at 7:10 p.m. on December 12, 2024 at the Town Hall Meeting Room with a quorum present.

ADMINISTRATION OF OATHS OF OFFICE TO COUNCIL MEMBERS

At 7:10 p.m., Mayor Pro Tempore Sheffield told the audience that the Town Clerk would administer the oaths. The Clerk proceeded to swear in Mayor Bledsoe and Council members Brian Leonard, Lisa Benton and Kathy Noonan.

APPOINTMENT OF MAYOR PRO TEM

Councilman Leonard moved to appoint Councilman Morris "Buddy" Sheffield to be the Mayor Pro Tempore. The motion carried unanimously.

ADOPTION OF 2025 TOWN MEETING SCHEDULE

Councilwoman Benton motioned to adopt the 2025 River Bend Town Council Meeting Schedule as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

ADOPTION OF 2025 EMPLOYEE HOLIDAY SCHEDULE

Councilman Weaver moved to adopt the 2025 River Bend Employee Holiday Schedule as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

ADOPTION OF MAYOR/COUNCIL RESPONSIBILITIES CHART

Councilwoman Benton moved to adopt the Mayor-Council Responsibilities Chart as presented. The motion carried unanimously. (see attached)

ADOPTION OF COUNCIL CODE OF ETHICS POLICY


Councilwoman Noonan moved to adopt the Council Code of Ethics Policy as presented. The motion carried unanimously. (see attached)

APPOINTMENT OF ECC REPRESENTATIVE

Councilman Weaver motioned to approve Patty Leonard as the Town's ECC Representative. The motion carried unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Councilman Sheffield moved to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 7:20 p.m.



Kristie J. Nobles, CMC
Town Clerk

Mayor and Town Council Responsibilities Last Updated 12/12/24

MAYOR	FINANCE & HUMAN RESOURCES	PUBLIC SAFETY	PARKS & RECREATION	ENVIRONMENT	PLANNING	CAC
Mayor: Mark Bledsoe	Liaison: Brian Leonard Backup: Lisa Benton	Liaison: Kathy Noonan Backup: Buddy Sheffield	Liaison: Jeff Weaver Backup: Kathy Noonan	Liaison: Brian Leonard Backup: Jeff Weaver	Liaison: Buddy Sheffield Backup: Lisa Benton	Liaison Lisa Benton Backup: Brian Leonard
Pro Tem: Buddy Sheffield	Backup: Lisa Benton	Backup: Buddy Sheffield	Backup: Kathy Noonan	Backup: Jeff Weaver	Backup: Lisa Benton	Backup: Brian Leonard
Serves as official head of Town for purpose of serving civil process and receiving all Town correspondence. Signs official documents approved by Council. Liaison with municipal, county, state governments & private sector. Presides over Town meetings. Town spokesman and media representative. Represents Town for ceremonial purposes. Representative to New Bern Metropolitan Planning Organization's Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). Representative to Highway 17/64 Association	Liaison for financial operations of the Town. Serves as Chair of Town's Audit Committee. Works with staff concerning technology and Human Resource Policy issues.	Liaison with the Community Watch group. Liaison with Coastal Environmental Partnership.	Liaison with Parks & Recreation Advisory Board. Works with volunteers on Fourth of July and other special events.	Liaison with Environment and Waterways Advisory Board (EWAB) Works with staff concerning environmental issues. Liaison with ABC Board	Liaison with Planning Board. Liaison with Board of Adjustment. Alternate to New Bern Metropolitan Planning Organization's TAC.	Liaison with Community Appearance Commission (CAC)

Code of Ethics for the
Town Council of
The Town of River Bend, North Carolina

PREAMBLE

WHEREAS, the Constitution of North Carolina, Article 1, Section 35, reminds us that a “frequent recurrence to fundamental principles is absolutely necessary to preserve the blessings of liberty,” and

WHEREAS, a spirit of honesty and forthrightness is reflected in North Carolina’s state motto, *Esse quam videri*, “To be rather than to seem,” and

WHEREAS, Section 160A-86 of the North Carolina General Statutes requires local governing boards and councils to adopt a code of ethics, and

WHEREAS, as public officials we are charged with upholding the trust of the citizens of this town, and with obeying the law, and

NOW THEREFORE, in recognition of our blessings and obligations as citizens of the State of North Carolina and as public officials representing the citizens of the Town of River Bend, and acting pursuant to the requirements of Section 160A-86 of the North Carolina General Statutes, we the Town Council do hereby adopt the following General Principles of Code of Ethics to guide the Town Council in its lawful decision-making.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES UNDERLYING THE CODE OF ETHICS

- The stability and proper operation of democratic representative government depend upon public confidence in the integrity of the government and upon responsible exercise of the trust conferred by the people upon their elected officials.
- Governmental decisions and policy must be made and implemented through proper channels and processes of the governmental structure.
- Council members must be able to act in a manner that maintains their integrity and independence, yet is responsive to the interests and needs of those they represent.
- Council members must always remain aware that at various times they play different roles:
 - As advocates, who strive to advance the legitimate needs of their citizens.
 - As legislators, who balance the public interest and private rights in considering and enacting ordinances, orders, and resolutions.

- As decision-makers, who arrive at fair and impartial quasi-judicial and administrative determinations.
- Council members must know how to distinguish among these roles, to determine when each role is appropriate, and to act accordingly.
- Council members must be aware of their obligation to conform their behavior to standards of ethical conduct that warrant the trust of the constituents. Each official must find within his or her own conscience the touchstone by which to determine what conduct is appropriate.

CODE OF ETHICS

The purpose of this Code of Ethics is to establish guidelines for ethical standards of conduct for the Town Council and to help to determine what conduct is appropriate in particular cases. It should not be considered a substitute for the law or for a council member's best judgment.

Section 1. Council members should obey all laws applicable to their official actions as members of the Council. Council members should be guided by the spirit as well as the letter of the law in whatever they do.

At the same time, council members should feel free to assert policy positions and opinions without fear of reprisal from fellow board members or citizens. To declare that a council member is behaving unethically because of disagreeing with that council member on a question of policy (and not because of the council member's behavior) is unfair, irresponsible, and itself unethical.

Council members should endeavor to keep up to date, through the council's attorney and other sources, about new or ongoing legal or ethical issues they may face in their official positions. This educational function is in addition to the day-to-day legal advice the council may receive concerning specific situations that arise.

Section 2. Council members should act with integrity and independence from improper influence as they exercise the duties of their offices. Characteristics and behaviors consistent with this standard include the following:

- Adhering firmly to a code of sound values.
- Behaving consistently and with respect toward everyone with whom they interact.
- Exhibiting trustworthiness.
- Living as if they are on duty as elected officials regardless of where they are or what they are doing.
- Using their best independent judgment to pursue the common good as they see it, presenting their opinion to all in a reasonable, forthright, consistent manner.
- Remaining incorruptible, self-governing, and unaffected by improper influence while at the same time being able to consider the opinions and ideas of others.

- Disclosing contacts and information about issues that they receive outside of public meetings and refraining from seeking or receiving information about quasi-judicial matters outside of the quasi-judicial proceedings themselves.
- Treating other council members and the public with respect and honoring the opinions of others even while the council members disagree with those opinions.
- Not reaching conclusions on issues until all sides have been heard.
- Showing respect for their offices and not behaving in ways that reflect poorly on those offices.
- Recognizing that they are a part of a larger group and acting accordingly.
- Recognizing that individual council members are not generally allowed to act on behalf of the council but may only do so if the council specifically authorizes it, and that the council must take official action as a body.
- Avoiding conflicts of interest.
- Practicing civility with fellow Council members and the public.

Section 3.a. Council members should avoid impropriety in the exercise of their official duties. Their official actions should be above reproach. Although opinions may vary about what behavior is inappropriate, this council will consider impropriety in terms of whether a reasonable person who is aware of all of the relevant facts and circumstances surrounding the council member's action would conclude that the action was inappropriate.

Section 3.b. If a council member believes that his or her actions, while legal and ethical, may be misunderstood, the member should seek the advice of the council's attorney and should consider publicly disclosing the facts of the situation and the steps taken to resolve it.

Section 4. Council members should faithfully perform the duties of their offices. They should act as especially responsible citizens whom others can trust and respect. They should set a good example for others in the community, keeping in mind that trust and respect must continually be earned.

Council members should faithfully attend and prepare for meetings. They should carefully analyze all credible information properly submitted to them, mindful of the need not to engage in communications outside the meeting in quasi-judicial matters. They should demand full accountability from those over whom the council has authority.

Council members should be willing to bear their fair share of the council's workload. To the extent appropriate, they should be willing to put the council's interests ahead of their own.

Section 5. Council members should conduct the affairs of the council in an open and public manner. They should comply with all applicable laws governing open meetings and public records, recognizing that doing so is an important way to be worthy of the public's trust. They should also remember that local government records belong to the public and not to council members or their employees.

In order to ensure strict compliance with the laws concerning openness, council members should make clear that an environment of transparency and candor is to be maintained at all times in the government unit. They should prohibit unjustified delay in fulfilling public record requests. They should take deliberate steps to make certain that any closed sessions held by the council are lawfully conducted and that such sessions do not stray from the purpose for which they are called. Further, they shall ensure that discussions conducted in closed session shall remain confidential until such time that the Council decides which details to officially releases thereof, in accordance with law.

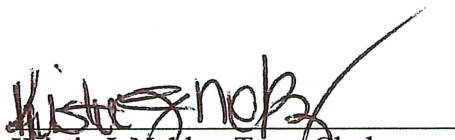
The Mayor and members of this Council do hereby accept and pledge to conduct themselves in accordance with this Code.

This document is to be reviewed by and presented to the Council for adoption following any change in the membership of the Council.

Adopted this 12th day of December, 2024 by the River Bend Town Council.


Mark Bledsoe, Mayor

ATTEST:


Kristie J. Nobles, Town Clerk



Originally adopted 8-12-2010
Re-adopted 12-15-2022
Re-adopted 9-14-2023
Re-adopted 12-12-2024