

Town of Four Oaks

Board of Commissioners Workshop

March 14, 2026

The Board of Commissioners held a planning workshop at the Town Hall Chambers on Saturday, March 14, 2026, from 9:00 am to 2:00 pm. Attending were Mayor Mike Hines, Mayor Pro-Tem Tony Capps, Town Commissioners Kim Robertson, Sawyer Roberts, and Linwood Parker. Also present were Town Administrator Barry Stanley, Mike Dart with Four Oaks Benson News in Review, and Rhonda Lee, Town Clerk/HR Officer, who recorded the minutes.

Mayor Mike Hines welcomed everyone and thanked them for their attendance to ensure the success of this workshop. Mayor Hines reviewed the agenda and introduced Lu Hickey, who will be the facilitator for the meeting. Mayor Hines called the meeting into a public hearing.

Facilitator Lu Hickey read over the agenda and introduced the guest speaker, Harold Keen, with the I-95/I-40 Alliance.

Guest speaker Harold Keen gave an update on the I-95/I-40 Alliance's accomplishments and a brief history of how the Alliance was formed. Mr. Keen stated that the Alliance was created 4 ½ years ago, with Four Oaks and Dunn being on board. Benson has since joined and was the first town to “reap the benefits”. The Alliance was formed to bring high-value jobs to the town. 40 million dollars was spent on the Advanced Training Center in Four Oaks. Benson and Dunn have several projects in the works now. The Town of Four Oaks has 4 voting seats on the Alliance Board. Harold Keen, Linwood Parker, Andy Hardy, and Derrick Marconey fill those seats.

Facilitator Lu Hickey reviewed some ground rules for the group to follow during their discussions.

Fire Department Funding

Johnston Co. EMS Director Ryan Parker provided an overview of the new cost-sharing funding model for Johnston County Fire Departments and explained how these allocations were determined for the Town of Four Oaks. The cost-sharing formula and program were developed by Johnston County EMS and the Fire Chiefs from all the municipalities in the county. Tony Capps asked who was responsible for building the individual budgets. Mr. Parker responded that each Fire Department was responsible for its own budget. Mr. Parker also answered questions like what the plan is for excess fund balances and how they will handle growth in the municipalities. It was also asked if the call volume included those in town as well as in the ETJ.

Parks and Recreation- Land Grant and Pickleball Court

Andy Jackson provided an update on Parks and Recreation. Andy stated that the Civitan and the Town were working together on a new building. Both are out of space for equipment, and it is a good time to start planning for the future. We have been awarded a \$40,000 grant, so the plans are for a 40x60 building with office space and bathrooms. This will be large enough to house all the Civitan and the town's sports equipment, so that everything will be in one place and easily accessible. The projected cost of the building is \$60,000, and the Civitan would need the Town's help with funding. This will only cover the building and the pad. The property does have access to tie into water and sewer.

Barry Stanley, Town Administrator, asked about purchasing land for a pickleball court. Mr. Jackson stated that it was mentioned at the last pool board meeting, but they decided to discuss it further at the next meeting. Commissioner Robertson stated she had not had any discussion on this matter in a long time and did not know where the town stands.

Commissioner Robertson stated that she had attended the Main Street conference in New Bern. One thing she kept hearing during the conference was that as you build and bring people into your community, you have to provide entertainment, whether it be walking, a ball field, or making pocket parks in the alleyways. We need to keep this in mind moving forward because the parks we have had for years are all we have.

Andy Jackson would also like to see us get lights on the ball field. We desperately need them on the middle school field. The cost would be \$100,000. We also need a dog park in town. This is probably the least expensive amenity we could provide. Mayor Pro-Tem Tony Capps suggested that we contact Duke Energy Foundation regarding lighting. Commissioner Sawyer Roberts asked if portable lighting would be an option for temporary purposes. Commissioner Parker asked if we had applied for a matching grant for land. Barry Stanley stated that we have that in the works. Land options were discussed.

Subdivision Planning

Mayor Hines began the discussion, stating that after meeting with the UDO committee, there are state statutes that tell us what we can regulate in a subdivision and what we cannot. We can restrict or control street size, sidewalks, entrances, and signage. The town cannot regulate material type and square footage. Mayor Hines is concerned about the number of starter homes the town is getting. It was mentioned that requiring roads to be 30ft and having bike lanes would probably be a good idea.

Mayor Pro-Tem, Tony Capps, reminded everyone that an HOA can have stricter guidelines than the town but not less than the town requirements. He also feels that it would be in the town's best interest not to grant so many variance requests, such as for sidewalks and curb and gutter.

Commissioner Parker stated that we need to enforce zoning. He stated that whatever you tax, you get less of. He feels like people who are building their forever home should get a tax grant. This grant would be applied to the principal balance of the mortgage, and stated that he feels houses should not be built for rental purposes.

After much discussion on subdivision regulations and how to move forward with enforcing and controlling the town's ordinances, several questions were raised. Mayor Pro-Tem Tony Capps asked how we handle things if the ETJ is removed. Per Town Administrator Barry Stanley, the county is looking at a transitional zone. Mr. Capps also asked how we handle growth.

Commissioner Parker responded that we have to be proactive. Mr. Capps also asked what can we and what do we want to bring into the town? Do we want to be a North Hills, or do we want to be a River Wood? Where do we want to be? Commissioner Parker states we want to be a village. We want good-paying jobs, and our travel industry is still viable, so we need to concentrate on that.

Long Term Goals

Town Administrator Barry Stanley discussed the following topics.

- We need to be more efficient with the staff we have today – Want to slow the drive-thru window down
- Encourage residents to pay online and utilize the website and Facebook for Town information
- Investigate doing billing differently
- Staffing needs in public works – Chris Barbour is Assistant Public Works Director and will hopefully be able to move up to PW Director in the future. Need help in Planning and Zoning/Permits in the near future.
- Parks and Recreation has Andy Jackson in a part-time role now. Hopefully, he will come on board full-time once he retires from the state.
- Public Works lot is out of space. Need to consider growth and future needs for a new shop space.
- We are going in the right direction on all of these things. Things are a lot better now than they were just two years ago.

Commissioner Robertson states that the Parks and Rec department needs administrative help.

Mayor Pro-Tem Tony Capps brought the following topics before the board.

- What does it cost to get where we want to be?
- We need to do a better job at marketing
- What can be done to help get information out? Interns? AI?
- Can we analyze the top complaints/complainers of Facebook?

Per Mayor Hines, a full-time Town Administrator may need to be in the budget as well.

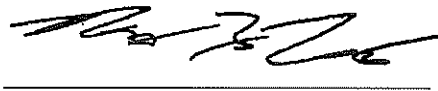
Barry asked that the Commissioners try to get the things talked about today prioritized and how to move forward. Needs everyone's input in weighing and scoring the priorities.

Town Administrator discussed Streetscape. Need to figure out how to spend the money left to get the best product for the money. Will be able to add parking on Railroad in front of American Discount. Open ditches, curb, and gutter on that side of Baker so the cost isn't too high. Will redo the intersection at Baker and Wellons with new mast arm poles and fresh asphalt. Traffic control will be the highest cost for Hwy 301 work. Will get a plan together so everyone can look at it and approve. Commissioner Robertson states that Church Street and 301 need to be fixed.

Mayor Hines states that we need to subsidize staff with some part-time help. This needs to happen.

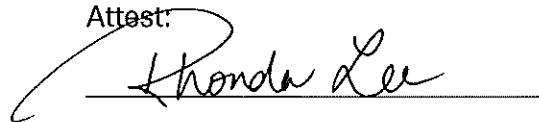
Mayor Hines made a motion to adjourn. Mayor Pro-Tem Tony Capps seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

Adjournment 2:20 pm



Mike Hines, Mayor

Attest:



Rhonda Lee, Town Clerk