

# COUNCIL

Continued from A1

or Greensboro, and frankly when travel costs were in the single digit thousands for the entire year folks probably didn't care much about where their councilors stayed or how they got there. However, as this Council looks to bring new ideas and innovations to Hertford, there will almost certainly be the need to travel beyond our regional or even state borders, so we needed a policy that would ensure we're doing so in the most fiscally responsible and transparent way possible."

Quoting council's mission statement regarding new ideas and innovations, Hodges said, "We will be careful students of history to capture best practices and learn from mistakes, but we refuse to accept any idea as correct based on tradition alone. We will proactively challenge the status quo and work tirelessly to identify new strategies to improve our residents' quality of life. New ideas and new innovations are necessary to move Hertford forward."

To illustrate the changes to the revised policy, Hodges talked about Councilman Frank Norman's plans to attend the National League of Cities Congressional City Conference in March in Washington, DC.

Norman and delegates from across the country will lobby members of Congress for the resources and programs towns like Hertford need to grow in the years and decades to come, Hodges said. He listed examples how knowledge gained from this conference may include reinstating federal historic restoration tax credits that would help current and future residents rehab their homes, increased federal funding for rural broadband and all-electric transportation initiatives.

Hodges said the previous policy provided no guidance whatsoever on such fundamental questions as:

■ How much am I allowed to spend on a hotel in Washington, DC? (There is literally no guidance on this in the old policy.)

■ How does a councilor decide which method of conveyance to use for travel (personal car, rental car, Town vehicle, commercial airline, combination)?

■ How much is a councilor allowed to spend on meals per day? (The old policy said \$38/day which is high for some locations and wildly unrealistic for others)

■ What happens if there is disagreement about whether something a councilman charges is a legitimate business expense?

The revised travel policy provides guidance for Town Hall when making decisions about how best to spend public funds.

"I realize it's easy to say 'just use your common sense' but this is what good governance is all about—establishing clear guidelines and principles so elected officials and constituents alike can be assured that governmental activities are openly and responsibly planned and executed every time," Hodges said. "My hope is by enacting a clear and prescriptive 'playbook' for council travel we can put to bed the worries about abuse and instead focus on what we can bring back to make Hertford a better place."

Based on ideas gathered from a review of Camden's travel policy, council will discuss additional changes and possible amendments to Hertford's travel policy such as credit card usage, spouses on trips and other scenarios during its retreat in March.

### Spending moratorium

On a related note as it relates to taxpayer money, council has lifted the spending moratorium and travel ban that had been in place since November so as to review financial data. A 66-page audit of the Town's finances for fiscal year 2018/19 has been released – a story on that topic will appear in a future edition.

By lifting the travel ban and spending moratorium, Norman is allowed to attend the NLC conference in March in Washington, DC.

As to Norman's travel planning, Councilman Quentin Jackson advised fiscal prudence by sounding a cautionary note about spending \$200-

\$300 a night to stay in a hotel.

Norman countered that he would look for the best most affordable deal.

"I will make sure that whatever I get will be less expensive than it would be if I was at the conference's hotel (\$299 per night before taxes at Marriott Wardman Park)," he said.

Mayor Earnell Brown advised that before Norman leaves for his trip, that he communicate with council as to the expected outcome from attending the conference.

Jackson added that it is important for Norman to talk to the mayor and council so as to know what goals and issues he will be advocating for on behalf of Hertford.

Norman agreed and said he will follow the conference's pre-set agenda and be a strong advocate for the town.

### Ethics policy

In other matters, council approved an ethics policy drafted by Brown.

"Hertford did not have an Ethics Policy and we felt it was needed as the impetus for the governing board's Rules of Procedures, which I am writing for governing board's approval," she said. "It was considered important to develop the Ethics Policy and implementing procedures to guide the actions of the Council in the performance of official duties. They were developed in accordance with the NC General Statutes."

Applying language from General Statutes needed to craft Hertford's Ethics Policy, these policies have been adopted in municipalities great and small so as to ensure that town officials exercise their authority honestly and fairly, free from impropriety, threats, favoritism and undue influence.

To this end, the town's ethics policy seeks to ensure that standards of ethical conduct and standards regarding conflicts of interest are clearly established for elected and appointed officials, that the Town Hall continually educates these officials on matters of ethical conduct and conflicts of interest, that potential and actual conflicts of interests.

### Railroad Club seeks home station

In other business, council discussed plans sought by the Albemarle Railroad Club (ARC) to relocate the group's model railroad displays from Elizabeth City to the Hertford Community Center.

Club's Facebook page said ARC must close up shop at its present location due to the club's sponsor retiring and closing the store. ARC will be packing up, disassembling the layouts, moving things to storage and hopes to be out by Feb. 28.

Club offers to contribute \$100 per month toward the community center's utility bill.

"This is going to bring visibility with people who like model trains as a hobby," Brown said. "I think it is an excellent idea that's not really costing us anything and gives us visibility. This will bring in tourists and something for our children to do – a good idea."

Jackson said while he's supportive of the railroad club's plans, he's worried about the availability of space at the community center because College of the Albemarle's plans to use the space for GED testing. He said a downtown location might be better for ARC's plans than the community center because the nature of the model train displays is not something that

can be readily moved so as to contend with COA's needs.

Brown contended that pending possible plans to transform the community center into a youth center, the ARC's plans are an interim solution and would not necessarily impact COA's plans among other groups who utilize the space.

Jackson said suggested using the nearby town-owned Kemp building as a possible venue for the railroad club. Used for storage, the building may need the roof fixed – repairs he said the town should undergo whether or not the railroad group uses that space.

Jackson voiced concerns about entering into a contractual relationship with the ARC that might potentially expose the town to liability if something were to happen to the railroad displays, particularly as people come and go from the building during the week on days when club members may not be around to monitor their property.

Town Manager Pam Hurdle said the group would need insurance to cover its assets and protect anyone who may get hurt.

Like Jackson, Hodges said he's supportive of the group, but there are questions that need to be answered regarding any contract, insurance and market rates for space before the group is allowed to set up shop on town property, so council opted to deliberate the matter more during March's work session.

"I don't want to push away a good opportunity, but there's

a lot of complications," Hodges said. "I don't want them to give them the wrong impression that we are not interested and excited about an opportunity. I just think we have a responsibility to walk that dog a little bit more before we decide to buy it."

A point echoed by Brown who said, "Council is in favor of the concept of having this kind of activity to come into Hertford. It's just that we need to do a little bit more legal work into it and have something in writing before they actually physically move in."

In other news, Jackson wants Town Hall to employ grant writer so as to secure funds needed to improve the quality of life in Hertford. Pending town finances going into budget planning for 2020/21, Jackson would like to advertise for the position so that when the time comes, there'll be a file of applications on hand for consideration.

"We're losing millions of dollars here – we're way behind the buck on a grant writer," he said.

Councilors voiced concerns about the grant writer's pay and/or possible commission structure, so the matter will be discussed with the Town Manager's input.

Also, council gave its nod to Jackson exploring the possibility of purchasing a better microphone system for council meetings by earmarking \$1,200 toward the endeavor.

And council endorsed Jackson's idea of streamlining the billing for the grave digging process.

# LAYTON

Continued from A1

to our shores for more than a few days at time.

Longtime property owners bought into quiet friendly neighborhoods, perhaps like **Front Street**, so they don't want to deal with living next door to strangers.

Like many cities and towns, Edenton is dealing with these issues too. See **Anne Edwards'** column on our editorial page A4. Edenton's Town Hall is in the process of crafting and drafting an ordinance to deal with these issues.

Long ago, our family owned a home in a university town – we loved it, eclectic area filled with older homes. We could walk most everywhere and knew many of our neighbors.

The neighborhood was a residential/college student blend, but over time, things changed as longtime residents and retirees moved out and more and more college students moved in along with other folks too who were transient in both economics and lifestyle.

Tone of our neighborhood changed – not for the better – folks would come in, rent for 9 months and then move in May.

I see parallels to life in college towns dominated by rentals as these AirBnB and Short-term/whole house rentals become more prevalent.

Out-of-touch landlords, parking issues, loud parties ... Dog barking all day and night...

Moreover, local Bed and Breakfasts and hotels are being shortchanged – they have to play by the rules, comply with building codes and pay the associated taxes while their Internet-fueled competitors skate under the radar.

Before these things mushroom up much more in Hertford, **Town Council** should pay close attention to what other towns are doing

to restrict these things; begin getting your ducks in a row.

In related news, I have a copy of the 66-page **town's audit** for fiscal year 2018-19. Rather than just regurgitating the audit's findings, I want to spend time analyzing the figures so as to better explain this snapshot of the town's finances to our readers.

Lastly with regard to **Town Hall**, **Mayor Earnell Brown's** office hours are between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. Tuesday – Thursday.

In other news, thanks for the kind note from the **Lane family**, who wrote, "We could not be happier with the article on **Robert Earl** (Tribute to a Country Doc/ Feb. 12). You did an amazing job with the interviewing and fact finding! The story is well written and thoughtful."

The community and patients have really enjoyed reading it.

People want to read heart-warming stories about things that they can relate to.

Facebook was full of wonderful memories and accolades.

Hopefully you will do more stories like this and the one you wrote about that amazing student **Claribel Ordaz-Rios** (Achieving the American Dream/Feb. 5).

Our paper is going back to its roots of local hometown news."

When working at dark o'clock, kind notes like this inspire my day. Thanks, **Chris Lane**.

**Perquimans Extension** will host a Get FIT Cooking Class starting at 6 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 20 in the Extension Kitchen. This class will feature recipes and tips when preparing fruits and vegetables. Participants will get involved with food prep and will sample heart healthy recipes.

There is no cost for this class, but registration is required by contacting **Amanda Betts** at 252-338-4467. For directions to the Extension Office contact 252-426-7697.

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STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
UTILITIES COMMISSION  
RALEIGH

DOCKET NO. E-100, SUB 157

BEFORE THE NORTH CAROLINA UTILITIES COMMISSION

In the Matter of ) 2019 Integrated Resource Plan Update ) Reports and Related 2019 REPS ) Compliance Plans )	NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING ON ) 2019 IRP UPDATE REPORTS AND ) RELATED 2019 REPS COMPLIANCE ) PLANS )
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NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the North Carolina Utilities Commission (Commission) has scheduled a public hearing in conjunction with the Commission's review and evaluation of integrated resource planning (IRP) in North Carolina. The purpose of the review and evaluation is to ensure that each regulated electric utility operating in North Carolina is developing reliable projections of the long-range demands for electricity in its service area and is developing a combination of reliable resource options for meeting the anticipated demands in a cost-effective manner. IRP is intended to identify those electric resource options which can be obtained at least cost to ratepayers in North Carolina consistent with adequate, reliable electric service. IRP considers conservation, efficiency, load management and other demand-side program alternatives in the selection of resource options. Commission Rule R8-60 requires that each of the electric utilities furnish the Commission with a biennial report in even-numbered years that contains the specific information set out in that Commission Rule. In odd-numbered years, each of the electric utilities must file an update report updating its most recently filed biennial report. In addition, regulated electric utilities are required to include their plans for meeting customer electric needs via renewable energy resources and energy efficiency programs by submitting a Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Portfolio Standard compliance plan (REPS compliance plan) as part of the IRP filing.

During the public hearing to be held in this docket, the Commission will receive testimony from nonexpert public witnesses with respect to the most current IRP update reports and REPS compliance plans filed in 2019 by Duke Energy Progress, LLC; Duke Energy Carolinas, LLC; and Virginia Electric and Power Company, d/b/a Dominion Energy North Carolina. Public witness testimony will be received in accordance with Commission Rule R1-21(g).

A night hearing for the convenience of public witnesses and solely for the purpose of taking nonexpert public witness testimony is hereby scheduled as follows:

Raleigh: 7:00 p.m., on Monday, March 9, 2020, in Commission Hearing Room 2115, Dobbs Building, 430 North Salisbury Street, Raleigh, North Carolina.

Anyone wishing to review the 2019 IRP update reports and REPS compliance plans filed by the utilities may do so either at the Commission's website, www.ncuc.net, by selecting the Docket tab and entering Docket No. E-100 Sub 157, or at the Office of the Chief Clerk of the Commission, Dobbs Building, 430 North Salisbury Street, Raleigh, North Carolina. Upon request, the Chief Clerk will place copies of the IRPs, compliance plans and any other documents filed in this proceeding in centrally-located public libraries where they may be copied without prohibition. Such a request may be made by writing to the Chief Clerk, North Carolina Utilities Commission, 4325 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, North Carolina 27699-4300, and providing the name and address of the library to which the information is to be mailed.

Persons desiring to present testimony for the record should appear at the public hearing. Persons desiring to send written statements to inform the Commission of their positions in the matter shall address their statements to:

Chief Clerk  
North Carolina Utilities Commission  
4325 Mail Service Center  
Raleigh, NC 27699-4300

The Public Staff-North Carolina Utilities Commission, through its Executive Director, is required by statute to represent the using and consuming public in proceedings before the Commission. Written statements to the Public Staff should be addressed to:

Christopher J. Ayers, Executive Director  
Public Staff – North Carolina Utilities Commission  
4326 Mail Service Center  
Raleigh, NC 27699-4300

The Attorney General is also authorized by statute to represent the using and consuming public in proceedings before the Commission. Statements to the Attorney General should be addressed to:

The Honorable Josh Stein  
Attorney General of North Carolina  
c/o Consumer Protection-Utilities  
9001 Mail Service Center  
Raleigh, NC 27699-9001

ISSUED BY ORDER OF THE COMMISSION.

This the 30th day of January, 2020.

NORTH CAROLINA UTILITIES COMMISSION  
A. Shonta Dunston, Deputy Clerk