



**A. OPEN CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION SPECIAL MEETING.**

Mayor Joshua Drake opened the meeting at 6:00 PM at Durham City Hall.

**B. ROLL CALL OF COUNCIL MEMBERS.**

Councilors present: Mayor Joshua Drake, Council President Leslie Gifford, Councilors Gary Paul (via Zoom), David Streicher, and Sean Lee

Councilors absent: None

Staff present: City Administrator Jordan Parente

Visitors: Residents Susan Deeming and JR Tarabocchia

**C. CALENDAR OF MEETINGS.**

- Thursday June 19, 2025, City Hall Closed in Observance of Juneteenth
- Tuesday June 24, 2025, Regular Meeting of the City Council at 7:30 PM
- Friday July 4, 2025, City Hall Closed in Observance of Independence Day
- Tuesday July 8, 2025, Regular Meeting of the Planning Commission at 7:00 PM
- Tuesday July 22, 2025, Regular Meeting of the City Council at 7:30 PM

**D. TREE ORDINANCE FOR DEVELOPED PROPERTIES - MUNICIPAL CODE.**

Council reviewed the current tree ordinance in preparation for possible amendments, focusing on thresholds, enforcement, and administrative procedures. There was extensive discussion about whether the existing 10-inch diameter threshold for tree removal permits is appropriate. City Administrator Parente noted that the City sees a high number of applications for single tree removals, and the ordinance's language has resulted in a heavy administrative burden.

Several Councilors expressed concern that the ordinance is applied too rigidly to individual homeowners. They questioned whether certain tree types, such as ornamental or invasive species, should be exempt. Ideas were floated to raise the size threshold for triggering a permit or to provide clearer definitions for what constitutes a "significant" or "contributing" tree. The concept of using tree species lists or professional arborist assessments as part of the review process was also explored.

Mr. Parente also noted inconsistencies in how "hardship" criteria are applied and acknowledged that the ordinance's existing criteria are not always clear to applicants. One suggestion was to simplify the application process for single-tree removals while keeping more rigorous requirements in place for larger development projects. The goal is to prepare revised language that would maintain the City's urban tree canopy goals while making the code more user-friendly and equitable for homeowners.

**E. SOLID WASTE ORDINANCE.**

Council briefly discussed a potential update to the solid waste ordinance. Councilor Streicher expressed a need to codify existing to make ordinances accessible to residents. He clarified that this isn't about creating new rules, but about formalizing the City's standards so City staff have the authority to act. Council members agreed that codification could aid public awareness of City rules and expectations of hauler services. They also discussed the balance between property owner responsibility and hauler obligations. The Councilors stated that draft language should be provided for how best to balance flexibility with accountability as well as clarity and fairness.

**F. FLOODPLAIN ORDINANCE.**

Council revisited the City's floodplain ordinance and whether to proceed with updates in response to FEMA's PICM (Pre-Implementation Compliance Measure). The City Planner had prepared a detailed timeline and estimated the project would take two to three months of work and cost approximately \$15,000. This stems from FEMA rules introduced under the previous federal administration, though FEMA hasn't yet finalized new floodplain regulations.

Initially, the City had opted to adopt FEMA's model ordinance, but legal counsel now recommends a permit-by-permit approach. This method places responsibility on applicants, requiring them to demonstrate compliance with environmental protections like the Endangered Species Act.

However, uncertainty about FEMA's future direction raised questions about the proceeding timeline. The number of actual structures in Durham's floodplain are minimal, mostly limited to non-critical City property like playgrounds or sheds, and the City's exposure is relatively small.

Council discussed the risk of non-compliance and potentially losing FEMA-backed flood insurance. The City Administrator stated that FEMA has not been responding to phone calls and emails, and some cities are choosing to ignore the mandate altogether. Council directed the City Administrator to pursue informing FEMA that the City intends to pursue the permit-by-permit option on an augmented timeline and delay allocating further funds until more information is known.

**G. CODIFICATION DISCUSSION.**

This topic was included in the solid waste ordinance discussion.

**H. CONTRACTING RESOLUTION DISCUSSION.**

Councilor Streicher introduced a proposal to engage a commercial leasing agent to explore available office space in Durham, in case the current City Hall building cannot be purchased. Council members discussed the risk of losing negotiating power if no alternatives are explored and agreed that engaging a leasing agent before the lease expires may help prevent being locked into unfavorable terms. Other options were discussed including building on new or existing city-owned property or entering a build-to-suit agreement with a developer. While some expressed a desire for long-term ownership of City Hall, others stressed the need for interim solutions. Ultimately, the Council requested that an agenda item be added to the next regularly scheduled meeting, with a motion required, to engage a leasing agent.

**I. FRIENDS OF TREES/ PLANTING DISCUSSION.**

This discussion was delayed until the next regularly scheduled meeting on Tuesday June 24, 2025.

**J. ADJOURN.** Mayor Drake adjourned the meeting at 9:35 PM.

**Approved:**

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**Joshua Drake, MAYOR**

**Attest:**

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**Jordan Parente, CITY ADMINISTRATOR/RECORDER**