

Town of Mount Olive
June 1, 2026
Regular Board Meeting
Minutes

Mayor Jerome Newton called the meeting to order at 6:00 P.M. Those in attendance per roll call were Mayor Pro-Tempore Delreese Simmons, Commissioner Vicky Darden, Commissioner CJ Weaver, Commissioner Harlie Carmichael, Commissioner Gena Knode, Town Attorney Carroll Turner, Town Manager Octavius Murphy and Town Clerk/Administrative Assistant Sherry Davis.

Mayor Jerome Newton called the meeting to order and delivered the invocation and Commissioner Vicky Darden led us in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mayor Jerome Newton read the Conflict-of-Interest Statement; there were no conflicts.

Mayor Jerome Newton requested a motion to approve the published agenda. Commissioner Vicky Darden made a motion to approve. Commissioner C.J. Weaver seconded and the motion passed 5-0.

Mayor Jerome Newton then requested a motion to approve the May 4, 2026, meeting minutes. Commissioner CJ Weaver made the motion to approve. Commissioner Vicky Darden seconded and the motion passed 5-0.

Mayor Jerome Newton opened the public forum.

Ms. Sallie Bollinger of 308 West Main Street, Mount Olive, NC 28365, 919-221-3727. She advised the potholes at College Street, James Street and Martin Street have been filled with jagged rocks. She has had three flat tires on her new car because of this. Please look into some cold patch.

Ms. Davita Manley of 203 Westbrook Street, Mount Olive, NC 28365. She said there is a problem with the drainage reservoir near her street. The town used to keep it clean but now when a small rain comes, her yard is flooded. She asked if there were any CDBG grants available for this issue.

Mr. Ralph Schroeder of 106 Price Street, Mount Olive, NC 28365, 919-738-0031. He stated he has worked with the hurricane's football field for years. He started with Steve Martin & Alex Ferrell in 1991. For thirty years it was just a grassy field. We started this because we were having trouble getting to Daughtry Field. Mr. Tony Jones and Greg Warren raised over \$200,000.00 for the building, lights and water. Why would the Town sell it for \$20,000.00. Mayor Jerome Newton advised the offer for \$20,000.00 was not accepted.

Mayor Jerome Newton then closed the public forum.

OLD BUSINESS:

Mayor Jerome Newton then discussed Non-Action Memo 06-58 – Presentation of the 2024/2025 Financial Audit by S. Preston Douglass & Associates, LLC. Mr. Lee Grissom presented a slide show with yellow book and internal controls of the 2025 Audit. There were no federal or state findings. He presented his unmodified opinion; the highest verification of cash government activities is \$7.6 million restricted and \$6.4 million unrestricted. The town had \$6.5 million as of June 30, 2025. His analysis of Fund Balance, in 2018 the town had their lowest point at four percent. The town has been working hard to increase this. The unrestricted fund balance needs to be \$600,000.00 or higher for a safety balance. The current fund balance is twenty one percent but has been flat for the last four years. Sherry Davis is doing a great job with the grants and works well with Beverly Stroud and myself. The net balance is not the same as cash in the bank. Beverly Stroud has done a great job two years in a row.

Mr. Lee Grissom then discussed the internal control findings. There was a vacancy for a while, but the town is keeping on track with reconciliation as of December 31, 2025, deadline is late April 2026. The finance officer vacancy, the voided cut-off fees and the \$109,000.00 loss of revenue due to this. The improper water & sewer rates were not correct in the system. The LGC – 103 has not been submitted and is due twice a year. The airport contract was not clear about the fuel sales and was not pre-audited. There was no fraud, just not a process. There was lack of a formal agreement, it was a verbal agreement but now a written agreement has been established. He stated his suggestions are as follows: the Board of Commissioners Priority is to set up an audit committee and revisit. The town has not had the greatest finance officers since Geoffrey Merritt left but you do have a great outsource CPA in Beverly Stroud so utilize her. The airport contract arrangement should be very simple. The fund balance needs to keep trending upward. Mr. Lee Grissom asked if there were any questions.

Mayor Jerome Newton advised the simple process on the airport. Mayor Pro-Tempore Delreese Simmons wanted to know if the airport manager should be operating a business. Mr. Lee Grissom said he did not want to be involved in this issue. Commissioner CJ Weaver said thank you for the presentation.

Mayor Jerome Newton then discussed Action Item 06-59 - Consider Offer to Purchase Approximately Six Acres of Property Adjacent to Carver Cemetery at 612 South Breazeale Avenue for the Amount of \$20,000.00 by ADLA, Inc. If Approved, Consider Authorizing Town Attorney Carroll

Turner to Begin the Upset Bid Process. Commissioner Gena Knode stated, I thought this was a none issue. Mayor Jerome Newton replied this is different. Town Attorney Carroll Turner stated he realizes this is a little confusing with so many offers. The south side of Carver Street has 5.9 acres the Town purchased in 2005 for the Carver Cemetery expansion, and it appears there are already some graves on part of it. He explained that ADLA, Inc. withdrew their offer for the football field and is now making an offer on three acres of the cemetery property.

Mr. Danny King commented that some people don't know what is going on or what is happening. He would like to build a 600 K walking trail. He is trying to enhance so the community can enjoy the dormant season. People have to step up. For over twenty years ADLA, Inc. has been feeding the community, teaching seniors how to navigate and hosting job fairs at Butterball. If your name is not on the deed, the state will not give you funding. He would love to implement a workforce development program and moving into Lenoir and Duplin Counties. If we invest \$650,000.00 how is \$20,000.00 giving it away. We have lost a lot of time, once the ball starts moving, they are not coming back.

Commissioner Vicky Darden asked if this would interfere with the kid's football. Mr. Danny King replied that the track would go around the field. He just wants people to have access. The football field is only used for four months out of the year. Mayor Jerome Newton asked Mr. Danny King if they would be okay with three acres. Mr. Danny King responded that we spent \$68,000.00 paving that road and nobody said anything about that. He said 2.6 acres meets the measurements of an eight-lane track and seating. We are trying to enhance the south side. He would love to partner with the Fellowship of Christian Athletes; he is not against them.

Commissioner CJ Weaver wanted to clarify, you are talking about a competition field and not a walking trail. Mr. Danny King stated their time is running out. We have wasted a lot of valuable time.

Commissioner Vicky Darden wanted to know the status of the football program. Attorney John Ryan for the Fellowship of Christian Athletes replied that we are behind. Mayor Jerome Newton commented that is a different issue. Mayor Pro-Tempore Delreese Simmons asked Pastor Ronnie Wise to please step to the podium beside Mr. Danny King. He then asked Pastor Wise if he was working together with Mr. Danny King and if he wants the track. Pastor Ronnie Wise responded, yes, he has enjoyed getting to know Mr. Danny King.

Mayor Jerome Newton discussed the six acres. Mr. Danny King will be okay with three acres. The field is separate and there is a possibility of a joint contract. What does that look like? Town Attorney Carroll Turner advised he spoke with Irvina Wentworth, and she requested the board make a decision on 3 acres only. He just needs to clarify, if we go with the three acres, ultimately ADLA, inc. would own the property. The football field would only be a lease. There was a proposal to do a dual lease. If the outer perimeter is leased, would you still be able to get funding. Mr. Danny King replied, if it is a ten-year or perpetual lease, yes but the deed is better.

Mayor Jerome Newton asked if the town agreed to a deed or lease based on conversation, can we make a motion? Town Attorney Carroll Turner replied they have verbally agreed to amend to three acres. If you approve and authorize me to approve. Commissioner Gena Knode asked Development Services Director Justin Hill if he could forecast the growth for Carver cemetery. If we sell the three acres, do you foresee a problem. Development Services Director Justin Hill responded that it depends on where the three acres are. He said it would probably take twenty plus years to fill up. Commissioner CJ Weaver advised the western portion. He wanted to know if the twenty plus years refers to the six acres or three. Development Services Director Justin Hill stated according to the drawing there are ten acres there.

Mayor Pro-Tempore Delreese Simmons made a motion to accept their offer to purchase and authorize Town Attorney Carroll Turner to begin the upset bid process. Commissioner Vicky Darden seconded and the motion passed 4-0. Commissioner CJ Weaver voted no.

Mayor Jerome Newton then discussed Action – Memo – 06-60 – Consider Approval of CDBG-NR 19-C-3131 & 22-C-4127 Projects Resolution Authorizing Officials to Sign. Commissioner CJ Weaver made a motion to approve. Commissioner Vicky Darden seconded and the motion passed 5-0.

Mayor Jerome Newton then discussed Action – Memo - 06-61 – Consider Adoption of Charter Change Ordinance Implementing Four- Year Staggered Terms & Adoption of the Resolution Calling for a Public Referendum. Commissioner CJ Weaver made a motion to approve. Commissioner Harlie Carmichael seconded and the motion passed 4-0. Commissioner Gena Knode voted no. Town Attorney Carroll Turner stated he was able to work out perfect timing for the November 3, 2026, ballot and the cost to the town is only \$1,000.00

Mayor Jerome Newton then discussed Action – Memo-06-62– Consider Approval of a Ten-Year Lease to the Fellowship of Christian Athletes for the Dr. Spencer E. Durante, Sr. Athletic Complex Located at 612 South Breazeale Avenue. Pastor Ronnie Wise commented that it has never been in his mindset that they were in competition with Mr. Danny King. They would love to have flag football, lacrosse, wrestling and a track club. We are currently facing \$3,000.00 deficit. At this point we are seven months behind, and the cost of the equipment has gone up by forty percent. We have begun losing athletes and coaches due to the uncertainty. There is no blame, he is just stating the facts. They are unable to construct the building, and he wants to minister to the youth of this community. Mayor Pro-Tempore Delreese Simmons asked how much the lease is. People are saying the town is not making any money. He also wanted to know if anyone else could use the field. Pastor Ronnie Wise advised typically \$1.00 per year and stated neither are we. Pastor Ronnie Wise advised absolutely anyone else can use the field if there is no conflict. Fellowship of Christian Athletes Pro-Bona Attorney John Ryan wanted to apologize to the mayor and the board for the tone he used in the first meeting regarding this issue. Commissioner Gena Knode was concerned about liability. Pastor Ronnie Wise stated they carry insurance. Commissioner CJ Weaver advised clause 12 gives authority to sublease.

Commissioner CJ Weaver made a motion to approve. Commissioner Vicky Darden seconded and the motion passed 5-0.

NEW BUSINESS:

Mayor Jerome Newton then discussed Non- Action-Memo 06-63 – Present the 2026/2027 Proposed Budget & Budget Message. Finance Director Joseph Trollinger thanked the department heads for taking hold of their budgets. He advised there is a decrease in current property taxes. He presented a slideshow prepared by his new intern Claire. The process of estimating water revenues made trending very difficult. The new water meters should be operational by the beginning of the Fiscal Year. We are phasing out the \$3.00 & \$6.00 surcharges. This will provide a reduction for our citizens but is not a major loss in revenue for the town. We are making progress on our recommended fund balance but are still below the threshold of thirty-four percent. The inspections, cemetery and code enforcement departments will be consolidated into Development Services.

Commissioner CJ Weaver asked if this proposed budget is balanced. Mayor Pro-Tempore Delreese Simmons asked if the property taxes are being reduced from .75 to .73 per \$100.00. Commissioner Vicky Darden commented that people are complaining about their water bills.

Mayor Jerome Newton then discussed Action-Memo – 06-64 –. Consider Approval of the Juneteenth Proclamation. Sherry Davis, Assistant Town Manager/Town Clerk, read the proclamation. Commissioner Gena Knode made motion to approve. Commissioner Vicky Darden seconded and the motion passed 5-0.

Mayor Jerome Newton then discussed Action-Memo – 06-65- Consider Approval of Special Called Board Meeting for Public Hearing on the Proposed Budget on Monday, June 22, 2026, at 6:00 P.M. Commissioner Gena Knode made a motion to approve. Commissioner CJ Weaver seconded the motion and the motion passed 5-0.

Mayor Jerome Newton then discussed Action-Memo – 06-66 – Consider Approval of Budget Ordinance Amendment #13 in the Amount of \$50,000.00 in Additional Funding to Complete the Water Meter Replacement Project. Commissioner Gena Knode asked if the new water meters project contractor and staff ordered the wrong size. Town Manager Octavius Murphy advised the shipping cost is more expensive but only ten percent more than the actual cost. They built in an additional \$50,000.00 in contingency. Mayor Jerome Newton advised he met with David Honeycutt and asked the hard questions. There was some information before on the meters that was not found but now it has been. Commissioner CJ Weaver made a motion to approve. Commissioner Harlie Carmichael seconded and the motion was approved 5-0.

Mayor Jerome Newton then discussed Action Memo – 06-67 - Consider Moving the July 6th, 2026, Regular Board Meeting to July 13, 2026, due to the July 4th Holiday (our offices are closed that day). Commissioner Harlie Carmichael made a motion to approve. Commissioner Vicky Darden seconded and the motion passed 5-0.

Town Manager's Report – Attached.

Mayor & Commissioner Reports

Commissioner Vicky Darden

- She thanked Jerilyn Lee for being here.
- She loves each and every one of you and please keep your children safe.
- Thank you all for coming out tonight.

Commissioner CJ Weaver

- He thanked everyone for coming out and hopes we see progress now.
- He said will have some hard decisions to make.
- He stated the Fire Department has been working a lot of mutual aid.

Commissioner Gena Knode

- She wanted to give a shout out to Town Manager Octavius Murphy. He is very good at getting out of the office and riding around town.
- She stated everyone we met wants to grow.
- She said trash is a really big issue with the University of Mount Olive students, but the administration is willing to help us out
- She has been receiving a lot of calls about the housing authority.

Commissioner Harlie Carmichael

- He advised everyone that the senior tax relief deadline was today.
- He stated he received a late fee today for his water bill.
- He received complaints regarding the new water meters. Some are installed at an angle. He urged everyone to please not touch the water meters.
- He said the Fire Department has free smoke detectors available.

Mayor Pro-Tempore Delreese Simmons

- He said he has received calls regarding the housing authority too, but the town has nothing to do with it.
- He stated we have had to deal with potholes for years. There are 500 feet of rocks we have to drive on, and we don't know when they are going to get paved.
- He advised Glenn Holland made sure we got extra streetlights & street signs.
- He explained that he asked Sherry Davis to pull up the monitoring reports from 2023-2024. Show me a street on the south side that was tested but reported as good. All testing sites are on the north side of town. He asked Town Manager Octavius Murphy if this would happen again. The Town Manager replied absolutely not, and it shouldn't have happened the first time.

Mayor Jerome Newton

- He thanked Jerilyn Lee for her support.
- He advised the letter of non-compliance for the housing authority director stated the director is unreachable. The housing authority falls under HUD. They oversee the director; the mayor only appoints the board. They are coming to us because they have no where else to go. Hopefully we will get some answers soon.

Our next regular board meeting is Monday, July 13, 2026, at 6:00 P.M. Our next scheduled special called board meeting is Monday, June 22, 2026, at 6:00 P.M.

Mayor Jerome Newton then advised the public we are going into a closed session. He asked everyone to step out but advised them they were welcome to stay outside until we came back into open session. He then requested a motion to go into closed session. Commissioner Harlie Carmichael made the motion to approve. Commissioner CJ Weaver seconded and the motion passed 5-0.

The meeting lasted approximately forty-five minutes for the purpose of **Closed Session Pursuant to NC GS § 143-318.11. Closed sessions.**

The purpose of the closed session was CLOSED SESSION PURSUANT TO NCGS SEC. 143-318.11 (*Motion/Second-Roll Call)

- (a) 6: To consider the qualifications, competence, performance, character, fitness, conditions of appointment, or conditions of initial employment of an individual public officer or employee or prospective public officer or employee; or to hear or investigate a complaint, charge, or grievance by or against an individual public officer or employee. General personnel policy issues may not be considered in a closed session. A public body may not consider the qualifications, competence, performance, character, fitness, appointment, or removal of a member of the public body or another body and may not consider or fill a vacancy among its own membership except in an open meeting. Final action making an appointment or discharge or removal by a public body having final authority for the appointment or discharge or removal shall be taken in an open meeting. G.S. 143-318.11

Mayor Jerome Newton requested a motion to return to open session. Commissioner CJ Weaver made the motion. Commissioner Gena Knode seconded and the motion passed 5-0. Someone checked to see if any members of the audience were still present and no one was there.

No action was taken

With there being no further business, Commissioner CJ Weaver made a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Vicky Darden seconded, and the motion passed 5-0.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jerome Newton
Mayor

Sherry Davis
Administrative Assistant/Town Clerk