

**SHALLOTTE BOARD OF ALDERMEN
ANNUAL RETREAT
MARCH 13, 2026
8:15 A.M.**

The Shallotte Board of Aldermen met for their annual retreat on March 13, 2026 at 8:15 a.m in the council chambers located at 110 Cheers Street with Mayor Art Dornfeld presiding.

Aldermen present: Gene Vasile, Larry Harrelson, Bobby Williamson, Jimmy Bellamy and Karmen Custer

Staff present: Mimi Gaither, Robert Waring, Megan Bellamy, Isaac Norris, Ashley White, Natalie Goins, Dan Formyduval, Corey Caison, Jeremy Dixon, Robert Gravino, Paul Dunwell, and Justin Ward (left at 2:48).

Mayor Dornfeld welcomed everyone to the 2026 Annual Board Retreat, thanked staff for their hard work in preparing the materials, and encouraged open and honest discussion regarding departmental needs.

Staff updated the Board on departmental accomplishments and challenges from the past fiscal year and presented goals and requests for the upcoming year.

DEPARTMENTS

(Each department report has been attached as a permanent record)

HUMAN RESOURCES

- 2024 turnover rate at 17% reduced to 10% in 2025
- Benefit transition from NC League of Municipalities to Robert Taylor Group.
- Annual State Health Plan rate increases amounting to \$186,109.
- Retirement contribution increases of \$44,684.
- Email platform consolidation \$11,820 (\$11,670 annually + \$150 set up fee)
- Continue trainings and education

PARKS & RECREATION

- Installed new mulch & sunshades at Mulberry Park.

- Farmers Market Success: Participation from 50+ vendors, live bands monthly, and food trucks. Shifted from weekly to monthly markets. Implemented upfront payment for vendors to reduce no-shows
- Shifted to artificial flowers on Main St. for cost savings, eliminating over \$20,000 in watering costs. Plan to explore colors that maintain vibrancy in sunlight.
- Increasing frequency of protest requests
- New camera system at Mulberry Community Center.
- Speaker system for Mulberry Park.
- Welcome to Shallotte signs (STDA funding?)
- Digital sign for emergency notifications & community information (Fire Dept. grant).
- Evaluate potential paving of Mulberry Community Center parking lot.
- Assess Sunnyside building's future use and necessary upgrades.
- Shally Shuttle: one-year recap.

PLANNING

- Work on tree preservation and replacement standards.
- Develop access management plan to address Main Street congestion (DA grant – will require 20% match from the Town).
- Third party code enforcement service – one day per week (\$26K annually)
- Develop Town storm water master plan.
- Consider establishment of storm water utility.

FINANCE

- Budget software (Lomali Budget Book)
- Consider electronic bill delivery options

ADMINISTRATION

- Replace computers (purchase new or lease?)
- Town Code update
- Consider hiring IT personnel
- Succession planning - upcoming retirements

FIRE

- Strengthen coverage and efficiency using response data and analysis.
- Improve firefighter safety and workforce capacity (add 1 firefighter annually).

- Support sustainable long range planning for staffing, stations, and equipment.

POLICE

- New Police Chief expressed commitment to evaluate current programs & policies
- Review vehicle lease program in depth
- Successful cadet program
- Additional patrol officer needed

MAINTENANCE

- Resurfaced just over 3,000 linear ft. of streets (Cost averaged \$81.26 per linear foot)
- Ongoing development related issues (soil testing failures, road damage from heavy truck traffic)
- Storm water management - Green Bay ditch cleaning project
- Establishment of storm water utility?
- Village Point Estates force main extension nearly complete
- Hwy 17 force main completion pending DOT coordination
- Noted success of in-house pump rebuilding
- Smoke test results led to repairs that reduce rainwater infiltration into the sewer system
- Dramatic reduction in sewer calls attributed to proactive inspections and maintenance
- Additional employee – January 2027

RESOURCE PLANNING/GOALS

A. Financial Update

Town Manager Mimi Gaither emphasized the town's good financial position, noting that even after completing major capital projects over the past five years, the town maintained over 100% fund balance. She highlighted that the town had paid for significant projects out of fund balance using a pay-as-you-go approach, which contributed to the strong financial standing.

B. Growth

Town Manager Mimi Gaither presented data from the Brunswick County Board of Realtors showing continued strong growth indicators for 2025. Planning Director Robert Waring provided analysis of current and potential development projects throughout the town, noting this could add significant population and tax base growth over the coming years.

C. Board Goals for 2025 and What We've Done

Town Manager Mimi Gaither reviewed the 2025 goals and reported on progress made in each area.

D. Capital Projects – Board Direction

Discussion was held on the following projects:

1. New Town Complex

A motion was made by Gene Vasile seconded by Karmen Custer to approve the Samet contract for construction manager at risk (CM@R) for an amount up to \$131,962, including a review of existing costs with the intent of reducing those costs to an amount that the Board of Aldermen would be willing to submit for financing to the USDA. Motion carried 5 yes 0 no.

2. Riverwalk

3. Price Landing

4. Fire Stations

5. Maintenance Capital Needs

- Brierwood Rd. force main extension
- Bay Rd. force main
- Columbus St. to Hickory St. tie
- Upsize Village Rd. force main
- Partnership participation in bio-solids project
- Lift station upgrades
- 2 fleet trucks
- Small dump truck that doesn't require CDLs
- Additional sewer allocation

E. Board Goals for 2026

Due to time constraints, Town Manager Mimi Gaither stated that she would summarize the goals and present them at a future workshop for further discussion. She also expressed appreciation to staff for their efforts in preparing and participating in the Board Retreat.

Respectfully submitted,

Natalie Goins
Town Clerk