

**MINUTES
CITY OF DUNN
DUNN, NORTH CAROLINA**

The City Council of the City of Dunn held a Special Call Meeting on Thursday, February 28, 2008, at 7:00 p.m. in the Dunn Municipal Building. Present was Mayor Oscar N. Harris, Mayor Pro Tem N. Carnell Robinson, Council Members Buddy Maness, Bryan Galbreath, Billy Tart, Chuck Turnage and Joey Tart. Also present was City Manager Ronnie Autry, Public Works Director Billy Addison, City Planner Steven Neuschafer, Librarian Mike Williams, Fire Chief Austin Tew, Police Chief B.P. Jones, Recreation Director Perry Hudson, City Attorney P. Tilghman Pope, City Clerk Debra West, and Daily Record Reporter Steve Reed.

INVOCATION

Mayor Harris opened the meeting at 7:00 p.m. and asked Mayor Pro Tem Robinson to give the invocation. Afterwards the Pledge of Allegiance was repeated.

Mayor Harris acknowledged and welcomed former Mayor J. Dal Snipes and Mr. Hoover Adams, founder of The Daily Record and General William C. Lee Memorial Commission in the audience.

PUBLIC HEARING

**DEMOLITION/RENOVATION OF THE
CIVIC CENTER PROPERTY (OLD ARMORY)
200 N. GENERAL LEE AVENUE**

Mayor Harris stated that the public has been notified that oral and written comments will be heard and received concerning the demolition/renovation of the Civic Center Property (Old Armory) owned by the City of Dunn and located at 200 N. General Lee Avenue.

A petition shall be available at this hearing for distribution to those persons desiring to petition the City Council to call for a referendum to borrow monies for renovation of the Civic Center Property, together with a corresponding tax increase to pay for said renovations.

The public hearing was duly advertised on February 18, 2008 and February 25, 2008.

Mayor Harris explained that during the City Council's recent budget/planning retreat, the Council came to a consensus to hold a public hearing with regard to the civic center committee's recommendation to demolish the Civic Center. After the public hearing, a petition will be available for any citizen to obtain 20% of the registered voters of the City of Dunn to authorize the renovation through and by a bond issue and/or other conventional financing. He further explained the procedure of levying a tax for the purpose of re-paying the bonds and/or re-paying the conventional financing and for the operation of the same. Once the bonds are repaid, funding will continue to be required to maintain and carry on programs within the facility.

Prior to beginning the Public Hearing, Mayor Harris yielded to comments from the Council, City Attorney and City Manager. Hearing no comments, Mayor Harris asked the Council if they would like to have the opportunity to field questions to speakers if agreeable with the speaker. The Council concurred.

Before hearing from the public, Mayor Harris asked Civic Center Committee Chairman Brad Heath to present the report of this committee.

Brad Heath, Chairman of the Civic Center Committee, came forward and gave the names of those members which served on the Civic Center Committee: Keith Finch, Buddy Creed, Hoover Adams, Michael Bethea, who later resigned and was replaced by John Archie, Jr., Brad Heath, Walt Smith, and Joe Miriello.

Mr. Heath read the executive summary report of the Civic Center Committee.

A copy of the Executive Summary of the Civic Center Committee is incorporated into these minutes as Attachment #1.

Mayor Harris thanked Mr. Heath and the Civic Center Committee for the thorough job, time and effort that went into this study which lasted approximately one year. He added that the City Council is looking toward following the instructions of the committee unless the citizens can provide a means to do otherwise.

Mayor Harris opened the public hearing at 7:15 p.m.

Mayor Harris asked if there was anyone present to speak for or against this issue.

Ms. Elizabeth Crudup, 400 S. Magnolia Avenue, Dunn, NC – She works with an agency called Harnett Historical Association (HHA). She is currently a resident of Dunn as well as a concerned citizen. She stated that the issue of demolishing the Civic Center has been debated for a long time. Preserving things from our past help us know what made us and who we are. Preservation should be a key component of any effort to promote sustainable development in this town. City officials should offer incentives to encourage re-use and energy upgrades on historical buildings instead of tax hikes to demolish them. The City of Dunn holds historical properties that are very important to their image. She gave an example of an ad that the City of Dunn currently runs in the “Images of Harnett County” magazine. All of the properties are historical and if they were demolished, what would they show as the Image of Dunn.

Ms. Crudup stated that the plan of HHA is to restore this building for public use. They hope to include a memorial for the military people, and a section to include the memories of the Dunn High School Alumni. In referring to the Civic Center report, she stated that the engineering report presented by Massengill and Associates stated that the building was structurally sound. She added that the building is sound and it is not a safety risk. She referred to page 69 of the report which shows the building is structurally sound and has not been fundamentally compromised from the wear and tear of the environment. The building does have significant leaks as a result of the decay of the current roof. Most of the cracking in the brick is found above the lentils and these cracks do not compromise the integrity of the building.

Ms. Crudup stated that the price to fix the stated faults as told, is \$120,725. Somewhere between page 69 and the summary report, there is suddenly a dangerous building. It was reported in the press, that renovation would cost \$772,000. She has not seen this number within the report, has no clue what that number represents and she does not know what the City is going to do with \$772,000 of tax money being asked for. The City is willing to spend \$120,000 on this building, whether it is to demolish it (which the actual number is \$120,225) to demolish or \$120,725 to restore it. The actual difference in the numbers is \$425. She added that the City is trying to make the citizens believe that they are not willing to spend an extra \$425 to save this building. The City would rather raise taxes, and give a number that the citizens have no clue where the \$772,000 will be spent.

Ms. Crudup stated that there is another option which is what her petition is about. In referring to her petition, she stated that since the City finds this building irrelevant to their causes, she is asking the City to give her organization proprietorship or stewardship of this building. This building has many memories for the local people. HHA will preserve and revitalize it into a conference/expo center in the lines of the Jim Graham Building in Raleigh. For example, they would hold flower shows, home shows, gun shows which will bring revenue to the City and walking traffic to the downtown businesses. There is no such facility in the area. A building of similar square footage in a town with similar demographics to Dunn, is in use at present in Decatur, Tennessee. They have a convention center with year round bookings.

Ms. Crudup stated that HHA is suggesting that instead of spending \$120,000 for demolition, that the City of Dunn spend \$30,000 a year to keep this building running. She asked that the Council do what makes sense, something that will make money, bring different shows to Dunn and help downtown Dunn businesses. The City would earn money from these events while saving the building.

Ms. Crudup asked that her petition be signed to save the building.

Mayor Harris asked Ms. Crudup if she would yield to questions from the City Council. She responded yes.

Mayor Pro Tem Robinsons asked Ms. Crudup if she would give a brief description of her group’s history and other projects they may have encountered and the source of financing they might utilize for renovation of the facility.

Ms. Crudup responded that HHA came about as a result of a very frustrating search for historical preservation action in Harnett County. She is vice-chairman of the Historical Properties Commission in Harnett County. She stated that Harnett County is in the process of creating a program. The County rules would not apply to the City of Dunn unless they sign-up. She added that when Harnett County presents this to the City of Dunn, she encourages Dunn to take a good look at it. She stated that they have found a lot of properties that need to be fixed. A lot of houses built in Dunn in the late 1890's into the 1930's are 110% better built than anything constructed today. They want to preserve the small town atmosphere. She stated that this organization was formed and is actively restoring 400 S. Magnolia Avenue. She added that the uses the Civic Center Committee looked at for this building already exists. Dunn already has a library, senior center and daycares. She has no clue what the \$772,000 was going to be used for. It would be nice if the Council members would inform the citizens where they plan to spend the taxpayer's money. HHA financing has been talking and working with USDA Rural Development. They have looked at Harnett County and asked for a viable project, something that will have community support, create jobs and the support of the leadership. She feels the Expo Center would preserve the building and bring businesses to town as well as creating services such as carpentry, cleaning, and marketing. Ms. Crudup read in the paper that the City had not heard from the people of Dunn. She has heard from the people just from her work. She read a few written comments from various authors to save this building.

Ms. Crudup stated that \$425.00 stands between saving this landmark and destroying it. She is sure the City can afford to spend the extra \$425.00.

Mayor Harris asked Ms. Crudup if her organization is non-profit. Ms. Crudup responded it is a non-profit incorporated.

Mayor Harris asked Ms. Crudup if she had received her letter of acceptance as a 501 (c) (3) firm. Ms. Crudup responded she had to make one correction, which has been sent it and she hopes to receive it in a week or two.

Mayor Harris asked Ms. Crudup if she had previously been filing federal income tax returns in reference to her non-profit. Ms. Crudup responded that she just started this process and has only been a resident of Dunn since November of 2006. Since she has been in Dunn, she has jumped into this. They may not be familiar with her face but she has been before the Council before with regard to the McKay House. She is pleased that it was preserved.

Council Member Galbreath asked Ms. Crudup for the address of the current project she is working on. She responded 400 S. Magnolia Avenue. Mr. Galbreath asked her if that is where she resides. She responded yes, because the City will destroy this building if it is not put to good use.

Council Member Galbreath stated that there was a website listed for the HHA in the newspaper. He visited the website and there was no information regarding Harnett County at all. Ms. Crudup responded this website is an introduction to her organization HHA. Harnett County itself is working on Harnett County as a facility. She does not want to duplicate what the County is already working on.

Mayor Pro Tem Robinson stated that Ms. Crudup is applying for 501 (3) status. He asked Ms. Crudup for the names of the members of her board of directors. She responded that presently she has a small board. Along with herself, there is Mr. Thomas Ellis, II and Ms. Delores Stackard. She added that if anyone feels so inclined to join in her cause, she welcomes the support.

Council Member Turnage stated that Ms. Crudup's figures are skewed. He pointed out that the cost estimate just for the façade plan is \$772,000. The cost estimate for total restoration is 1.9 to 2.6 million. Ms. Crudup responded that somewhere between page 69 and the Summary report something happened. Mr. Turnage stated that there are two plans. Ms. Crudup stated that on page 69 (facts and figures) states that \$120,725 is for basic restoration to cover the asbestos abatement, glass and window replacement, roof replacement and waterproofing the exterior. Otherwise, everything else is fine. She stated that \$772,000 cannot be correct to cover this basic restoration.

Council Member Maness stated that the number quoted by Ms. Crudup will only stabilize the building, prevent any further deterioration, and will not make it habitable on the inside. To suggest that \$120,725 will provide the funds for a usable facility is far from the truth.

Ms. Crudup showed a picture of a temporary exhibit stand used for shows. It can be put up and taken down. There will be no permanent wall structure put in this place. They would not build anything new. With the current flooring which only needs to be cleaned up, the building only needs maintenance and cleaning. She stated it does not need \$772,000 of anything.

Mayor Harris asked if there was anyone else present to speak for or against this issue.

Mr. William Elmore - W. Divine Street, Dunn, NC. – Spoke in support of preserving this building. He is in the real estate and building business and he has restored many pieces of property in Dunn. The history of this building is deserving of preservation. He does not support any tax increase and he asked “what is the hurry in tearing this building down?” He would like for the City to look at private/public funding and grant funding. The condition of this building is not the fault of the current administration or the prior administration. The building appears to be in bad shape when viewed from the outside, but he does not think it is in as bad of a condition as the public thinks. He feels this building can be preserved. He pointed out that Larry Massengill engineers reported that the building is in such a condition that it can be repaired. Although he has not had conversations with Mr. Massengill about this building, he was pleased to know that Mr. Massengill stated in the report, that the condition of the building was repairable and restorable. Mr. Elmore asked that the Council consider the idea of making the exterior of the building look better. He does not agree with turning the building over to another group at this time. He would like to see the City hold ownership on the building, board it up and make it look more presentable to the public. It presently reflects a negative image on the City. The citizens of Dunn should all be ashamed to allow it to get in its current condition. It would take a lot of money to demolish the bldg. (\$120,000). He feels that the figures presented in the report were projections on different uses of the building and they have never determined what use the City may have for this building. If they would wait on demolition, there may be an individual in the future, who would want to invest private monies into this project which would generate tax revenues for the City by the increase in the tax base. There may be grant programs in a year or two available for this project. He referred to the current Triangle South Building which is housed in the old Magnolia Avenue School building and the preservation/renovation that took place to preserve a building which is used by many people on a daily basis. The Civic Center may have the same use or purpose at some time in the future if the City will prevent further deterioration of the building, wait and not move too fast in demolishing it. For the heritage and history of this building, he would like to see it preserved. It would cost millions to build a like facility today. He asked that they not bring this issue to the public, and he does not feel the building will stand if it is brought to a public vote. He asked the Council to prevent further damage and wait a year or two to see if funding will develop to save this structure.

Mayor Harris asked Mr. Elmore if he would yield to any questions from the Council. He responded yes; however, there were no questions for Mr. Elmore.

Mr. Hoover Adams, Lakeshore Drive, Dunn, NC – He thanked the members of the Civic Center Committee for their hard work and the engineers gave them the verdict they wanted. He stated that architects and engineers are like lawyers, they pick sides with whoever pays them and that is what happened in this deal. He feels the figures are grossly exaggerated. He can't see where it would cost \$120,000 to tear down a building. A couple of big tractors could get rid of it in a hurry. He added that he met with Representative David Lewis yesterday and asked for \$500,000 for this building. Representative Lewis promised that he would ask for a substantial sum of money for this project once the legislature reconvenes. Mr. Adams stated that they can get money every time the legislature meets. He also plans to meet Senator Dole in the next few days and stated that he is sure she will recommend this project. He stated that there are monies available to give from different sources if they make a good cause to receive it. He gave some history of the General William C. Lee Museum's construction. When Mayor Harris, the late Attorney Pat Pope and himself met together to start the General William C. Lee Museum, they started out with no funding. Not only did they finance this project, but presently there is over one-half million dollars in an endowment. He stated that those of us who fought in the war will be gone and other people may not be interested. It would be a shame and disgrace to give up the Civic Center building. It has a lot of character and value. He feels the figures were greatly exaggerated. He could hire an engineer tomorrow that would give him the exact opposite opinion. He thinks they can sell the idea to the public and the time to do it is now with another war going on. There is more patriotism with the current war. He stated that the City Council should get an opinion from another engineering firm. He does not question the ability of any of these people and it is one of those things people can have honest disagreements on. He feels the City can get out for less money.

Mayor Harris asked Mr. Adams if he would yield to questions from the City Council. Mr. Adams responded yes.

Council Member Turnage stated that Mr. Adams was on the Civic Center Committee. He asked Mr. Adams if these type of conversations with saving the building arose when the Civic Center Committee met. Mr. Adams responded no, that he only attended one meeting because he knew from the temperament and conversations at their first meeting, he would be wasting his time because they wanted to demolish the building. Mr. Adams said to take note of the fact that the engineers they hired are the same firm that represents the town. The people opposing the renovation depend on the City engineering firm to keep them working. The engineering firm had to return the report they did, to stay in good terms with the City. He's not saying that's dishonest, but that is just the way lawyers, engineers and a lot of other people are. Sometimes you can get the opinion you want from doctors but he doesn't hold it against them.

Council Member Joey Tart stated that he does not entirely disagree with Mr. Adams about engineers and lawyers but he knows the longer they work on a case, the more they get paid. Mr. Adams responded that will happen here too. Mr. Tart stated that in this particular situation, the previous council actually sat with the City Planner when he came up with a proposal to save the façade of the building, to strengthen it and keep some room available for the Dunn High School Friends Association. The council was hopeful that this idea would develop to save the property; however, when the cost estimate came back at \$772,000, they were discouraged and did not expect this type of cost. He stated that there was never any pressure put on the City engineer nor did he have any reason to come back with a high estimate. Mr. Tart added that our people who are serving the community do things for the town, and not for themselves and had the engineer done anything differently, he would have been proposing his own agenda and he does not believe his business would do that. It was in the engineer's best interest to give the City the exact facts. Mr. Tart stated that the engineer gave the City the best estimate that he could. He added that the Council was excited when they thought they could preserve a portion of this building, it is a sentimental issue; however, sentimental will not pay for the preservation of this building and that is the problem this Council has run into.

Mr. Adams stated that he did not mean to infer that the City engineer did anything wrong. The City engineer did what his profession calls for and as he said, it is like a lawyer; you can go on either side but at the same time, if you have a man paying you money, you are going to hesitate to disagree with him.

Mayor Harris asked if there was anyone else present to speak for or against this issue.

Mr. John Archie, E. Divine Street, Dunn – He is presently retired. He served on the Civic Center Committee. The citizens of Dunn can ill afford another tax. He is not opposed to or in favor of keeping the building. The building is structurally sound but the bottom line is the taxpayers do not want another tax imposed.

Former Dunn Mayor J. Dal Snipes, 905 W. Pope Street, Dunn, NC – Stated that he is making his comments as an interested citizen. His remarks are toward saving the building. It is no secret that in the last four years with budgets like they were and priorities, that there was no money to spend on this project at that time as is probably the case tonight and probably is the case next year and probably will be the case even two to three years down the road. There will be a future need for this building and at that time, there may be public money, public/private money or grant funding available. He asked that the building not be demolished, continue to moth-ball it and continue to make it safe because he believes that at some point in the future, the City may have a need for this building such as a senior citizens center, something for the arts, a museum or a veteran's memorial or some combination of all these uses. He attended a meeting a few weeks ago in Rocky Mount at the Imperial Center, which only a few years ago, was a boarded-up old tobacco manufacturing facility with no life and no future. When Hurricane Floyd came through Rocky Mount, it took out Rocky Mount's performing art center as well as other buildings that they housed various community entities. At that time, through private monies, City monies and also federal monies, they were able to un-mothball that building and it is one of the finest facilities of its kind anywhere. It may be upwards of three to four million dollars to build the Civic Center from the ground up with over 20,000 square feet of usable space. He opposes any tax increase especially if the taxpayers do not know what they are voting for. At this point, they do not know the future or life of the building. He asked that the Council keep the building and secure it. This building has had a tremendously proud history in our City and he firmly believes that one day it can have new life and serve this City proudly again.

Mayor Harris asked the Council if they had any questions for former Mayor Snipes.

Council Member Turnage stated that he and the former Mayor grew up together and they share some of the same history as it pertains to this building. He added that he is also trying to weigh all of the options set forth. He encouraged citizens such as former Mayor Snipes, Mr. Adams, Mr. Elmore and Ms. Crudup to work together, support the Council, bring forth their ideas now so that someone can work together for that vision.

Mr. Rick Lashmit, 715 Westbrook Avenue, Dunn, – He is in support of looking at another venture other than demolishing this building. His main concern is “why are we in this position or why is that building in this position?” He came to City Hall a couple of years ago and told somebody that the City is tearing down buildings, and condemning houses when the City needs to clean up their own back yard. This building is a disgrace with the windows broken out. He again asked why it’s in this condition. Money was supplied by private funds to build the new Recreation Center and it can happen again. An older administration spent between \$50,000 and \$100,000 of taxpayer’s money repairing the roof of this building. If it would take \$120,000 just to get the building up to par, look at what it could save in the future. With 20,000 square feet, it could cost five to six million dollars to replace a building like this. If you mention the word “raising taxes”, everybody responds because they do not want additional taxes. The General William C. Lee Museum started with nothing and now has an endowment of \$500,000 to pass down to younger generations. We have to leave something. If you don’t remember where you came from, you don’t know where you’re going.

Mr. Adams stood up and stated that he meant no reflection on the City engineer. He is a friend of his and he is sure he is a good honest man but there is a difference in opinion. He feels his numbers are wrong.

Mr. William P. “Billy” Barfield, 1304 Guy Avenue, Dunn - He is not a veteran and he has lived in Dunn all of his life. He is in favor of not destroying the Civic Center (old armory). The old armory is history of Dunn. He played basketball and attended his prom in this facility. The history of Dunn should not be sacrificed for the sake of another ballpark. Preserving history is important. The City destroyed the old Grantham home for the sake of a vacant lot, and destroyed the General William C. Lee birthplace to get a vacant lot. The First Citizens Bank was destroyed because we were told it was structurally unsound. The old armory building is structurally sound. It was allowed to depreciate because the Recreation Department did not want to be there. The key of why we’re here tonight is the maintenance or lack thereof of this building. When he served on the City Council, they tried to get maintenance done but as Mr. Adams stated, when you are against it, you can turn the figures around to make a profit or loss. The Civic Center Committee was first charged with saving the building and then they were told it was their responsibility to find the financing for this building; they did not find the financing, so they suggested demolishing it. The money is out there whether it is in the form of a low-interest loan, or grants. If it takes taxes for progress, you do not mind it but you mind taxes when it is wasted on something that is not needed. He cannot recall the first notice of the Civic Center Committee being posted for the public to attend. Thirty days is not enough time to obtain the signatures required for the petition. In referring to the petition, where will the financing come from. The City Council and Mayor should come up with a plan to finance this and not make the local citizens find funding. Who will occupy this building if it is renovated? The City needs this building. The Recreation Department does not want it. Why can’t they honor the veterans, and save the façade? Once this building is torn down, it is gone. He asked the Council to study the issue and not rush to tear down the building. He asked the Council if the old Harnett High School building is any safer than the old Civic Center. The question was asked “why hurry?” In referring to the recent budget retreat, it was stated to act quickly, so that monies can be budgeted for demolition.

Mr. Adams stood and stated that no one has the time to gather signatures for this petition. This is the City Council’s obligation to vote. Do not pass it on to the citizens.

Mayor Harris asked if there was anyone else present to speak for or against this issue. Hearing none, the public hearing was closed at 8:18 p.m.

Mayor Harris thanked everyone for coming and expressing their opinion concerning this property.

City Attorney Pope stated that the City Clerk had copies of the petition available for anyone desiring one.

Mayor Harris stated that petitions are available in the Clerk's office. Mayor Harris read the petition as follows:

NORTH CAROLINA

HARNETT COUNTY

**PETITION TO THE CITY COUNCIL FOR THE CITY OF DUNN, NC
REGARDING RENOVATION OF THE OLD DUNN CIVIC CENTER (OLD ARMORY)
LOCATED AT 200 N. GENERAL LEE AVE., DUNN, NC**

We the undersigned do hereby petition the City Council for the City of Dunn, North Carolina to hold a public referendum, to allow the registered voters of the City of Dunn, North Carolina to approve or disapprove the City of Dunn issuing bonds or obtaining local financing from local financing institutions for renovations to the Old Dunn Civic Center (Old Armory) located at 200 N. General Lee Ave., Dunn, North Carolina. *We understand and acknowledge, that to be included in any such referendum, will be the approval of a corresponding property tax increase to pay the debt service on any financing deemed necessary by the City Council for the City of Dunn related to such project, including the cost for operations of the facility.*

We the undersigned further acknowledge that at least twenty percent (20%) of the registered voters of the City of Dunn, North Carolina, as certified by the Harnett County Board of Elections, must execute this Petition in order for the City Council of the City of Dunn to hold a public referendum as set forth above, and that this Petition must be returned to the City of Dunn, North Carolina by March 31, 2008 at City Hall, located at 401 East Broad Street, Dunn, North Carolina 28334.

	<u>Name</u>	<u>Address</u>	<u>Signature</u>
1.	_____	_____	_____
2.	_____	_____	_____
3.	_____	_____	_____
4.	_____	_____	_____
5.	_____	_____	_____
6.	_____	_____	_____
7.	_____	_____	_____
8.	_____	_____	_____
9.	_____	_____	_____
10.	_____	_____	_____

With no further business to discuss, a motion was made by Mayor Pro Tem Robinson and seconded by Council Member Billy Tart to adjourn the meeting at 8:22 p.m.

Oscar N. Harris
Mayor

Attest:

Debra G. West
City Clerk