



Town of Holly Ridge

Mayor's Message

FEBRUARY 16, 2026



Happy Monday, everyone. I hope everyone is enjoying the warmer weather. After last week, we all need it. I wish you all a great week ahead. God bless you and your family, our Town, our County, our State, and our great Country.

1. On Tuesday night, we had our Town Council meeting. Below is a summary of actions taken during the meeting:

- We had a Presentation of the Audit for the fiscal year 2024 – 2025, Thompson, Price, Scott, Adams & Co., P.A. The presentation slides will be available online on our website. As a summary, we had a successful audit; no irregularities were found. This is the 8th successful audit by our Town. A big thank you to the Town Manager - Heather Reynolds and our Finance Director - Chuck Strickland - for their dedication and hard work.
- There were no Public Hearings.
- The Town Manager's Report covered the activities of various departments. **My comment: I have mentioned many times that we are fortunate to have such dedicated staff in our various departments. Most of the work goes unnoticed, but in my opinion, given the limited staff we have for our Town's size, we have the best staff in the area, and I am honored and proud to work with them.**
- Old Business
 - Approval of the Municipal Park Sponsorship Program. We will begin announcing this plan and seeking sponsorship.
- Under New Business
 - Approval of the Change of Date for March Regular Town Council Meeting to March 9 from previously scheduled on March 10 – **Passed 5-0**
 - Approval of the By-Laws for the Holly Ridge Beautification Committee – **Passed 5-0**
 - Appointment of Jennifer Marshall and Jackie Sage to the Bee City USA Committee for a Term of two years.– **Passed 5-0**

- Appointment of Jennifer Marshall and Jackie Sage to the Holly Ridge Beautification Committee for a Term of two years. – **Passed 5-0**
- Appointment of Jennifer Marshall to the Friends of the Park Committee for a Term of two years. – **Passed 5-0**
- Appointment of Anna Gaskins to the Board of Adjustment for a Term of three years. – **Passed 5-0**
- Announcements, we publicized the following:
 - Tuesday, February 17, 2026 – Planning Board Meeting beginning at 6:00 p.m. at the Holly Ridge Community Center.
 - Thursday, February 19, 2026 –Town Council will hold a Special Meeting to Conduct Four Public Hearings. This meeting will take place at the Community Center and begin at 6:00 p.m.
 - **Monday, March 9, 2026 (Changed)** – Town Council Regular Monthly Meeting beginning at 6:30 p.m. in the Community Center.
 - Friday, April 3, 2026 & Monday, April 6, 2026 – Town Administrative Offices Closed for the Easter Holiday.
- We had a Closed Session to discuss legal matters. **My Comments: Closed Sessions are a standard practice among municipal government entities to discuss legal matters that are not public. This is not intended to hide any matters from the citizens, but to allow the Town Council to discuss these legal issues with the Town Attorney.**

2. On Wednesday, we had the Public Information Session on the annexation matter. We appreciate all who were able to attend and ask questions. We continue to have transparency and share information with the public. There were good conversations, and the developer answered the questions asked. On matters not within their respective responsibilities, the Town Attorney, the Town Manager, or I responded to the audience. The process seems to have worked well, and we answered all audience questions. We had nearly 70 attendees. The highlights of the discussion are as follows.

- The annexation is across two counties, Onslow and Pender
- There are no development plans in Pender County at this point. There are environmental studies, floodplain analysis, and many other steps before such a plan is developed.
- The development plan will be submitted to the county if the Town rejects it.
- The economic benefits and tax revenue impact are shown on the slide deck developed by Jacksonville-Onslow Economic Development (JOED)
- The Fire and Police will respond to that area even if it is not part of the Town.
- The 50-year development plan is standard practice for projects of this scale.

- The first house occupancy will be approximately 2 years from the date of approval.
 - The roads will be dedicated to the Town
 - The environmental study has been completed and posted to our website
 - Several additional regulatory steps will have to be completed before the first residential unit is built
 - There will be at a minimum 250 acres dedicated to the Town for a natural park
 - The wells in the property are already operational by ONWASA, and water is currently being used in the area
 - There are no contamination sites in the proposed area of Project Ajax (this is the project name for this development)
 - The housing development planned for workforce housing (**defined as 60-140% of the median house price, which is \$375,000 in Holly Ridge**) to support the 2,500 potential employees in the industrial park. No public housing is planned.
 - The development comprises multiple types of units, as shown on the slides.
 - There will be nearly 60 acres of commercial space adjacent to Route 50.
 - The Onslow County school system is discussing building the planned elementary school on the Ajax site. Some concerns were raised regarding Pender County schools, which are not matters to be discussed at this point, as there are no current plans for development of the Pender County portion.
3. This week and early next week, we will be preparing for the Special Meeting next week to conduct the Public Hearings. The Special Town Council Meeting will be held on Thursday, February 19, at the Community Center and will address 4 topics for Town Council consideration:
- i. Annexation of property
 - ii. Zoning Request
 - iii. Concept Plan
 - iv. Development Agreement
- Citizens will have the opportunity to speak to the Town Council during each Public Hearing. Due to the expected number of speakers, **the 3-minute rule will be strictly enforced.**
4. This development has been the subject of very passionate discussion among citizens, centered on social media, which is an inappropriate platform for debate. Also, this discussion is now expanded to include individuals who are not citizens of Holly Ridge, as well as a website and public polling. My fiduciary responsibility to the citizens of Holly Ridge is to act in their best long-term interests. It has been recommended that citizens vote on this issue. This issue was debated, publicized, and was a central theme of the last election, only 3 months ago. There were two distinct platforms on opposite sides of the issue, and the citizens voted. **66%** of

citizens chose our platform, reflecting overwhelming approval of our Pro Smart Growth, low-tax recommended direction. We welcome all who reside in the area to attend our meeting if they wish to comment. But it is inappropriate for anyone to try to impose their views on our citizens and to agitate the Community by creating websites and posting inflammatory material on social media. Let's all try to bring this community together, communicate, and have a healthy debate about facts rather than conjecture. I am always available and happy to meet at any time to discuss this matter. Still, I am not going to respond to false accusations or non-factual statements or get into social media arguments.

5. I will have office hours this week on Tuesday and Thursday, 1–4 p.m. I am available to discuss any subjects by appointment, by phone at 336-865-0884, or by message. We do appreciate citizens' interest in the management of our great Town. I have had many great discussions with our citizens. I invite anyone interested to meet with me and discuss your ideas and concerns. We may disagree on issues, but we are open to discussing and hearing from you. We appreciate your confidence and support. God bless you.

Mayor Pete Parnian