

Lincolnton City Council Approves Christian Ministry Land Agreement, Walmart Expansion and Other Projects

Jay Dellinger, Publisher

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LINCOLNTON, N.C. — The Lincolnton City Council addressed several important issues during its October 1 meeting including a property agreement involving Christian Ministry, expansion plans for Walmart, neighborhood traffic concerns and improvements to city infrastructure. Residents also raised concerns about a proposed data center and the future of the historic Oaklawn School property.

Christian Ministry Property Agreement Approved

One of the more significant decisions involved approval of an updated property agreement between the city and Christian Ministry. The arrangement involves a property exchange that would allow Christian Ministry to relocate its operations to the Oaklawn School area.

Under the agreement, the city will receive Christian Ministry's two existing downtown buildings while Christian Ministry will receive two buildings at the new location along with a planned 10,000-square-foot addition.

City officials explained that the proposed addition was originally planned at 20,000 square feet but has since been reduced to 10,000 square feet. The overall project amount has not changed.

The revised agreement also involves changes to the amount of land included in the exchange. Officials discussed retaining an adjoining section containing a basketball court for possible development into a neighborhood park with recreational facilities. However, the park remains a separate proposal and was not included in the approved agreement.

During public comments, resident Jocelyn Barber expressed concerns about the future of the historic Oaklawn School and asked that community members and the Coalition of Churches remain involved in discussions. Barber emphasized the historical importance of the former Rosenwald school and its longtime connection to the surrounding community.

City officials estimated that the relocation could take place in the fall or winter of 2027 depending on construction progress and weather conditions.

Walmart Parking Reconfiguration Receives Approval

Lincolnton City Council approved a request allowing Walmart on North Generals Boulevard to reconfigure its existing parking lot to accommodate additional spaces for online grocery pickup.

The project does not involve expanding the store's building. Instead, Walmart plans to convert a portion of its regular parking spaces into designated grocery pickup spaces to meet the growing demand for online orders.

Under the approved plan, the parking requirement will be reduced from 725 spaces to 672 spaces. Because the proposed parking arrangement did not meet the city's existing requirements, council approval was necessary.

City planning officials indicated that the remaining parking would be sufficient for the store's operations.

The changes will take place within the existing parking area and do not involve construction of a new building addition.

Residents Raise Concerns About Proposed Data Center

A proposed data center along Car Farm Road drew concerns during the public comment portion of the meeting.

Resident Jeff Ward told council members he was not opposed to data centers in general but questioned whether the proposed location was appropriate for an established residential area.

Ward pointed to existing homes, apartments and nearby residential construction along with concerns about increased truck traffic.

He encouraged city leaders to consider industrial or business park locations rather than introducing another large development into the neighborhood.

Another resident raised concerns about the amount of electricity and water data centers could require and questioned whether city officials had allowed sufficient time to develop regulations governing such facilities.

The concerns were presented during public comments. Council did not vote to approve or deny the proposed Car Farm Road data center during the meeting.

Speed Limit Reduction Approved

Council approved reducing the speed limit on West Main Street Extension from 35 mph to 25 mph following requests from neighborhood residents.

City officials explained that the roadway is frequently used as a shortcut by motorists attempting to avoid heavier traffic during school hours.

The change is intended to improve safety and bring the roadway more in line with other residential streets.

Officials also discussed the possibility of reviewing speed limits throughout the city to establish greater consistency in residential neighborhoods. The new speed limit will require updated traffic signs.

Water and Sewer Infrastructure Improvements

Council approved engineering work associated with the North Carolina Department of Transportation's planned bridge project on the NC 150 Bypass near the city's wastewater treatment plant.

As part of the project, the city plans to replace an existing 12-inch water line with

a larger 16-inch line to accommodate potential future growth.

Plans also include an additional eight-inch pipeline that could eventually carry treated wastewater for irrigation or other approved uses. Fiber-optic infrastructure is also planned to improve communication with city utility facilities.

Council approved a project fund of approximately $117,300 for engineering and related expenses.

Officials explained that most eligible design costs are expected to be reimbursed by NCDOT although the city would remain responsible for improvements beyond replacing existing infrastructure.

Firefighters Honored for Life-Saving Actions

The meeting also included a special recognition of Lincolnton firefighters whose actions helped save lives during two separate emergencies.

Firefighters received medical life-saving awards for their response to a May 4 emergency on Motz Avenue involving a patient who was unconscious and not breathing.

Crews immediately began CPR and used an automated external defibrillator while working alongside emergency medical personnel. Their efforts helped restore the patient's pulse before transportation to a hospital.

The individual whose life was saved attended the meeting and joined firefighters for the recognition.

Members of the Fire Department were also honored for their response to an August 5 house fire on North Flint Street.

Firefighters entered the smoke-filled residence and helped rescue a person who was unable to leave without assistance. The resident's brother also assisted in the rescue.

The department recognized the firefighters for their teamwork and presented two members with the Medal of Valor for their actions during the emergency.

The resident who was rescued attended the ceremony and expressed gratitude for the efforts that saved his life. His brother was also recognized for his bravery.

Police Chief Announces Retirement

Mayor Ed Hatley recognized Lincolnton Police Chief Brian Green following his announcement that he plans to retire.

Green confirmed that December 1, 2026 will be his official retirement date.

Hatley expressed appreciation for Green's service and described his departure as a significant loss for the city.

City officials indicated they have begun preliminary discussions about the process for selecting Green's replacement although no final procedure was announced during the meeting.

Several police officers were also recognized for earning professional certifications reflecting their training, education and law enforcement experience.

Other City Business

Council approved a rezoning request for property at 201 West Main Street to allow a broader range of commercial uses and adopted several updates to development regulations.

The city also advanced a voluntary annexation petition involving property owned by Lincoln Bible Church on Wilma Sigmon Road. The action begins the review process and does not constitute final annexation approval. A public hearing was anticipated for November.

Additionally, council authorized an application for a potential $5,000 safety grant to assist with equipment and workplace improvements in several city departments. The grant funding has not yet been awarded.

City officials reported that construction of the new public service center on Sigmon Road and improvements at City Park remain on schedule although winter weather could affect progress.

The meeting concluded with announcements concerning the city's Halloween celebration and other upcoming community activities.

Residents can watch the October 1 meeting through the city's recorded council proceedings.

https://www.youtube.com/live/hIxvsrWyGew?si=Lbl7HAzYM4Jj18LT