



MEDIA RELEASE

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City Manager Announces Retirement

Burlington, NC – During yesterday’s City Council Meeting, City Manager Hardin Watkins announced his retirement from city management effective March 6, 2022.

In his remarks to City Council, he stated the following, “My experience in Burlington has been wonderful. I’m grateful for the opportunity and appreciate the trust and confidence that the City’s elected officials placed in me as the leader of the City’s staff team. It has been a rewarding and exciting time to be a part of the wonderful things happening in the Burlington community. As you know, the future for this community is extremely bright. My years in Burlington have been terrific and I’m proud of our success together.”

Watkins has served the City of Burlington for six years, beginning in January 2016. In that time, Burlington created the Community Police Advisory Team, established numerous greenways and walking paths, provided notable support to Alamance County agencies during the pandemic, launched Link Transit, improved the code enforcement program, installed an online portal for permits and licenses, renovated North Park (including new pool), overhauled The Valley golf course, refurbished the Dentzel carousel, prevented loss of MLB-affiliated baseball, refurbished Willowbrook Park, started an Economic Development Department, built momentum for Western Electric’s redevelopment, secured \$15.8 million in state grants for water/sewer infrastructure, navigated the legislative and regulatory maze to clean-up City Park creek, began replacing old water meters with automated meter technology, upgraded all streetlights to LED, and completed the new animal shelter. During Watkins’ time in Burlington, the City made strides to improve efficiency and effectiveness in many operational areas, including employee wellness, community engagement, and strategic planning. Burlington enjoys an excellent reputation in the state and has steadily grown towards both the Triad and Triangle regions.

“It has been a privilege and honor to work with the current and former members of the Burlington City Council. I am deeply appreciative of all the things that we’ve accomplished together,” said Watkins. “32 years in local government and 23 years as a City Manager is a long time. After taking some time off to relax, I will likely explore other opportunities that will allow me to continue my lifelong journey of helping make communities better. I’m also looking forward to spending more time with my wife and helping my father more abundantly as he transitions to a senior living center.”

Watkins added, “While there is never an easy time to leave a job this complex, I want to ensure that our organization is in the best position to react and handle new challenges and opportunities along with the City’s regular business and activities. This seems to be the right time for a leadership change – we all want the organization to continue the success moving forward.”

Mayor Butler made a statement on behalf of City Council at the February 1, 2022 Council Meeting upon

the announcement of Manager Watkins retirement, “The City Council is very respectful, and appreciative of Hardin’s service to Burlington and our community. We wish him the best and look forward to supporting him in his future endeavors. We also know that Hardin’s focus will now be on the transition plan and we are going to work with him to make sure it is smooth and efficient for all involved. In the last six years we have had many accomplishments and we look forward to the completion of several projects that Hardin started.”

The Burlington City Council will be charged with hiring a new City Manager. Watkins has agreed to stay through March to assist with transition and will be available subsequently to help as needed.

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Our Mission:

“The City of Burlington is dedicated to providing high quality municipal services within our diverse community in a friendly, professional and efficient manner in order to promote the safety, health, and quality of life of residents and employees.”

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