

AI Summary in a minute: Fort White Appoints Glenn Hunter as Interim Town Clerk

In a surprise 3-2 vote, the Fort White Town Council fast-tracked the appointment of government veteran and former Columbia County economic development director Glenn Hunter as Interim Town Clerk to stabilize “shaky town operations.” The immediate appointment bypasses standard process but includes conditions: a background check, drug test, resume submission, and a follow-up special meeting to ratify a formal contract and adopt a banking resolution authorizing him to sign checks. His core mandate is to organize the troubled clerk’s office, safeguard grant activities, and recruit a permanent, qualified clerk-manager within approximately 90 days.

Key issues center on chronic disorganization. Hunter diagnosed a pattern in which legal matters and grant filings are “dropped on council members” at meetings rather than prepared in advance by the clerk—a practice he said “leads to more confusion, and it costs a lot of money.” He warned that the Town is “missing” numerous state grants and lamented stalled projects such as the caboose at the train depot, noting “That’s kind of sad.”

Hunter, who emphasized he “was not seeking this job,” framed his involvement as civic rather than personal or financial. He told the Council: “There’s no ego here. There’s no personal agenda... it’s not about us. It’s about all these folks out here.” On compensation he was dismissive: “It’s not about the money.” In a follow-up interview, he committed to three days per week, stating he had reviewed the prior contract and left that requirement in place. “Fort White is important. I have a long history here and care about the Town. I am optimistic we can put things on the right track.”

The Council was divided on process and scope. Presiding Officer/Councilwoman Terry prioritized speed (“I’m willing to go with the verbal to expedite the situation”) and initially suggested a 10-hour week sufficient to “sign checks and get the invoices out the door.” Councilman Bill Koon strongly disagreed: “10 hours a week is not gonna get nothin’ done.” Councilwoman Monica Merricks insisted on documentation first, warning that verbal understandings risk later disputes: “anything could be said and it’s not put on paper and it’s not signed, and then they come back and say, ‘Hey, I said this’... never mind.” Mayor Thomas requested at least a resume or application. Councilman Lonnie Harrell supported immediate appointment with a later written proposal. Town Attorneys Leonard Ireland and Scott Walker provided a legally compliant path forward, including a short single-subject special meeting and a separate banking resolution.

The story highlights ongoing tension between urgent operational needs and proper governance in a small town struggling with grants, meeting preparedness, and administrative continuity.