

# Edenton mourns the passing of Councilman Willis Privott

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**EDENTON** -- It is with incredibly heavy hearts that we announce the passing of former Councilman Willis Privott.

A titan of Edenton civic service and advocacy for decades, Councilman Privott helped shape the growth and direction of Edenton for 32 years on the town council, a total of eight consecutive terms — a third of a century. He was the first African-American individual to serve as an Edenton councilman, selected by council in 1980 to replace an outgoing member, and fully elected in 1981, serving until 2013.

“Councilman Privott was a consummate gentleman and fiercely devoted to his community,” said Mayor Hackney High. “He was an individual who was always steadfast in his convictions, and he would treat all he encountered with courtesy and civility. While we will miss him, it brings me comfort knowing that his legacy has been forever cemented into our history. He was a true Edentonian to his core.”

A standout memory from his tenure was his passion for Edenton's sidewalks. Until around the early 1990s, towns and cities could not use state funds for sidewalks, funding could only be used for streets. So what did Councilman Privott do? He worked alongside the N.C. League of Municipalities to lobby the General Assembly to change this law, which allowed towns and cities to use state funds to help pay for new sidewalks!

As a result, new sidewalks were constructed along Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue, Virginia Road, and North Oakum Street (at the time a state road). This fervor for sidewalks and Edenton's accessibility, helped not just our folks locally, but towns and cities across North Carolina.

"Councilman Privott was a true community leader," said Councilman Sam Dixon, who is the sole active council member that served alongside him. "He brought the people together and the town of Edenton is so much better today because of his leadership. He always listened intently to others before independently making his decisions. His wisdom was apparent at each council meeting."

Councilman Privott also loved our town employees. From our wonderful ladies at Town Hall, to the hardworking guys at our wastewater treatment plant, the good Councilman would champion for our employees all across town to have opportunities for professional training and development — all thanks to his admirable service with the Chowan Rescue Squad teaching him the importance of continuing education.

His portrait hangs in the lobby of our council chambers, as an enduring testament to his legacy.

A public viewing for Councilman Privott will be from 5 PM to 7 PM on Friday, March 22, at Rowsom Funeral Home.

Mayor Pro Tem Elton Bond, who succeeded Councilman Privott as the Fourth Ward representative, will share his words during the celebration of life service, which is scheduled to be held at 3 PM on Saturday, March 23 at Warren Grove Missionary Baptist Church.