

**CITY OF LAURINBURG
CITIZEN INPUT SESSION
FEBRUARY 25, 2015
MUNICIPAL BUILDING
303 WEST CHURCH ST.
LAURINBURG, NC
6:00 P.M.**

Minutes

The City Council of the City of Laurinburg held a Citizen Input Session on February 25, 2016 at 6:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers of the Municipal Building located at 303 West Church St., Laurinburg, NC with the Honorable Mary Jo Adams, Mayor Pro Tem, presiding. The following Councilmembers were present: Curtis B. Leak, Dolores A. Hammond, Andrew G. Williamson, Jr. and J. D. Willis. Mayor Matthew Block, MD was absent.

Also present were Charles D. Nichols III, City Manager; Jennifer A. Tippet, City Clerk; and William P. Floyd, Jr., City Attorney.

Leadership Team members present included: Robert Ellis, Treatment Plants Director; Harold Haywood, General Services Director; Stacey McQuage, Utilities Director; Robert Smith, Electric Services Director; Tim Pierce, GIS Administrator; Darwin Williams, Police Chief; Randy Gibson, Fire Chief, Teddy Warner, Community Development Director; Betty Galloway, Human Resources/Risk Management Director; and Josh Coble, IT Manager.

Mayor Pro Tem Adams called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.

Councilmember Willis requested a moment of silence.

Mayor Pro Tem Adams explained that this Citizen Input Session is to discuss projects or programs for the upcoming budget and that a separate Citizen Input Session will be held for the proposed new City Hall and Police Station.

The City Manager introduced himself and then requested that Department Heads introduce themselves.

The City Manager explained that everyone was excited to have such a good turnout for the Citizen Input Session. He added that the budget process starts with the citizens and what the citizens want Council to address.

He presented a PowerPoint presentation with highlights as follows:

- Overview of Budget Calendar

Date	Description of Action Items
January 15, 2016	Capital Requests Due from each department
January 1, 2016 - February 29, 2016	Public Input Session held during early 2016 (set by Council)
February 1, 2016 - February 29, 2016	Council Retreat held during month to set budget priorities (set by Council)
March 15, 2016	Operating Budget Requests Due from departments
March 15, 2016	Council receives update of CIP
March 16, 2016 - March 31, 2016	Operating Budget Discussion Meetings with Depts.
April 1, 2016	Budget working draft due to City Manger
April 12, 2016	Council Preview of Budget Working Draft
April 13, 2016 - May 9, 2016	Staff Meetings for Budget Revisions
May 10, 2016	Official presentation of Manager's recommended budget to Council
May 11, 2016 - June 20, 2016	Council budget work sessions as directed
May 17, 2016	Set public hearing for FY 17 budget for June council meeting
June 21, 2016	Hold public hearing on budget
June 21, 2016	Budget and fee schedule adoption (or no later than July 1)
July 1, 2016	Operating and capital budgets loaded and active in Munis
July 1, 2016	Adopted budget document delivered to departments
July 8, 2016	Adopted budget posted on website

- Accomplishments during current year included:
 - Capital Improvements included recycling center expansion, purchased automated side loader and pickup truck for Sanitation Department, acquired two (2) vans to transport inmates that work for the City at (\$1.00 per day), purchased four (4) police cars, replacing Commonwealth Bridge, purchased bucket truck for Electric Department, repaired electric substation, upgraded solar farm distribution line, purchased three (3) utility trucks for Public Utilities, and repaired College Park Pump Station.
 - Community Development Projects: two (2) large entrance signs will be erected on Highway 74, ordered new decorative flags for downtown, erected decorative street signs downtown, ordered new trash containers for downtown, ordered benches for downtown, completed fruit orchard in Washington Park area, and Art Garden downtown planned and construction to begin soon.
- Status of General Fund:
 - Total annual expenditures decreased from 2011 to current \$6.6 million budget.
 - Fund Balance has been increasing - at just under \$3 million in 2011 to just under \$4 million at end of FY 2015.
- Property Tax Rates:
 - Compared with 18 other local municipalities, the City's property tax rate of \$.40 per thousand is the third lowest, behind Pinehurst and Southern Pines. Property values in Pinehurst and Southern Pines are much greater than Laurinburg property values.
- Electric Rates:

- After the Duke Progress purchase of North Carolina Eastern Municipal Power Agency (NCEMPA) assets and seven percent (7%) rate reduction in December 2015, the City’s electric rate for 1,000 kwh is lower than Duke Progress Energy, Pee Dee Electric, Lumber River Electric and the City of Lumberton (also a member of NCEMPA).
- The rate decrease in December 2015 was the first rate decrease since the City has been a member of NCEMPA.
- Water/Sewer Rates:
 - Compared rates for 5,000 gallons per month service with four (4) local municipalities – Lumberton, Red Springs, Aberdeen and Southern Pines. Lumberton’s rate is a little lower than Laurinburg’s rate which is considerably lower than Red Springs, Aberdeen and Southern Pines.

The City Manager explained the process for the Citizen Input Session will be for approximately 30 minute group breakout session for listing of top priorities for Council to consider in Fiscal Year 2017 budget and then presentation of the group priorities. He added that staff will compile the priorities and provide to Council.

Following group discussion, the City Manager explained that the State of the Community would be held on February 26, 2016 at the Laurinburg Presbyterian Church beginning at 7:30 a.m. with breakfast, and then presentations by the County Manager and himself, and that the event will be streamed live on WLNC Radio. He added that his presentation will be more comprehensive than what he had presented earlier in the meeting.

The priorities from each group were presented as follows:

TABLE 1

RANKING	ITEM
1	Better plan to address storm cleanup <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How quickly will we clean up? ● Schedule for people to know.
2	How to explain electric rates and how to save money? Can we help citizens learn how to use less energy?
3	Increase/much better communication during disaster situation (i.e. ice storm) Solutions: radio updates, social media?
4	Address cleanup of Pope property – bent sign and sidewalk pole issue
5	Church Street close to Presbyterian Church – curbing issue – storm drainage New Street (drainage/grading issues) – crush & run? Cypress Drive Laurin Lakes right-of-way area

TABLE 2

RANKING	ITEM
1	Homeless shelter
2	Use old buildings and not build new ones Tear down old abandoned buildings/no new buildings

3	Youth Programs Swimming Pool Community Centers/Fitness Gym More playgrounds
4	Beautification of streets Pick up litter on streets
5	Red district city-wide cameras
6	Police Department get a raise (city-wide)

GROUP 3

RANKING	ITEM
1	Youth Center
2	Damage/vacant houses (by fire)
3	Litter control
4	Clearing of brush/vegetation City right-of-way & easements
5	Resurfacing of City streets
6	Performance stage at Downtown Art Garden
7	Downtown City Museum
8	Greenway/walking trail/climbing wall/dog trail

GROUP 4

RANKING	ITEM
1	More police officers and more incentives to attract qualified officers - bonuses
2	Recreation for youth/Community Center
3	Invest legal funds to cause owners of downtown properties that are a threat to the health, safety and welfare
	Check whether Main Street can be made one-way
	City financial officer report on the website by use of visual charts – bar/pie All revenues & sources All expenses Any transfers

GROUP 5

RANKING	ITEM
1	Street lighting (better lighting)
2	Abandoned/dilapidated structures (stronger enforcement) (empty buildings)
3	Sidewalks (more)
4	Beautification (limbs/debris)
5	Animal Control (stronger leash enforcement) (communication) (feral cats)

	Recreation facility (partnership with County)
	YMCA
	Library improvements (County)

GROUP 6

RANKING	ITEM
1	Starting point financially Until citizens understand
2	Re-prioritize capital projects (focus on youth) (less on brick & mortar)
3	Market the City to attract businesses to have jobs
4	Continuing drainage problems throughout the City of Laurinburg

GROUP 7

RANKING	ITEM
1	Get rid of “not my responsibility” attitude of leaders
2	Youth Job creation Training After school activities WIOA (Workforce Investment Opportunities Act)
2A	Addictions – Health/intervention Drug Alcohol Other
3	Middle school in Laurinburg
4	Address violence Close Brothers In the Hood Youth violence City get engaged with youth Use current inventory of abandoned facilities for Youth Center with volunteers
5	More police – 10% increase More community involvement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cops as mentors in school • Build trust Be proactive with community interaction
6	More inviting downtown <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restore where feasible • More friendly parking downtown <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Planters consume too much space • Static displays in empty buildings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Student art work ○ Scout projects ○ 4-H ○ Others ○ Job creation (NC Works)

7	Litter/Trash <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education in school • Education in community • Enforcement • Partner with hunting clubs - cameras
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GROUP 8

RANKING	ITEM
1	Better lighting – motion sensors
2	Community Arts/Rec/Cultural Center
3	New city hall/police department
4	Abandoned property
5	Downtown “old” buildings
6	Trees/hanging limbs – Main Street
7	Trash/litter
8	Downtown economic incentive program
9	Non-profit grant program
10	Sidewalk improvements/curbs/pot holes repaired
11	Paved parking area downtown
12	Homeless shelter
13	Children activities - YMCA

The City Manager explained that if citizens had any other ideas to email him at cnichols@laurinburg.org or call him at 276-8324.

Mayor Pro Tem Adams thanked everyone for attending and participating in the Citizen Input Session. She added that the next budget meeting is tentatively scheduled on March 15, 2016.

Councilmember Hammond thanked everyone for attending and welcomed citizens to attend all City Council meetings.

Councilmember Williamson explained that he appreciated the input, and that much of the comments reinforced concerns by Council.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion was made by Councilmember Hammond, seconded by Councilmember Williamson, and unanimously carried to adjourn.

The meeting adjourned at 7:17 p.m.

Matthew Block, MD, Mayor

Jennifer A. Tippet, City Clerk