

**CITY OF LAURINBURG
CITY COUNCIL RETREAT
FEBRUARY 25, 2011
DIANE HONEYCUTT CENTER (RCC)
ROOM 130
600 MCLEAN STREET, LAURINBURG, NC
3:00 P.M.**

Minutes

The City Council of the City of Laurinburg reconvened its February 22, 2011 meeting on February 25, 2011 at 3:00 p.m. in Room 130 of the Diane Honeycutt Center located at 600 McLean St., Laurinburg, North Carolina with the Honorable Matthew Block, Mayor, presiding. The following Councilmembers were present: Herbert M. Rainer, Jr., Thomas W. Parker, III, Kenton Spencer, and Joy Ellison. Councilmember Curtis B. Leak was the only member absent.

Also present were Edward F. Burchins, City Manager, and Dolores A. Hammond, City Clerk.

In attendance also were Margaret Henderson and Dr. Vaughn Upshaw with the School of Government-Chapel Hill, NC.

Mayor Block reconvened the meeting at 3:25 p.m.

Mayor Block explained that the first item of business is to consider a resolution authorizing the City Manager to execute a mosquito agreement with the North Carolina Department of Transportation.

The City Manager explained that during Council's regular meeting held Tuesday, February 22, 2011, the City Manager was authorized to execute with the North Carolina Department of Transportation-Mosquito Program. The documents included a Resolution which was not included in the packet. This is a procedural request by the State.

Councilmember Spencer moved for the adoption of Resolution No. R-2011-03 which authorizes the City Manager to execute all documents in applying for funding for Mosquito Control. Councilmember Rainer seconded the motion and it was adopted by the following vote:

Ayes: Spencer, Rainer, Ellison, Parker

Nays: None

(Resolution No. R-2001-03 in on file in the City Clerk's office)

Mayor Block informed Council that Councilmember Leak would not be attending today due to a family emergency. He will try to attend the Saturday session.

RETREAT

The City Manager introduced Dr. Vaughn Upshaw, UNC School of Government, whose expertise is in public governance; leadership development and training for elected officials and public managers; planning and leading organizational change; governing board development; board self-assessment; manager performance evaluation; strategic and critical thinking; and long-range planning and visioning.

He explained that she has compiled the information that Councilmembers sent to her in order to conduct the meeting today.

Dr. Upshaw stated that she is interested in getting input from Council on what it would like to do to make this session useful. She stated her understanding is that the reason she is presenting is that Council is interested in how the board works as a body.

Councilmember Parker stated that he feels the Council is dysfunctional because there is not a unified plan and Council does not work together as a team.

Councilmember Ellison agreed with Councilmember Parker.

Work as a team is a common goal.

Councilmember Rainer expressed that he feels that it is healthy to have five different opinions as long as some point that there is an agreeable conclusion.

Councilmember Ellison stated that Councilmembers should not be disrespectful.

Respect differences Agree, agree to disagree, and be respectful of each other is also a common goal.

Councilmember Spencer stated that his perspective is that Council has to define team and how to work together in trying to achieve working as a team. He also stated that information should be transparent, and how individuals manage that information in order to obtain objectives. If there are individuals outside the team that are not elected officials interjecting their own person opinions into the process, then boundaries set by Council should be enforced and the person informed of the procedures. The elected official should reintegrate that a person cannot inject or change the process of a situation that are set by Council.

The consensus among Council at this time is that Council should have ***Communication within and external to group and to clarify roles/responsibilities.***

Councilmember Ellison stated that she agrees with the decisions made, but stated that she feels as though Council does not do a good job of follow up with measurable expectations on direction given staff. She suggested that a schedule be developed in order that Council can manage tasks that staff has been given. She also stated that

Council could not be effective creating policy if Council never writes policy. A concern is that Council is a policy making board that makes little policy.

Upon clarification by Dr. Upshaw, the feeling of Councilmember Ellison is that things are getting lost.

Another item Council should consider ***monitoring and developing a progress evaluation process and policy focus.***

Mayor Block stated that he would like for Council to agreement on rules of procedure. He stated the meetings could be more effective if an agreement that a certain level of formality be conducted.

Common Rules of Procedure is another avenue that Council should agree upon.

Councilmember Parker stated that he feels that Council does not seem to be able to be satisfied with the decision that has been made as a body. He stated that Council may be too reactionary, not clam or collect, or set policies and adhere to them. He explained that Council tries to fix too many things. This is a policy making Board not a fix it Board. He then stated that staff is the entity has should be responsible for helping citizens with city problems not relating to Council's role in local government.

Councilmember Spencer stated that he feels that Council does not give good direction to staff.

Following discussion ***Improve direction to staff and follow our own agreements*** were added to the list.

Dr. Upshaw stated in order that Council have the conversation they need to have there should be some ground rules.

She then stated that based on discussion that recognizing everyone at this retreat is because they have a value around public service and that everyone needs to respect each other for bring those values to the table.

The Mayor and Councilmembers then reflected on the ground rules for conducting a frank discussion regarding their roles and expectations of what a Governing Board should do and how members should be treated.

The consensus was:

1. No personal attacks
2. No interruptions
3. Be respectful
4. Be truthful/honest

She then explained that not everyone processes the data in the same way. The concept of what is truthful to one may not be the same for everyone. Dr. Upshaw stated that everybody sitting in the room has access to the same data. How a person processes that data is individually; and therefore, everyone should share their reasoning on what action they took or are taking.

Discussions ensued on Council's actions during meetings and the changes that have taken place the past few years.

Dr. Upshaw summarized some of the changes which is the context in which governing Board governs, the changes such as economics, technology, the dynamics of the environment itself, the shift in the Governing Board itself, those with history and those that are new and how the newest members see things and how they would like things to work differently based on the experience with local government.

She also discussed the organization itself which is a bureaucracy. It is part of a governmental system whereas local governments do not exist apart from much larger systems of government, rules, law, etc. It is an environment that is changing in the way in which government works is deliberately slow and tedious. How to balance those things is a question.

Following discussions, the consensus is that Council should give direction as a board not an individual basis. Dr. Upshaw stated that only the Board can manage the Board and if there are concerns with a person or persons, they should talk with the party or parties that their concerns are about.

A discussion then ensued about rules of procedure for Councilmembers and expectations of Councilmembers.

Councilmember Parker expressed concern over the perception of collective voting among Councilmembers based on comments expressed during certain Council meetings.

Dr. Upshaw stated that no matter what is verbalized during a meeting, whether it be a 3-2 or 2-3 vote, until everyone votes a decision is not made.

Council recessed for a short break at 4:50 p.m.

The meeting resumed at 4:55 p.m.

Finishing up the prior discussion, each Councilmember expressed what they feel is their stake in local government.

Councilmember Parker stated that his stake is that the meetings are conducted in a more orderly fashion which means no interrupting and respecting each others opinions.

Councilmember Spencer stated that his stake as part of the Governing Board is to be an effective public servant and to get to the agenda that the public has asked him to do.

Councilmember Rainer stated that his stake is to make Laurinburg a better place than when he started as Councilmembers. Councilmember Rainer stated that Council needs to monitor the progress or follow up and items that staff has been assigned to do

Councilmember Ellison stated that her stake is to promote the City's assets more. She expressed her concern is that when interested parties are researching the Scotland County area, she would like demographics, how the school system is operated, how the City is promoting what is in Laurinburg and show how everyone cares about the community.

Mayor Block stated that, with this process, to determine how formal Council would like the meetings run.

A discussion ensued on the procedures and formality of the meetings and the contributions of the Mayor and City Council.

A discussion then ensued on information sharing and that all information should be shared with all Councilmembers.

There was also a discussion regarding policies between Council, the manager, and the employees.

Dr. Upshaw stated that following dinner she would like to discuss legal roles. She explained that she would discuss fundamentals around procedures, how Council, as a body, wants the Mayor to exercise more direct control over the Governing Board.

Council recessed for dinner at 5:47 p.m.

The meeting resumed at 6:03 p.m.

A discussion ensued regarding gaps in communication between the City Manager and Council.

Dr. Upshaw explained that information shared with Council should be focused on what services the City is offering to citizens at what quality and what costs. She stated that information dealing with the everyday operations of the City should be conducted by the City Manager. She further explained that employees with concerns or citizens with questions about certain events in the community should be directed to the City Manager by Council.

A discussion ensued once again on Council's procedural rules.

Dr. Upshaw stated that there are workshops on procedures and she suggests Fleming Bell from the School of Government who routinely conducts the workshops.

She then proceeded to inform Council on the basics of procedures. The Council can only take action on those things that Council has jurisdiction and authority to make; Board must meet in order to act; have to be notified of the meetings (regular, work session, special meetings, etc.); cannot take action unless a quorum is present; and in a formal meeting, motions should be made in order for Council to take action.

Dr. Upshaw clarified questions pertaining to motions by Council. She stated that “there must be a question before the Board on which it can decide. Except when electing their own officers or balloting for appointments, legislative bodies proceed by voting yes or no on specific proposals put forward by one or more members. Each member has the right to know at all times what question is before the Board and what effect a yes or no vote would have on that question”.

She explained that merely seconding a motion does not mean a person agrees with the motion, but it means that that motion is up for discussion.

She also explained that during an agenda session, all Council needs to discuss is to agree on what to have on the agenda and if Council needs more information.

Dr. Upshaw then explained that at Council’s regular meeting that the meeting should begin with the approval of the agenda. Council approves the agenda.

She stated that it is up to Council on how formal or informal Council would like to have their meeting conducted.

Upon question by the City Manager, there was consensus among Councilmembers that they are provided adequate paperwork at the agenda workshop session.

The City Manager stated that he feels that when the quarterly financial report is being given at the agenda workshop, that is when Council would need additional paperwork.

There was a discussion on the number of projects that Council has asked to City Manager to complete.

There was a consensus that a project calendar and a time line expected by Council be kept by the City Manager in order to complete the project and update Council on the time line of any projects they have directed the Manager to research or complete.

Dr. Upshaw stated that what she is hearing from Council is that they would like:

- More structure in meetings; and
- Want Mayor to exercise more of a formal parliamentary process in the agenda workshop as well as the formal regular meeting; and
- Direction as a body to City Manager not individually; and
- Being sure that communication as a group is more transparent; and

- Understanding authority rests with the Board for anything that is done, not with any individual, but with equal authority; and
- Each Councilmember has the responsibility to manage one's self

A discussion ensued on the perception of the Manager working for only one individual. Dr. Upshaw restated that the Manager works for the Board and that he must take direction from the Board as a whole not just an individual.

A discussion then ensued on newspaper articles that tend to reflect the entire Council's opinion which has not been discussed by Council.

Following further discussion regarding the Mayor, City Council, and the Manager's relationship, the City Manager stated that he felt as though he treats each one equally.

A discussion centered on the appointment of a Councilmember's resigned seat in 2010 and the controversy during that time.

Dr. Upshaw, upon question, stated that if there are any questions about elections, challenges, etc. that have been questioned that they should be addressed to Bob Joyce or Fradya Bluestein at the School of Government or an attorney.

Dr. Upshaw stated that she has enjoyed working with Council.

RECESS

Councilmember Parker, seconded by Councilmember Spencer, and unanimously carried to recess until Saturday, February 26, 2011 at the Diane Honeycutt Center, Room 130, 600 McLean St., Laurinburg, NC at 8:00 a.m.

The meeting recessed at 7:30 p.m.

Matthew Block, Mayor

Dolores A. Hammond, City Clerk