

**CITY OF LAURINBURG
AGENDA WORKSHOP
JANUARY 12, 2011
W. CHARLES BARRETT ADMINISTRATION BUILDING
305 WEST CHURCH ST.
7:00 P.M.**

Minutes

The City Council of the City of Laurinburg held an agenda meeting January 12, 2011 at 7:00 a.m. in the council room of the Municipal Building with the Honorable Matthew Block, Mayor, presiding. The following Councilmembers were present: Curtis B. Leak, Kenton Spencer, Tom Parker, Herbert M. Rainer, Jr., and Joy Ellison.

Also present were Edward F. Burchins, City Manager, Dolores A. Hammond, City Clerk and Charles L. Hicks, Jr., Assistant City Attorney.

Staff members present were: John Evans, Police Chief, Bob Bell, Human Resources Officer, Brandi Deese, Zoning Officer, and Stacey McQuage, Public Utilities Director.

Mayor Block called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

Mayor Block and the Assistant City Attorney reviewed the rules of discussion for the agenda workshop which is to review items on the upcoming agenda and to identify specific information that Council might desire to have available at the next meeting. It is not a meeting at which matters that will come on for public hearing should be discussed other than administratively.

The City Manager reviewed the upcoming agenda for the January 12, 2011 regular meeting.

- 1) Consent Agenda
 - a. Minutes from the December 14, 2010 workshop and December 21, 2010 regular meeting
- 2) Ordinance No. O-2011-01 which rezones from Residential-6 to Office/Institutional property located off of US Highway 401 North – St. John’s Holiness Church - *public hearing will be held*
- 3) Laurinburg Downtown Revitalization Quarterly Report (Mary Robinson, Executive Director)
No discussion
- 4) Set public hearing on a request to rezone from Residential-20 to Office/Institutional property located off Hasty Road - New Hope Baptist Church
Brandi Deese explained that an 18.787 tract of land has been requested to be rezoned in order for the location and construction of a church
- 5) Consider Resolution No. R-2011-01 which directs the city clerk to investigate the sufficiency of a voluntary annexation - New Hope Church Baptist Church
This request is the result of a petition for voluntary annexation for the property upon which New Hope Baptist Church is to be constructed.
- 6) Set public hearing on a request for a conditional use permit to construct 44 one story elderly apartments on Plaza Road

Brandi Deese explained that the Gateway Company has requested a conditional use permit to allow construction of 44 one story elderly apartments on a 5.898 tract of land on Plaza Road.

- 7) Consider Ordinance No. O-2011-02 which amends Ordinance No. O-2010-01 (Ordinance Establishing Community Development Block Grant Account Program Grant Project Ordinance for City Of Laurinburg Community Development Block Grant 09-C-2015) by replacing it to include Administration Costs of \$15,000.00

Mrs. Brandi Deese informed Council that the original ordinance that was presented to Council for Scottish Glen Improvements did not include the administration costs. The proposed ordinance will rectify this exclusion. This will not cost the City any funds because of the grant status for the Laurinburg Housing Authority.

- 8) Education Program regarding Wholesale electric and retail rates

The City Manager informed Council that he and ElectriCities of North Carolina are working together to get some type program set up for discussion on electric rates. He informed Council that ElectriCities is available to appear before Council at its regular meeting. He also stated that he would like to have Ned Fowler & Associates, the City's Electrical Engineer, to also appear before Council. He stated that he is requesting that information be shared as to how the electrical rates are structured and how the electrical rate system was developed. This information can then be used to determine what kind of rebates the City might offer, marketing, branding, and advertising the City's programs. The City Manager stated that one of the things the City is doing now in reading electric meters is a 27-day billing cycle. He stated that this billing cycle may help some residents. He stated that the City will begin on the second route with a 27-day cycle, then a 28-day billing cycle, and then go back to a 27-day billing cycle. This will continue through the end of March and then in the milder months will go longer in order to make up for the days that were not billed in the colder months. He would like to do the same for the summer months. ElectriCities is putting together packets of informational material to give to the City's electric customers.

Upon further discussion, Council chose to have the representatives from ElectriCities come to the regular meeting in March.

Councilmember Rainer stated that he would like the current interest rate the City is paying to the North Carolina Eastern Municipal Power Agency.

The City Manager stated that he thinks the average interest rate on all the debt is 8 percent. He stated he would get the exact information and get back to Council.

- 9) Consider Agenda Workshop dates

The City Manager presented the following dates for agenda workshops if Council desires to continue:

Tuesday, February 15, 2011

Tuesday, March 15, 2011

Tuesday, April 12, 2011

Tuesday, May 10, 2011

Tuesday, June 14, 2011

There was consensus that the above dates be set for agenda workshop sessions at the regular meeting January 18, 2011.

The City Manager stated that he is in a position to provide a couple of reports dealing with the Laurinburg Fire Department and the Department Head Transition Plan.

He stated that they will be presented at the regular meeting of January 18, 2011.

There was consensus that the City Manager provide information during this meeting.

Laurinburg Fire Department

The City Manager stated that he would summarize his report on the analysis of the Laurinburg Fire Department and then provide Council with a written report. He explained that since Council's last retreat, he has interviewed every member of the fire department (including full-time, part-time and communications staff) and has asked where each thinks the fire department stands, what are major concerns, their likes and dislikes, and what direction if any each feels the department needs to be moving. He then stated that the response was that they feel they are not appreciated by the community. There was a concern at one point about the fire department's leadership, lines of communication, and structure within the department. There was also concern about the equipment. He then explained some of the risks that fire department personnel face in the community. He explained that planning and the scope of the department should be centered on the risks. He then explained that he would like to focus on staffing, training, and equipment to deal with some of the risks that face the community.

The City Manager stated that the fire department is not staffed at the level that allows staff to initiate a minimum attack of any fire because of the lack of full time staff.

The City Manager then stated that a decision would need to be made in the future whether the City would continue to employ a part time fire chief or employ a full time fire chief along and how we will address other staffing and equipment needs. He proceeded to explained insurance ratings, requirements by other entities such as OSHA and the National Fire Protection Association.

He informed Council that the part-time fire chief is researching the idea of a first responder team or an engine company. He explained that Police Chief John Evans is serving a dual role serving as the part-time fire chief. He stated that the fire department employees have had positive remarks about the way the department is being handled.

Chief Evans informed Council that the training facility is well under way to being completed. This is being funded by the Scotland County's Firefighters Association.

Councilmember Leak expressed his concern about a new vision for the Fire Department and the time frame that he felt was not met.

The City Manager continued to explain the functions of the fire department and areas that need to be upgraded.

A discussion ensued on radio communications between public safety entities.

Mayor Block stated that in comparing other fire departments' expenditures, the City of Laurinburg's are really low. He stated that, after hearing the City Manager's presentation, his understanding is that the City Manager needs to lay out some framework for the department.

The City Manager stated that the plan is to present information during the budget process.

Councilmember Leak stated that he would like the fire department chief and the police chief be separated.

A discussion then ensued on the personnel and revamping of the fire department.

Councilmember Spencer stated he would like to see a plan of the costs of a full time fire chief versus that of a part time fire chief. He then stated he would like information before the budget process in order to make a valid decision.

Mayor Block clarified that what is needed is information about how to get to a full time fire chief and how much the projected costs would be for the necessary changes in the department.

Department Transition Plan

Mr. Bob Bell, Human Resources Officer, stated that he had created a strategic planning of talent form which basically walks through steps for department heads and others, including the manager, to review where people are and what they need to do to move ahead in the organization. He explained that he had also prepared an organizational chart and highlighted situations where people are within five years of retiring.

Upon question by Councilmember Spencer, Mr. Bell explained that the IT Department is managed by the Electrical Services Director.

Councilmember Rainer suggested that this item be discussed at Council's retreat.

Mayor Block then asked Mr. Bell to give an overview of the proposed plan.

Mr. Bell stated that the IT Department, from its inception, was listed as Fiber Optic Department in the Electric Department of Public Works.

The City Manager stated that the plan is to move the IT Department from the Electric Department into the Barrett Building where it will be a stand alone department (recommendation in next year's budget) and separate from the Electric Department.

Councilmember Ellison stated she would like to see more information on the talent review process and the talent inventory.

Upon question by Councilmember Ellison, Mr. Bell stated that the talent review process or the talent inventory, at this time, does not go along with employee's evaluation forms. He explained that this is a new document that he has been working on.

Mr. Bell explained that he had talked with department heads about the employees that are able to retire in the next five years. He then explained that the conversation was to find out where the department heads were in filling those positions in the future. He informed Council that the Police Department has three employees that are in the process of being trained for upper management positions. He also stated that Consumer Billing also has trainees.

Upon question by Mayor Block, Mr. Bell stated that the Water Plant transition plan is more difficult because of the different level of skill requirements.

Councilmember Ellison stated she would be interested to see how it is documented where employees, managers, and human resources officers can find out what skill sets are necessary for a particular job. She also stated she would like to know if there is an evaluation that is in place that categorizes growth from year to year so that employees know where they need to be in order to apply for advanced positions. She then stated that it would be helpful if there was a tool to use with the talent review that matches with the talent inventory informing employees of all the skills needed in order to reach average, proficient, and advancement in the process.

She also discussed current job descriptions, and Mr. Bell reported that job descriptions were reviewed five years ago.

Following discussion, it was the consensus of Council that the fire department and the transition plan be discussed at Council's upcoming retreat in February and that Council be provided with plans, costs, and current job descriptions, etc. Council also requested that costs for anyone that could retire within this budget year be provided.

12) Provide proposed list of potential meetings for January and February 2011

The Mayor explained that these potential meetings are not the proposed agenda workshop meetings, but rather are other meetings such as Citizen Input Session, retreat, the downtown summit, City/County Joint meeting ,etc.

Councilmember Leak suggested that Mr. Bell facilitate the Citizen Input Session.

Mayor Block stated that he and the City Manager had discussed the format for the Input session and that, taking into consideration Council's request, there will be brief introduction by the Mayor, an overview on what services the City provides it citizens, and a break-out session into groups that will be facilitated either by Councilmembers or department heads.

The City Manager stated that he feels that it is a good idea to address what services the City provides up front so that discussion of items that the City has no control over may be kept to a minimum.

Councilmember Ellison stated that she would prefer that the questions be written during the break out session and that a neutral person read the questions. This will help minimize personal issues that certain people may have.

Councilmember Leak suggested that Mr. Bell coordinate the event. The consensus of Council is to schedule the Citizen Input Session Thursday, February 3, 2011 at 7:00 p.m. in the A.B. Gibson located at 322 South Main St.

Mayor Block stated that the downtown summit will be held Wednesday, February 2, 2011 at 5:30 p.m. in the upstairs council room of the Municipal Building located at 303 West Church St.

There was consensus among Councilmembers that they would hold their retreat February 25 and 26, 2011.

A discussion ensued on whether to have a facilitator present during the retreat. The City Manager was directed to bring a list of available facilitators at the regular meeting January 18, 2011.

Upon question by Councilmember Ellison, the City Manager stated that he had not contacted the Rail Division of North Carolina Department of Transportation but would do so.

APPOINTMENTS

13) Firemen's Relief Fund

The City Manager stated that Mr. Rembert DeBerry is interested in serving another term.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion was made by Councilmember Parker, seconded by Councilmember Spencer, and unanimously carried to adjourn the meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

Matthew Block, Mayor

Dolores A. Hammond, City Clerk