

**CITY OF LAURINBURG  
COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING/RETREAT  
AUGUST 25, 2014  
MUNICIPAL BUILDING  
303 WEST CHURCH ST.  
LAURINBURG, NC  
5:00 P.M.**

**MINUTES**

The City Council of the City of Laurinburg held a special meeting/retreat on August 25, 2014 at 5:00 p.m. in the council room of the Municipal Building with the Honorable Thomas W. Parker III, Mayor, presiding. The following Councilmembers were present: Mary Jo Adams, Dolores A. Hammond, Curtis B. Leak, Andrew G. Williamson, Jr. and J. D. Willis.

Also present were: Charles D. Nichols III, City Manager, and Jennifer A. Tippet, City Clerk.

Leadership Team members present included Cindy Carpenter, Finance Director; Robert Ellis, Treatment Plants Director; Harold Haywood, General Services Director; Stacey McQuage, Public Utilities Director; Fire Chief Randy Gibson; Brandi Deese, Planning & Development Director; Tim Pierce, GIS Administrator/Cemetery Supervisor; and Betty Galloway, Human Resources/Risk Management Director.

Mayor Parker called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

The Invocation was given by Councilmember Hammond.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Mayor Parker explained that the items on the agenda were items that had been placed on a retreat list for future discussion. He then reviewed the agenda, and it was consensus of Council to approve the agenda as presented. He added that Mr. Mike McLaurin was present and requested to speak with Council on the Branch's Car Care building.

**COMMENT**

Mr. Mike McLaurin appeared before Council and explained that he and his brother own the building beside Branch's Car Care, and that as a retired city manager, he is aware of the value of downtown. He added that over the last three (3) years, he and his brother have expended over \$100,000.00 on their building. He urged Council to resolve this "eyesore" (i.e., Branch's Car Care) as soon as possible.

**BRANCH'S CAR CARE PROPERTY UPDATE**

The City Manager explained that a meeting was held on August 18, 2014 with the County Manager, the School Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent, and Jim Willis representing Laurinburg Downtown Revitalization Corporation (LDRC) to discuss this property at the request of the School Superintendent.

The City Manager explained that in the past there was an arrangement which the Council did not wish to consider whereby Branch's Car Care would give the property to the City and BB&T would waive the remainder of the loan balance. He discussed the contamination issues and estimated costs involved with cleaning up the property, which in 2012 were \$51,000.00 for removing the underground tanks and \$50,000.00 for demolition of the building. He added that the School System has an environmental firm that it deals with to conduct soil samples if Council is interested in moving forward with the project. He further added that the discussion on August 18, 2014 included discussion of City crews doing the demolition work and the County waiving the tipping fees.

Discussion ensued concerning potential use of the property and that the City's funds could come from the Demolition Fees in Planning and Zoning.

Councilmember Willis expressed concern about using the Demolition funds and suggested finding alternative funding.

Following a brief discussion, it was consensus of Council to give the City Manager and staff permission to continue researching demolition of the Branch's Car Care property and funding alternatives and to bring update back to Council.

#### **CEMETERY-REPORT ON FUNERAL HOME MEETING**

The City Manager explained that a meeting was held with Mr. Beacham McDougald and Mrs. Lynn McDougald, Mr. Josh Byrd, Mr. Richard Boles, Mr. Mike Webb, Mr. Kenneth Purcell and his gravedigger, Councilmember Leak, Mr. Tim Pierce and himself to discuss issues and concerns with Cemetery policies and procedures. He explained that the funeral homes requested that the City offer some type of coverage for two (2) hours on Saturdays and indicated that they would be in favor of the City increasing fees. He discussed that the City would have to pay an employee on-call pay for the two (2) hours, and then overtime pay if the employee was called in to work. He further explained that approval by Council is needed to conduct research on how often Cemetery personnel are called in on Saturdays and the costs involved.

Discussion ensued concerning the City's current practices on weekends and the manner in which former Cemetery Supervisors handled weekend coverage.

Upon question by Councilmember Williamson, Mr. Pierce explained that it was possible that an employee would have to sell a Cemetery plot if called in on Saturday. He added that in reviewing the errors that had been made since he had taken over operations at the Cemetery, the mistakes his crew had made were on the weekend or on holidays.

Mrs. Carpenter explained that Finance would not be available to receive funds on Saturdays and this could pose a problem.

Councilmember Leak explained that the funeral business is an emotional business and the funeral directors want some flexibility for the weekend.

Following further discussion, it was consensus of Council for staff to develop a plan to address the funeral homes' concern, to provide a cost estimate and a plan for handling any monies from the sale of cemetery plots that may occur on Saturdays.

## **BUILDING CITY HALL**

The City Manager explained that he had contacted the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) concerning low-interest 40-year loans to construct a new City Hall. He added that in 2013 Oakley-Collier conducted a feasibility study, and it was revealed that building a new City Hall is less expensive than renovating the current facility. He added that with a \$5 million cost, it would be approximately a \$250,000.00 loan payment per year for 40 years. He further added that the City would be eligible for some grant money but the grants would be small amounts.

Discussion ensued concerning various governmental buildings in the area including the courthouse in Richmond County and the Lumberton City Hall.

Councilmember Leak explained that the site selection for a new City Hall should allow for growth and expansion.

Following further discussion, it was consensus of Council for staff to conduct research into a new City Hall and appropriate site selection.

## **FIRE SUBSTATION AND TRUCK**

Chief Randy Gibson explained that he was providing the following for informational purposes concerning a proposed fire substation and purchase of a new pumper:

- Based on review of county demographics by the Scotland County Fire Commission a substation is needed in southern part of county.
- Proposed site is a parcel of land owned by the City behind the water tank on McColl Road.
- Property is zoned General Business and water and sewer are available.
- Location will allow for faster deployment time and bring rural areas within the 5-mile protection area and lowering insurance rates.
- City of Laurinburg Fire Department partially funded through the Scotland County Fire Tax, with each Fire District receiving \$31,000.00.
- Proposing minimum requirements to be a substation. Building would be heated and contain two (2) bays, a restroom and a storage closet.
- Would like to investigate joint funding with the County's portion of \$300,000.00 and the City adding \$180,000.00 to purchase a larger truck with a heavier duty chassis and ability to carry more equipment.

Upon question by Councilmember Adams, Chief Gibson explained that the new vehicle would be housed at the North Fire Station and the County vehicle currently housed at the North Fire Station would be moved to the new substation.

Discussion ensued concerning the need for firefighters to drive the fire trucks when conducting inspections due to staffing levels and the potential effect on response time to a fire.

Chief Gibson explained that he was seeking permission to go forward with the substation and the Fire Commission wanted the substation and the vehicle replacement to go hand in hand.

Upon question by Councilmember Adams, Chief Gibson explained that the Fire Commission is currently working with an engineer and PCI for a Butler building for the substation and the cost would be determined. He added that the funding for the construction of the substation would come from the County Fire Tax revenue.

Following further discussion, it was consensus of Council for staff to continue studying the fire substation on City property utilizing funds from the Scotland County Fire Tax to build the substation, the purchase of a new fire vehicle with \$300,000.00 in funds from the County Fire Tax and approximately \$180,000.00 from the City, and to bring a recommendation and details to Council at a future work session.

### **ELECTRIC RATE FEES**

The City Manager explained that currently the purchase of assets from the North Carolina Eastern Municipal Power Agency (NCEMPA) by Duke Progress Energy is on schedule to be completed on or about July 1, 2015, and he advised that the City's electric rates should remain as is until the effects of the asset sale are realized.

### **CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN (CIP)**

The City Manager explained that he was working on a 5-Year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) and then expand out to a 10-Year CIP. He added that both plans will be dependent upon what Council decides regarding building a new City Hall.

### **BEREAVEMENT POLICY**

Mrs. Betty Galloway, Human Resources/Risk Management Director, discussed the City's current bereavement policy of three (3) days when an immediate family member dies with the employee utilizing sick leave. She explained that based upon her research of municipalities of similar size to Laurinburg, she recommended Council give employees three (3) days bereavement leave for immediate family, provided that it could be used only once per year. She added that the cost to the City would be approximately \$65,000.00 per year. She further added, if approved, this would begin on July 1, 2015.

Upon question by Councilmember Hammond, Mrs. Galloway explained that this request for bereavement leave was generated by the Employee Advisory Committee.

Discussion ensued concerning the City's shared leave policy and the need for an employee to use all sick and vacation time before being eligible for shared leave. Mrs. Galloway explained that there does not seem to be any problem with the City's shared leave policy as there are employees utilizing shared leave with employees donating leave time for those in need.

Following further discussion, it was consensus of Council for staff to present an amendment to the Personnel Policy to provide three (3) bereavement days to employees for immediate family to be used once per year if needed with the terms “immediate family” and “three (3) days” defined.

### **VETERANS DAY**

The City Manager explained that currently instead of Veterans Day being a holiday for employees, there is a floating holiday, and that Council had requested staff investigate having Veterans Day instead of the floating holiday.

Mrs. Galloway explained that based upon her research, 74% of municipalities are closed on Veterans Day and 26% are open, with the majority of those open being in the western part of North Carolina.

Following discussion, it was consensus of Council to conduct a poll of City employees to determine if they prefer the floating holiday versus Veterans Day as a holiday.

### **RETAINING EMPLOYEES**

The City Manager explained that staff is looking at upgrading performance evaluations and requiring that all employees are evaluated annually. He added that the question of a Rate Study is there were comments on whether one was needed. He further added that a Rate Study was conducted about two (2) years ago so he didn't think one needed to be done.

Upon question by Councilmember Hammond, the City Manager explained that in 2007 a Rate Study was conducted but was not adopted by Council.

Mayor Parker stated that it would be helpful to have the turnover rate for the City to determine if there is a problem.

Discussion ensued concerning the difficulty of retaining an employee who has qualified for a higher level position but there is not such a position in the Pay & Classification Plan or the position is already filled, such as what happened in the Electric Department.

Following further discussion, it was consensus of Council for staff to continue working on methods to retain good employees who have received training.

### **CITY'S ROLE IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND MARKETING**

Councilmember Adams explained that she was concerned that other than providing some funding for economic development, that perhaps the City should add marketing or a different direction for economic development.

Discussion ensued concerning the City's contributions to Scotland County for economic development and the City's two (2) seats on the board of the Scotland County Economic Development Corporation (EDC).

Councilmember Williamson explained that his concern is that while it is great to hear the recent announcements such as about Cascade relocating to Scotland County, most of the information presented about the community is negative and a way to market the community needs to be developed.

A brief discussion ensued concerning a marketing study conducted by The Buxton Company and the City's use of a lobbyist, Marlowe & Company, in the past.

Councilmember Hammond suggested the use of the website and social media to market the City on a more positive note. She also mentioned use of the Community Access Channel.

Councilmember Willis suggested that the Laurinburg/Scotland County Area Chamber of Commerce (Chamber), the Tourism Development Authority (TDA) and the City need to work together on a marketing plan and develop a budget with the plan.

Following further discussion, it was consensus of Council for the following:

- City Manager to provide open session minutes of the EDC to Council
- Economic Development Director to provide updates to Council in closed session as needed
- City Manager to work on plan to better market the City of Laurinburg

*At 6:49 p.m., Mayor Parker called for a short break for dinner.*

*Mayor Parker called the meeting back to order at 7:10 p.m.*

## **RULES OF PROCEDURE**

Councilmember Hammond explained that currently the Council Rules of Procedure are an ordinance and in the City Code. She added that the Rules of Procedure need to be reviewed and passed as a resolution and removed from the City Code.

Following discussion of potential items to review including the order and the items on the agenda, it was consensus of Council to review the Rules of Procedure and put the Rules of Procedure in a resolution and remove from the City Code.

## **CLARIFICATION OF ROLES/EXPECTATIONS**

Councilmember Hammond explained that she had requested this be on the Retreat Agenda since they had not been revised since 2005.

Following a brief discussion, it was consensus of Council for the Mayor, City Council, the City Manager and City Clerk to review the Roles and Expectations and discuss at the next work session.

**COMMENTS BY MAYOR OR COUNCIL**

A discussion ensued concerning including on special meeting agendas a section for “Comments by the Mayor or Council”. The City Clerk will provide the General Statute concerning special meetings and notice requirements.

**ADJOURN**

Motion was made by Councilmember Willis, seconded by Councilmember Hammond, and unanimously carried to adjourn the meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 7:21 p.m.

---

Thomas W. Parker III, Mayor

---

Jennifer A. Tippett, City Clerk