

**CITY OF LAURINBURG
CITY COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING
NOVEMBER 6, 2014
MUNICIPAL BUILDING
303 WEST CHURCH ST.
6:00 p.m.**

MINUTES

The City Council of the City of Laurinburg held a special meeting on November 6, 2014 in the Council Chambers of the Municipal Building at 6:00 p.m. 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; Jennifer A. Tippett, City Clerk; Brandi C. Deese, Planning & Development Director; and Betty J. Galloway, Human Resources/Risk Management Director.

Mayor Parker called the meeting to order at 6:04 p.m.

Councilmember Willis gave the invocation.

Mayor Parker explained that due to Greg Icard's resignation as the Director of the Scotland County Economic Development Corporation (EDC) effective November 7, 2014, he invited Scotland County Commission Chair Guy McCook and County Manager Kevin Patterson to explain the process of hiring an Economic Development Director, how they view economic development in Scotland County and Laurinburg, and to answer questions from Council. He added that the City has a budgetary commitment to the EDC through June 30, 2015. He then identified the members of the EDC as follows: County Commissioner Carol McCall, County Commissioner Bob Davis, County Commission Chair Guy McCook, Councilmember Curtis Leak and himself.

Mr. McCook stated that Mayor Parker is the Vice Chair of the EDC.

Mr. Patterson provided a brief history of how the EDC was formed and the structure of the EDC as follows:

- Prior to Jim Frank Henderson's retirement from the Laurinburg/Scotland County Area Chamber of Commerce (Chamber), the City and County contracted with the Chamber for economic development and marketing.
- County Commissioners decided to form the EDC and asked the City if it wanted to participate.
- EDC is comprised of five (5) voting members – three (3) appointed by the Chairman of the Scotland County Board of Commissioners and two (2) from the Laurinburg City Council. All members must be elected officials. The County and City Managers are ex-officio members. The Chairman of the EDC is selected by the Chairman of the Scotland County Board of Commissioners and the Vice Chairman by the City of Laurinburg Mayor.

- Three (3) officers include the President who is the Economic Development Director, Treasurer who is the County Finance Director, and Secretary who is either the City or County Manager. The EDC Board can create other offices, but changes must be approved by the EDC Board, the County Commissioners and the City Council.

The County Manager explained that the Economic Development Director is a County employee. He further explained that he had discussed the hiring process with the EDC and the County Commissioners. He added that he would like to conduct an assessment center in addition to interviews, and that the position had been advertised and applications were being received.

A discussion ensued concerning the hiring process when Mr. Icard was hired and to whom the Economic Development Director reports. The County Manager explained that the Economic Development Director is a County employee, and therefore reports to the County Manager.

Councilmember Willis explained that he thought that the Economic Development Director reported directly to the five (5) member Board of the EDC, and that any salary changes had to be approved by EDC Board.

Further discussion ensued concerning the reason for making the Economic Development Director a County employee, which was the cost of providing benefits such as health insurance.

Commission Chair McCook explained that as County Commission Chair he does not want to get involved in personnel as a County Commissioner; however, as Chairman of the EDC, he would like the opportunity to interview candidates and provide an opinion for the Director. He added that ultimately the County Manager will hire the Director. He further added that the position of the Director is a hybrid position in that it reports to the County Manager because the position is a County position, yet the Director also reports to the EDC Board.

A discussion ensued concerning the development of the by-laws for the EDC and that the by-laws were based upon the by-laws for Scotland County Development Corporation. Councilmember Hammond explained that the by-laws did not specify to whom the EDC Director reported.

Discussion ensued concerning clarifying the by-laws regarding the Economic Development Director position.

Discussion ensued concerning the City's contribution to the EDC and the funding provided by the County for the Economic Development Director's salary and benefits.

Upon questions by Councilmember Willis, Chair McCook stated that the EDC Board was not involved in approving the \$10,000.00 bonus given to Mr. Icard, but that in hindsight, should probably have been notified that the County Commissioners were considering such action.

Councilmember Williamson expressed appreciation for the history providing context for the process involved with the Economic Development Director. He added that he thought that perhaps the City has issues that are not being met by the Economic Development Director. He added that this comment was not meant as a criticism, but it appeared that the Director's primary focus was on recruiting industry for the County. He further added that there may be other things that needed to be done to grow Laurinburg and have someone report to City Council.

Chair McCook discussed the timeliness of tweaking the EDC Director's position. He also discussed the activities of the Director over the last two (2) years being primarily related to industrial expansion and recruitment because that was where the action was occurring - FCC wanted to expand and Cascades was looking at moving to Scotland County. He also discussed promoting economic growth in the community with workforce development projects with Richmond Community College (RCC) and the Chamber, and a current project of working with a local industry to determine gaps in the hiring pool.

Chair McCook discussed the EDC's involvement in retail recruitment. He explained that most EDCs are not involved in retail recruitment. He also discussed the vacancies existing in several shopping centers and that the shopping centers are managed by professionals whose full-time jobs are retail recruitment, and the lack of success for filling the vacancies.

Upon question by Councilmember Williamson, Chair McCook explained that it would be helpful for the City to do some marketing of the community. He added that the Tourism Development Authority conducts a good deal of marketing already.

Upon question by Councilmember Williamson, Chair McCook explained that he would like to suggest that the City and the County allocate one (1) penny of tax rate for economic development without raising taxes. He added that the County would appreciate a partnership with the City that would complement the work done by the EDC.

Upon question by Councilmember Adams, Chair McCook explained that there are two (2) support groups for the EDC: the Economic Development Forum and the Smaller EDC Group.

Following further discussion, Mayor Parker thanked Chair McCook, Commissioner McCall and County Manager Patterson for providing the information. He added that the base of how the EDC was built had been provided and perhaps there could be some subtle changes based on the current circumstances.

Chair McCook explained that as small as the City and County are, pooling resources together, an effective job in economic development can be done.

DISCUSSION OF CITY'S ROLE IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mayor Parker discussed the funding provided by the City for economic: \$32,000.00 to the County, \$12,500.00 for the Chamber, and \$22,000.00 to LDRC for a total of \$66,500.00. He explained that Council needs to consider whether the City wants to continue contributing to these organizations and also put additional emphasis on marketing the City to enhance all other efforts.

Councilmember Williamson explained that he felt the EDC is doing a good job with the limited budget; however since the City is the population center, County seat and retail hub for the County, he does not want the City to delegate the economic development efforts to the County. He added that he felt that an opportunity exists with Mrs. Deese's departure to explore creating a position that reports to the City Manager to compliment the EDC's efforts and to work on retail recruitment.

Councilmember Leak explained that the trend with other municipalities in the state is to bring in grant writers. He added that he felt the new position should have a salary of \$65,000.00 to \$100,000.00.

Councilmember Adams explained that she felt it was important to continue some type of partnership with the County and the EDC, and more important for the City to take care of marketing, grant writing and retail recruitment, whatever can be done to promote the City. She added that with Mrs. Deese's departure from the City, there may be an opportunity to develop recommendations for a position to report to the City Manager.

Councilmember Willis explained that since the City is committed financially to the County and the Chamber through the fiscal year 2014-2015, Council needs to discuss exactly what type of position and responsibilities for that position that best suits the needs of Laurinburg. He suggested taking 10-15 minutes at each meeting to discuss this topic.

Councilmember Hammond explained that she felt now would be a good time to review the Planning and Community Development Director position and its responsibilities. She cautioned that careful consideration be given to not assigning the position more work than one (1) person can handle.

The City Manager explained that he had met with Mrs. Deese to discuss the Planning and Community Development Director position and he wanted to hear Council's wishes at this meeting. He added that one (1) position might not be sufficient to meet all of Council's wishes. He further added that he would like to take Council's direction and meet with Mrs. Deese to see how the job might be reorganized and what duties could potentially be assigned to another person. He added that in the next budget, it could be reviewed again.

Councilmember Willis suggested that each Council member and the Mayor provide information to the City Manager with recommendations that will be in the best interest of the City, and then let the City Manager and his staff compile and review the recommendations, and then come back to Council with a recommendation.

Councilmember Leak suggested reviewing past organization charts.

Mayor Parker thanked Mrs. Deese for her service. He added that she had expanded the vision of the Planning and Community Development Department. He then asked Mrs. Deese to provide input on how she felt Council should proceed with the position.

Mrs. Deese recommended that if Council feels that economic development encompasses more than industrial recruiting, then the City should continue partnering with the County but increase funding in order to have equal membership as the County.

Discussion ensued concerning the City's participation with the County in the EDC. Councilmember Willis explained that the City will never get equal membership with the County on the EDC unless it can provide funding equal to the County, to wit \$500,000.00.

Mrs. Deese discussed the following:

- Based upon Council's direction, staff had increased participation with LDRC

- Current staffing level does not allow staff to devote much time for grant writing. A grant writer would pay for itself.

Mrs. Deese explained that she was not certain that one (1) employee would be able to accomplish all that it appears that Council would like accomplished.

Further discussion ensued concerning providing input to the City Manager for what the Council members would like to be incorporated into the position, and allow the City Manager to bring back a recommendation that fits in the organization and which the City can afford.

ADJOURNMENT

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

The meeting adjourned at 7:15 p.m.

Thomas W. Parker, III, Mayor

Jennifer A. Tippett, City Clerk