

**CITY OF LAURINBURG  
CITIZEN INPUT SESSION  
MARCH 5, 2015  
MUNICIPAL BUILDING  
303 WEST CHURCH ST.  
LAURINBURG, NC  
6:00 P.M.**

**Minutes**

The City Council of the City of Laurinburg held a special meeting March 5, 2015 at 6:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers of the Municipal Building located at 303 West Church St., Laurinburg, NC with the Honorable Thomas W. Parker III, Mayor, presiding. The following Councilmembers were present: Mary Jo Adams, Dolores A. Hammond, Andrew G. Williamson, Jr. and J. D. Willis. Councilmember Curtis B. Leak was absent due to surgery earlier in week.

Also present were Charles D. Nichols III, City Manager, and Jennifer A. Tippet, City Clerk. Department heads present were: Cindy Carpenter, Finance Director; Cliff Sessoms, Assistant Chief of Police; Betty Galloway, Human Resources/Risk Management Director; Robert Ellis, Water and Wastewater Services Director; Stacey McQuage, Utilities Director; Robert Smith, Electric Distribution Director; Randy Gibson, Fire Chief; and Josh Coble, IT Manager.

Mayor Parker called the meeting to order at 6:07 p.m. He noted the extremely low citizen participation could have been due to other meetings in the community or because of the weather.

The Invocation was given by Councilmember Williamson.

Mayor Parker introduced the Councilmembers.

Upon request by Mayor Parker, Fire Chief Gibson discussed the transition to the new 911 Center/Emergency Operations Center (EOC). He explained that the biggest hurdle thus far was the transition to Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) and getting all addresses and fire zones into the system.

Mr. Stacey McQuage provided an update on the relocation of a water line on Dixie Guano Road.

Mr. Josh Coble explained that he was responsible for the day to day computer and server issues at the City. He added that the biggest hurdle he has faced since being with the City was being the liaison between Chief Gibson and Mike Edge trying to make sure that the technology transition to the 911 Center/EOC went seamlessly.

Robert Smith explained that the most recent problem encountered was with the SCADA System causing problems with relays at the switching station causing intermittent power outages. He added that because the City is proactive in trimming limbs around electric lines there were just a

few City customers who lost power during the recent ice storms for a couple of hours at the most.

Upon question by the City Manager, Mr. Smith explained that an estimate six (6) years ago to install underground electric lines was over \$1 million per mile.

Mrs. Betty Galloway explained that she had been working on filling vacant positions and everything was running well.

Mr. Robert Ellis discussed the Industrial Park project and repairs at the Bridge Creek Pump Station. He explained that the City's sewer system takes in more water than is supplied, indicating a problem with Inflow & Infiltration (I&I) along with the recent heavy rains. He also discussed the State's requirements for sewer plant expansion and indicated that it did not appear that the City would need an expansion as soon as had been anticipated due to the change in the FCC timeline.

Assistant Chief Sessoms discussed the public misconception concerning calls needing a police officer. He explained that citizens were used to calling the Police Department phone number, 276-3211, and were still doing so instead of calling 911. He added that the mobile CAD system is not running yet due to problems with the County's servers. He further added that the 911 Call Center/EOC will be of great benefit to the community.

Mrs. Cindy Carpenter explained that she was responsible for finance, payroll, utility billing and tax collection. She discussed a visit today from an organization from Cumberland County to sign up individuals eligible for a weatherization program.

Mrs. Jeanette Herlocker explained that she was attending as a representative of Laurinburg Downtown Revitalization Corporation (LDRC). She added that LDRC was interested in pursuing new trashcans and signage downtown as well as beginning Phase 3 of the improvements. She also stated that she was impressed with City employees.

Mr. Dave Wells explained that he was filling in for Sandy Callan on behalf of WLNC Radio. He added that there was no place he would prefer to live than Laurinburg.

Mayor Parker recognized the two (2) gentlemen from the US Army Civil Affairs Division who were attending the meeting to obtain a full comprehensive look at local government.

Mayor Parker requested each Department Head to discuss anything they would like to see in their department for the coming year, and the comments were as follows:

- Chief Gibson: Continue to see various programs for fire and injury prevention flourish and to be at full potential, additional staffing is needed.
- Mr. McQuage: Foresees two (2) big budget items and one is to replace a 20-inch asbestos line from the water tank on Caledonia Road, with an estimated cost of over \$5 million and will be highly disruptive to customers. Other item is merit pay for employees.

- Mr. Coble: Looking at methods for better communication between the City and citizens which will improve transparency.
- Mr. Smith: Need to replace breakers at switching station and also work on lighting in alleys and backstreets to provide lighting and make them safer.
- Mrs. Galloway: Working on succession planning since there are key employees at or near retirement and the need to get current employees trained so that there are no lapses in services.
- Mr. Ellis: Need to add wells for the Water Treatment Plant. Work on I&I issues within the sewer system. Leith Creek parallel sewer will enable rehabbing work on the old line.
- Assistant Chief Sessoms: Recruiting to fill vacant positions from within the community and to be a more diverse force. School Resource Officers added this past year have worked well and the school principals are extremely pleased.
- Mrs. Carpenter: Need to consider City facilities.

Mayor Parker thanked the department heads for providing input on what they thought the citizens would like to see going forward.

Councilmember Adams thanked Mrs. Herlocker, the media and staff for coming.

Ms. Mary Evans, representing radio station WEWO, explained that a citizen had just emailed her with a concern about too many cars, garbage and old tires along the sides of streets. She added that he would like to push for large containers for citizens to put garbage in instead of placing along the street.

The City Manager explained that litter was a priority for the City and last year Council approved a new position, Litter Supervisor. He further explained that this position supervises inmates five (5) days a week picking up litter. He added that citizens should call Public Works if there is a problem area that needs to be cleaned up.

Mrs. Evans explained that another citizen noticed that trees were being cut down where groups may gather, and wanted to know if there was an incentive program for citizens to have lighting at their homes to enhance security.

Mr. Smith explained that area lights are available for City electric customers for \$11.00 per month.

The City Manager requested that citizens notify the City if there is a public area that needs additional lighting so that staff can investigate to determine if additional lighting is needed. He explained that additional lighting was added behind Cedar Grove Cemetery and downtown in the alleys.

Mayor Parker thanked everyone for attending.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

Motion was made by Councilmember Adams, seconded by Councilmember Williamson, and

unanimously carried to adjourn.

The meeting adjourned at 7:04 p.m.

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Thomas W. Parker III, Mayor

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Jennifer A. Tippett, City Clerk