CITY OF LAURINBURG
CITY COUNCIL MEETING
JUNE 17, 2025
CITY HALL AND POLICE DEPARTMENT
303 WEST CHURCH ST.
6:00 PM

Minutes

1. CALL TO ORDER

The City Council of the City of Laurinburg held its regular meeting on Tuesday, June 17, 2025, in the Council Chambers of the City Hall and Police Department at 6:00 p.m. with the Honorable James T. Willis, Mayor, presiding. The following Councilmembers were present: Mary Jo Adams, Mary Evans, Rosemary Rainer, Barbara Rogers, and Andrew G. Williamson, Jr.

Also present were Charles D. Nichols III, City Manager; William P. Floyd, Jr., City Attorney; Harold W. Haywood, Administrative Services Director / City Clerk; Amanda Futrell, Deputy City Clerk / Contracts Administrator.

Mayor Willis called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. Mayor Pro Tem Evans gave the Invocation and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The City Manager stated that the agenda was revised to include item L, which is a budget amendment that was emailed to Council on the Monday before the meeting.

Councilmember Adams moved to approve the agenda with the addition of line-item L. Councilmember Rainer seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Brendetta Terry, CEO of HER Life Matters in Laurinburg, distributed flyers to Council and approached the stand to make a comment. She stated that HER Life Matters is a non-profit entity for single moms in crisis that aims to provide resources, referrals, housing, and support to those in need. She stated that she is looking for funding to form a community-led task force in a suitable location to supply outreach to children to get them more involved in community events. She left letters written by a group of children for Council to review.

4. CONSENT AGENDA

Mayor Willis read aloud the Consent Agenda:

a. Consider the approval of the draft minutes for the May 20, 2025, Special Meeting and May 20, 2025, Regular Meeting.

b. Consider Ordinance No. O-2025-13 Amending the FY 2024-2025 Budget Appropriations Ordinance No. O-2024-21 to transfer funds from the Annual Vehicles & Equipment Capital Projects Fund to the General Fund and Electric Fund to pay for planned operating capital projects.

c. Consider Ordinance No. O-2025-14 to amend the Annual Vehicles & Equipment Capital Project Fund for the purchase of replacement vehicles in the Police Department and replacement equipment in the IT Department.

d. Consider Ordinance No. O-2025-15 to Amend the Fiscal Year 2024-2025 Annual Budget Appropriations Ordinance No. O-2024-21 to Reallocate the General Fund Non-Departmental Budget to other Departmental Budgets within the General Fund.

e. Consider Ordinance No. O-2025-16 Amending the Water/Sewer Capital Project Fund to transfer funds from the Sewage Collection Department for the Bridge Creek Basin Gravity Sewer Replacements Project in the amount of $236,850.00.

f. Consider Resolution No. R-2025-09 to support the closure of Trooper Lane by the NC DOT.

g. Consider Resolution No. R-2025-10 Authorizing the Sale of Real Property.

h. Consider approval of the site plan for the Scotland County Emergency Medical Services Center.

i. Consider the application to use McDuffie Square by the Scotland County Highland Games for the Friday Highland Fling Free Community Concert on October 3, 2025, from 9:00 a.m. until 10:00 p.m.

j. Consider the application to use McDuffie Square by the Stop the Violence Committee for the Stop the Violence Back to School Community Event on August 16, 2025.

k. Consider the application to use McDuffie Square by the Storytelling Arts Center of the Southeast for the Free Concert and Non-Profit Vendors event on November 1, 2025, from 7:00 AM until 7:00 PM.

l. Consider Ordinance No. O-2025-19 to Amend the Fiscal Year 2024-2025 Annual Budget Appropriations Ordinance No. O-2024-21 to appropriate General Fund Balance for the Fire Department.

Councilmember Rogers moved to approve the Consent Agenda. Councilmember Adams seconded the motion.

The vote was as follows:
Ayes – Adams, Evans, Rainer, Rogers, Williamson
Nays – None
(Copies of Ordinances No. O-2025-13, No. O-2025-14, No. O-2025-15, No. O-2025-16, No. O-2025-19, and Resolutions No. R-2025-09 and No. R-2025-10 are on file in the clerk's office)

5. PUBLIC HEARING

a. Consider Fiscal Year 2025-2026 Budget.

Mayor Willis opened the Public Hearing, and the City Manager led the discussion. The City Manager stated that there are five different parts associated with the proposed Fiscal Year 2025-2026 Budget. He accredited the City staff for their proactivity in developing the proposed budget and the information presented at both the last meeting and at this meeting, which has not changed.

The City Manager provided a high-level explanation of the 2025-2026 FY Budget, amounting to $44,438,023 and comprising all four funds - General Fund, Electric Fund, Water & Sewer Fund, and Solid Waste Fund. He stated that a cost-of-living adjustment of 5% for all City employees is included in the budget. He stated that the Fringe Benefits package and the longevity amounts will remain the same. He explained that, with this budget, the City has been able to fund all capital and operational needs and has been able to add six new positions, including two on the Beautification crew to supplement Hammond

Park and other projects. He stated that the City has had great success with the tree trimming and right-of-way crew and that there are four new tree crew members, allowing for two different crews to work on electric lines and stormwater & sewer right-of-ways.

The City Manager stated that everything stays flat except for the planned Water & Sewer increase of 15%, explaining that Raftelis performed a Water & Sewer Rate Study three years ago and created a 5-year plan for the City. He stated that this is year three of the plan, which scales down each year from a 25% increase to 20% to 15% to 10%, and finally, down to a 5% increase in the final year. He stated that, in this $44,438,023 budget, the main increase from last year is due to the debt payment of the Water & Sewer Fund's approximate $30 million in revolving loan funds that the City is using to complete capital projects. The City Manager explained that these projects come with a 0-1 % interest rate and must be paid off once completed. He stated that many of these projects are near completion, so the City must start paying off those revolving loans with the first financing payment due next year. He explained that this first payment is the debt service in the budget that the City must start paying for Water & Sewer.

Mayor Willis thanked everyone for their hard work in preparing the 2025-2026 FY Budget, and he opened the Public Hearing. He asked if there was anyone present that would like to speak in favor of the proposed budget, and there was no one. He asked if there was anyone present that would like to speak in opposition to the proposed budget, and there was no one. Mayor Willis closed the Public Hearing. The City Manager proceeded to explain each line item.

1) Consider adopting the Fee Schedule - Effective July 1, 2025.

The City Manager explained that the changes to the Fee Schedule are highlighted in red font for Council's reference and primarily reflect the across-the-board 15% increase in the Water & Sewer Fund. He stated that there are two increases that Council discussed last month regarding the $175 per event cost for facilities use Downtown and the $125 per event cost for facilities use at Hammond Park.

Councilmember Adams moved to adopt the Fee Schedule - Effective July 1, 2025, as presented. Councilmember Williamson seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous.

2) Consider the adoption of the 5-year Capital Improvement Plan.

The City Manager explained that there have been some modifications to the 5-Year Capital improvement Plan after receiving updates from Willis Engineering regarding the Water & Sewer project estimates. He explained that there was an increase in the proposed plan budget, from $66 million to $82 million, that resulted from these updates. He explained that the 5-Year Capital Improvement Plan includes all four funds and is prepared for Council, Mayor, and Staff in all departments to plan and prepare for the future needs of the City. He stated that this plan also aids in the City's pursuit of grant funding. Councilmember Adams asked the City Manager if the information presented was what was sent over to Council prior to the meeting, and he confirmed that it was.

Councilmember Adams moved to adopt the 5-year Capital Improvement Plan, as presented. Mayor Pro Tem Evans seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous.

3) Consider the adoption of the 10-year Capital Improvement Plans for Water & Wastewater.

   The City Manager stated that Willis Engineers has always assisted the City with long-term planning for Water & Wastewater. He stated that the 10-year plan was implemented a few years ago and has helped the City be prepared, while providing a more competitive advantage when applying for grant funding.

   Councilmember Williamson moved to adopt the 10-year Capital Improvement Plans for Water & Wastewater, as presented. Councilmember Rainer seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous.

4) Consider Ordinance No. O-2025-17 to Approve the Fiscal Year 2025-2026 Budget Appropriations Ordinance.

   The City Manager stated that the Budget Appropriations Ordinance is the main governing document that the City refers to throughout the year. He explained that the ordinance breaks down the $44,438,023 million budget by each of the four different funds and the individual departments. He stated that the ordinance ensures that each department remains within their appropriated budget amount, and that it breaks down each revenue source. The City Manager explained that the ordinance is what the City is restricted to and is what the LDC considers to be the City's guidelines. He stated that Council will discuss the 30-year 40-cent tax rate and the municipal service tax district 21cent rate in the future, after the County's reevaluation for the next FY budget.

Mayor Willis asked the City Manager to confirm if, when the County does their reevaluation, new tax rates will come into effect. The City Manager stated that new values for the City and County will be discussed after the County's January 2026 evaluation.

Councilmember Adams asked how much of the City budget represents one cent of property tax. The City Clerk confirmed the amount to be $82,338 per one cent.

Councilmember Adams moved to approve Ordinance No. O-2025-17 to Approve the Fiscal Year 2025-2026 Budget Appropriations Ordinance, as presented. Councilmember Williamson seconded the motion.

The vote was as follows:
Ayes – Adams, Evans, Rainer, Rogers, Williamson
Nays – None

(Copy of Ordinance No. O-2025-17 is on file in the clerk's office)

5) Consider Ordinance No. O-2025-18 to Approve the Fiscal Year 2025-2026 Budget Appropriations Ordinance for Downtown.

The City Manager explained that the Budget Appropriations Ordinance for Downtown was introduced a few years ago to provide the DAC with more flexibility when spending, enabling the committee to make purchases without the need for approval by Council for each individual purchase. He stated that the committee has a flat budget of $75,000 per year for marketing, promotions, etc. and that much of the budget comes from the Facade Grant. He explained that the facade grant is a program in which, as commercial property owners spend money on exterior improvements, the downtown MSD money can be contributed to those efforts. He stated that this Fiscal Year Budget Appropriations Ordinance is the formal budget for the DAC to abide by. The City Manager reiterated that the municipal service district rate is 21 cents and stated that the City matches that contribution every year. He stated that the total amount is for the municipal services district's funds that must be spent on downtown improvements.

Councilmember Rogers referenced the line item she has previously spoken about, regarding providing eligibility for people to ask for a specific amount of money from the City to support their business or organization in town. She passed out a copy of a typed reference sheet of the program to each Councilmember to review and discuss a proposal number. She explained that the purpose of the reference sheet is to provide an idea of who would be eligible and a baseline for the feasibility of the program. She stated that this program does not include any of the organizations that the City currently contributes to and suggested a minimum of $10,000 as the starting amount. Councilmember

Rogers stated that she would like to open the floor to a discussion among Council about a more defined criteria for the program. Councilmember Rogers offered to make a motion to move forward with the consideration of her proposed program.

Councilmember Adams asked that Council postpone any discussion regarding Councilmember Rogers' proposal until the July meeting, since the reference sheet and proposal were not included in the agenda or shared with Council prior to this meeting. The City Manager stated that budget amendments may be made at a later date, if necessary, to accommodate this program if approved by Council.

Councilmember Williamson suggested discussing the consideration of groups that provide a service to the City as a requirement to receive the funding. Councilmember Rogers explained her vision for this program to be a way for citizens to accommodate for services that the City does not already provide.

Councilmember Rogers added another comment, directed at Ms. Brendetta Terry from the Public Comment period, regarding the community centers located in Laurinburg. She stated that the City has active programs that need more people and communication with the public about their activities, offerings, and engagement opportunities. She encouraged Ms. Terry to offer her ideas for programming and to strengthen partnerships with those current organizations in the community.

Councilmember Rainer moved to approve Ordinance No. O-2025-18 to Approve the Fiscal Year 2025-2026 Budget Appropriations Ordinance for Downtown, as presented. Mayor Pro Tem Evans seconded the motion.

The vote was as follows:
Ayes – Adams, Evans, Rainer, Rogers, Williamson
Nays – None

(Copy of Ordinance No. O-2025-18 is on file in the clerk's office)

6. CITY MANAGER REPORTS

a. Consider Update to Personnel Certification List.

The City Manager stated that the Certification List is discussed by Council every year to encourage employees to obtain certifications to grow with the City and advance their career. He explained that it is a detailed list of all the certifications City employees are permitted to pursue to advance their education and salary.

He stated that the majority of the certifications allow for a step increase on the pay scale, which is a 2.5% increase to the employee's salary, and that some are bonuses. He explained that, every year, the City department heads submit any new certifications to the Human Resources Director to review its credibility and the required exam. The City Manager stated that there are five certifications that have been added to the list this year.

Councilmember Williamson moved to approve the Update to Personnel Certification List, as presented. Councilmember Adams seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous.

b. Consider Resolution No. R-2025-11, Resolution of Intent, to close the alley located behind 709 E. Covington Street, between Hall Street and 4th Street.

The City Manager explained that the historic City of Laurinburg infrastructure included alleys in between the houses, down which the sanitation crew would travel to pick up trash, until they were eventually closed and left in an effort not to increase City property taxes for the citizens inhabiting the properties surrounding them. He stated that there is a General Statute referenced in the agenda allowing the City to close the alleys and give the property to the adjacent property owners, if they wish. The City Manager stated that a request was submitted by Mr. Ricky Steele of 709 East Covington Street, who owns five parcels around the alley and is building a metal building on his property. He stated that Mr. Steele has requested ownership of the alley. Mayor Pro Tem Evans asked if what he is building would be for the public, and the City Manager stated that it would be on his personal property. The City Attorney stated that, once Mr. Steele acquires the alley, he will consolidate the lots into one tax parcel.

Councilmember Rainer moved to approve Resolution No. R-2025-11, Resolution of Intent, to close the alley located behind 709 E. Covington Street, between Hall Street and 4th Street, as presented. Councilmember Rogers seconded the motion.

The vote was as follows:
Ayes – Adams, Evans, Rainer, Rogers, Williamson
Nays – None

(Copy of Resolution No. R-2025-11 is on file in the clerk's office)

c. Consider Resolution No. R-2025-12 Awarding the Bid for the McColl Road Water Line Replacement Project to S & L Contracting, LLC in the amount of $1,383,111.50.

The City Manager explained that the City has had countless water main breaks on McColl Road and down to Tartan Road, which has been a high dollar issue that needed to be replaced. He stated that the City was able to get the State Budget Appropriations a few years ago that Representative Pierce and Senator Britt helped to secure. He stated that six bids for this project were received on May 29th, and that there is a request for Council to approve S & L Contracting, LLC's bid, in the amount of $1,383,111.50. The City Manager stated that this resolution authorizes him to execute the contract, pending the City Attorney's approval.

Councilmember Williamson asked what the status was of the waterline construction on South Main near Legion Park. The City Manager stated that there is sewer rehab underway in that area due to an uneven elevation issue from when it was installed. Mayor Pro Tem Evans asked about the project underway at Washington Park. The City Manager stated that it is the Caledonia tank and that there is $60 million currently allotted for Water & Sewer capital projects.

Mayor Pro Tem Evans moved to approve Resolution No. R-2025-12 Awarding the Bid for the McColl Road Water Line Replacement Project to S & L Contracting, LLC in the amount of $1,383,111.50, as presented. Councilmember Rogers seconded the motion.

The vote was as follows:
Ayes – Adams, Evans, Rainer, Rogers, Williamson
Nays – None

(Copy of Resolution No. R-2025-12 is on file in the clerk's office)

d. Discussion of after-hours call center for public works and utility services.

The City Manager stated that the City is always looking for ways to enhance customer service and improve response times for service maintenance and has considered an after-hours call service for employees to engage with citizens quicker during power outages, water and sewer main breaks, or any other issue. He explained that the City has an extensive SCADA System for electronic notifications of these issues, but that there is always room for improvement in customer service to better communicate the information this technology presents. He stated that the City has partnered with Daupler Incorporated to develop a system for texting and calling, and the City has a pilot program in place with the company now. The City Manager stated that if you call the City's Police Department after-hours at 3211, it will direct you through that new process, but that the program is not set to be in full effect until roughly August 2025. He explained that, once the program is fully implemented, there will be an after-hours phone number for citizens to call involving direct communication with the on-call staff, along with photo and video capabilities for citizens to capture evidence of the issue and send it directly to the staff member they have been in communication with. He stated that this would improve the City's response time and preparedness.

e. Auditing Services Contract for Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2025.

The City Manager stated that the City has used Roche, Head & Associates, PLLC to perform the audit after an RFP process since 2023 and has been satisfied each year with their work. He stated that, as the City enters its third year on that contract, Council is asked to approve the Auditing Services Contract for the Fiscal Year ending June 30, 2025.

Mayor Pro Tem Evans moved to approve the Auditing Services Contract for Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2025, as presented. Councilmember Adams seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous.

7. COMMENTS FROM MAYOR AND/OR COUNCILMEMBERS

Councilmember Rainer asked if the City has a new provider for sending out the light bills. The City Manager stated that the City does the billing for the County as well and is now using two vendors. He stated that the process and physical mail copies will remain largely the same, and that using two vendors will introduce beneficial redundancies to ensure a reliable backup system. He stated that the turnaround time when working with the companies is about two weeks and that there are a few tweaks that still need to be made to the new system.

Mayor Willis reminded everyone of the Highland Hooligans game taking place that evening, during which Chief Johnson was to throw the first pitch.

Mayor Pro Tem Evans stated that City Hall would be closed on Thursday, June 19th to recognize Juneteenth, with Councilmember Rainer adding that there would be a celebration for Juneteenth from 6:00pm to 9:00pm in McDuffie Square that evening.

8. CLOSED SESSION (PERSONNEL)

a. Set City Manager's Salary.

Mayor Willis stated that he would postpone this meeting's Closed Session until next month so he may gather all the information needed to review, discuss, and set the City Manager's salary. Councilmember Adams asked Mayor Willis how postponing this Closed Session would affect the budget. The City Manager stated that the budget could be amended in July, or whenever Council wishes. Mayor Willis stated that Council needs more information, along with the City Manager's evaluations. He asked the City Clerk to help him obtain salary information for City Manager positions around the state of North Carolina.

9. ADJOURNMENT

Motion was made by Councilmember Rainer, seconded by Councilmember Williamson, and unanimously carried to adjourn the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:55 p.m.

James T. Willis, Mayor

Harold W. Haywood, City Clerk