

**CITY OF LAURINBURG
CITY COUNCIL MEETING
JULY 22, 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, July 22, 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. Councilmember Rainer gave the Invocation and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Councilmember Adams moved to approve the agenda, with a second by Councilmember Williamson. The vote was unanimous.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Ms. Doris McLaughlin, of 342 Lincoln Street in Laurinburg, took the stand to address Council. She stated that this is the second time she has brought the following two issues to Council in the past two years. She stated that her first issue pertains to paying her City invoices. She stated that she can pay her invoices through Equal Payment Plan but cannot get her payments drafted directly from her bank. She stated that she either has to bring her payments in person or mail them in. Ms. McLaughlin stated that she called Andrew McNeill earlier in the day to inquire about the issue but could not get through to him. She stated to Council that drafting payments directly from the bank should be pursued by the City because it

is convenient. She then addressed her second issue regarding the vacant property next to her house on Lincoln Street. She stated that, previously, it was just a vacant house, but now it is a dangerous nuisance. She explained that there are broken windows, open doors, overgrown bushes, and critters on the property. She stated that she had spoken with Mr. Mac McInnis, the Planner/Zoning Officer, and a couple of Councilmembers about the issue and was told it has been in foreclosure for two years now. She stated that she spoke with the last owner of the property and was told they did not want to pay the back taxes on the property. Ms. McLaughlin stated that it is in no condition to live in and that she came to Council tonight because she recently had a snake on her porch and was told by the exterminator that the snake had not come from her yard. She stated that Mr. McInnis made arrangements for the vacant lot to be cut, but that nothing had been done about the vacant property. She explained that she would like the City to expedite the process of demolishing the property.

Doris Macklin addressed Council to make a suggestion to the City. She stated that she had previously lived in South Carolina, for over 40 years, and there was a program called Prepaid Lights for people to add money to their light bill account to use until it ran out, or to continue adding to it so they would not have to worry about their lights getting cut off. She encouraged Council to look into a program similar to Prepaid Lights for people in the community who struggle to pay their light bill each month.

4. CONSENT AGENDA

Mayor Willis read aloud the Consent Agenda:

- a. Consider the approval of the draft minutes for the June 9, 2025, Special Meeting and the June 17, 2025, Regular Meeting.
- b. Authorize the Mayor to execute the Order to Collect Property Taxes.
- c. Consider the Semi-Annual Surplus Property Sales report.
- d. Consider the application to use McDuffie Square by the Laurinburg Rotary Club for the 2026 Suds & Swine Festival, which will take place April 17, 2026, through April 18, 2026, from 12:00 p.m. until 8:00 p.m.
- e. Consider the application to use the shelter facility at Hammond Park by Bethlehem Baptist Church for an event on August 9, 2025, from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

- f. Consider the approval of the use of McDuffie Square for the National Night Out Event with the Police Department on October 7, 2025, from 4:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m., and approve the closure of Railroad Street, from Gill Street to Main Street, for this event from 5:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.
- g. Consider Ordinance No. O-2025-20 to Amend the Fiscal Year 2024-2025 Annual Budget Appropriations Ordinance No. O-2024-21, ratifying the amendment to be effective for June 30, 2025, to transfer funds within the Electric Fund operating departments to the Electric Power Purchases Department to pay for the increased cost of wholesale electric power purchases for the fiscal year.
- h. Consider Ordinance No. O-2025-21 to Amend the Fiscal Year 2025-2026 Annual Budget Appropriations Ordinance No. O-2025-17 to appropriate General Fund Balance for the unexpected HVAC repairs needed at City Hall.

Councilmember Rogers moved to approve the Consent Agenda.

Councilmember Adams moved to second the motion. The vote was as follows:

Ayes - Adams, Evans, Rainer, Rogers, Williamson

Nays - None

(Copy of Ordinances No. O-2025-20 and No. O-2025-21 are on file in the clerk's office)

5. PUBLIC HEARING

- a. Consider Resolution No. R-2025-13 to close the alley behind 709 E. Covington Street, between Hall Street and Fourth Street. Mayor Willis stated that this Public Hearing is to consider Resolution No. R2025-13 to close the alley behind 709 E. Covington Street, between Hall Street and Fourth Street.

The City Manager explained that this is the continuation of the first part of the Public Hearing from last month's Council meeting. He stated that the City started the process under General Statute 160A-299 that authorizes the City Council to close City alleys. He explained that Ricky Steele is the Citizen requesting the closure of the alley that is surrounded by his various properties so that he may consolidate all the lots into one parcel. He stated that, last month, Council approved the resolution of intent to close the alley, and that tonight's Public Hearing is the final part of the process.

Mayor Willis opened the Public Hearing.

Public Comments in favor of the request to close the alley.

There were none.

Public Comments in opposition to the request to close the alley.

There were none.

Mayor Willis explained that the alleys in between the houses in Downtown Laurinburg were once used for garbage pick-up during the 1950s through the 1970s, until the City began using trucks that would collect the garbage along the streets. He also stated that, sometimes, there are utility lines and poles in the alleys, and that Council will approve a request to close the alley unless said utilities are present.

Mayor Willis closed the Public Hearing.

Mayor Pro Tem Evans moved to approve Resolution No. R-2025-13 to close the alley behind 709 E. Covington Street, between Hall Street and Fourth Street, as presented. Councilmember Rainer seconded the motion. The vote was as follows:

Ayes - Adams, Evans, Rainer, Rogers, Williamson
Nays - None

(Copy of Resolution No. R-2025-13 is on file in the clerk's office)

6. CITY MANAGER REPORTS

- a. Update from Laurinburg-Maxton Airport - Seth Hatchell, Executive Director, LMA.

Mayor Willis stated that he was delighted to have the Chairman of the Southeast Regional Airport Authority before Council, and he reiterated that Councilmember Adams is a member of their Board. He stated that the Director, Seth Hatchell, was also present before Council, along with his Assistant, Marcus, and the organizer of the Sky High Expo and Fly-In event, Trey Brown.

The SERA Chairman addressed Council to give thanks to the City of Laurinburg for cooperating with the Airport and creating a good working relationship for continued progress and expansion.

Mr. Hatchell took the podium to provide Council with an overview of the current status of the Airport and its upcoming improvements. He stated that a packet was provided to Council by the Airport, outlining a couple of key points he wanted to touch on at the meeting. He highlighted the estimated Annual Economic Output of the Laurinburg-Maxton Airport (LMA) as being \$187,000,000 and explained how this number is calculated by the Division of Aviation. He explained that his value is determined after a series of surveys is sent out to all the airports in the State of North Carolina, collecting data on their annual budget, number of operations, how many hangars they have, how full they are, etc. He explained that this information is then entered into an algorithm, and the output estimate is derived from those results. He added that, out of 62 general aviation airports in North Carolina, the Laurinburg-Maxton Airport is ranked as number 10.

Mr. Hatchell stated that the LMA just passed its largest budget in the Airport's history in June 2025 of about \$2.762 million, most of which is capital expenditure that are put back into the Airport. He explained further that there has been continued investment in the Airport's infrastructure over the past several years, including six active projects, and highlighted the renderings of the Airport terminal building upgrades that were placed in the hallway as you enter City Hall. He stated that the terminal building upgrades are a gateway for new business opportunities, from an aeronautical perspective. He explained that one out of two airports in all of North Carolina obtain funding from the FAA for this sort of project, and that the Division of Aviation is prioritizing this specific project as well as providing matching funds with the FAA. He reiterated that this means the LMA has State and Federal funding and added that the Airport also has local funding from the Airport Authority's contribution to the project. He concluded that this project will offer the Airport Authority the opportunity to expand their operations, along with providing office space for other new businesses.

Mr. Hatchell stated that the Airport recently completed its new above-ground fuel farm, which doubles the previous fuel capacity that was underground from the 1960s. He added that the Airport recently bid out a project for two new sets of T-hangars to double the current number, stating that there are currently 18 T-hangars, including small hangars for two-seater, four-seater, and six-seater general aviation aircraft. He explained that there are currently 35 based aircraft at the Airport, with a waitlist of 15 to 16 more people who want a base, but there is not enough space for them at the moment.

Mr. Hatchell announced that, last week, the Airport hosted their first-ever Aviation Career Education (ACE) Academy, for which they partnered with Scotland County Schools and invited 16 middle and high school students to

learn about careers in aviation. He stated that their discussions involved how to become a flight instructor, how to work on planes and how to fly for the military, adding that the U.S Army Golden Knights Parachute Team visited to talk to the students. He explained that on the third day of the Academy, the topic of discussion was commercial aviation, in which they were taught about the LMA's relationship with the Fayetteville Regional Airport, were given a tour of the commercial airport, and learned about TSA and the different airlines associated with commercial flights. He stated that the students performed an exit survey, to which 95% of the attendees said they wanted to come back next year. He concluded that the Laurinburg-Maxton Airport was one of 12 airports in North Carolina that hosted a similar program this year.

Mr. Hatchell then stated that, in 2023, the LMA touched 25 states from either arrivals or departures and had 11,077 operations in 2024, of which 82 were jet operations flying corporate individuals in to do business in Scotland County. As a final remark, he turned the conversation over to Mr. Trey Brown to talk about the airshow.

Mr. Trey Brown, Founder and CEO of the Sky High Aerospace Expo, addressed Council to explain the air show the Airport is hosting. He stated that the contracts and performers for the event are finalized and confirmed, with lots of excitement surrounding the event. He highlighted that when ticket sales went live on June 2nd at 12:00 a.m., 26 tickets were sold instantly, and since then 200 tickets have been sold at an exponential rate. Mr. Brown stated that attendees of the event are coming from across the United States, including Kentucky, Florida, and Virginia. He then provided Council with a brief overview of the headliners and event agenda.

Mr. Brown stated that the main headliner will be Tora Tora Tora, an 8-ship Pearl Harbor reenactment demonstration team, along with a 1957 Chevy Jet Truck with two jet engines on the back that might race a couple of airplanes down the runway. He explained that Friday will be reserved for STEM, which has grown tremendously, and he is hoping to partner with the School Board to bring local and surrounding schools out during the rehearsal for hands-on activities on the tarmac that folks will not have the opportunity to do for the rest of the weekend. He stated that Saturday will be the primary air show day, beginning in the evening and lasting into the night with a finale fireworks display. He stated that on Sunday there will be a midday air show and encouraged everyone to spread the word about the weekend event, adding that people should visit skyhighexpo.com if they have questions.

Mayor Willis stated that when he bought his tickets, he was given the option to upgrade his seating and asked what that meant. Mr. Brown explained that the elevated seating experience is the box seats in the front row of the show, right

against the flight line, that only people who have purchased the VIP pass will have access to. Mayor Willis also asked if Tora Tora Tora will be performing on Saturday. Mr. Brown replied that Tora Tora Tora will perform their entire sequence of pyrotechnics on both Saturday and Sunday.

Councilmember Adams asked Mr. Brown to explain the Saturday schedule prior to the airshow. Mr. Brown explained that, prior to the evening airshow, Saturday's activities will entail leaving the airspace open for general aviation. He stated that the other side of the airshow is called a fly-in, explaining that anyone with their own aircraft can fly in and enjoy the experience in their own aircraft, allowing for the airspace to remain open all day. He added that, once the airshow starts, the airspace closes for safety reasons, and no one is allowed to fly in or around the performers.

Mayor Willis asked if there will be aircraft, such as a WWII bomber, at the event that people will be able to explore and tour. Mr. Brown confirmed that there will be and explained that there will be various kinds of static aircraft parked in the core area for people to walk up to, take pictures of, and talk to the pilots about. He stated that there will be everything, from small warbird aircraft to US military aircraft, included in this amenity. He added that he just got a call the week prior that the V22 Osprey Team from one of the Marine Corps Air Stations will be attending the event and bringing an aircraft and a C17 Globe Master.

Mayor Willis thanked the Airport staff for coming out to present their updates and reiterated the immense benefit this project has had and will continue to have on the community. He stated as a last remark that the ticket prices will increase at the end of July and will increase one more time one week before the event.

- b. Consider the policy framework for the "Community Pour Back" program to provide financial support to non-profits and other established organizations - Councilmember Barbara Rogers-Bailey.

The City Manager stated that Councilmember Rogers had previously presented a new program to Council to support local non-profits and other organizations. Councilmember Rogers stated that the only correction made to the draft from the last meeting was changing "County Manager" to "City Manager" and asked if there were any additional questions as to its function, purpose, or structure.

Councilmember Adams stated that the program seemed broad and wanted clarification for her understanding of the program summary. She asked to confirm that this program is a way to give money back to the community for housing, emergency bill finance, family and elderly resources, etc. and stated

that the program does not differ from what churches and services, like United Way, are doing for the community and non-profits. She provided an example from 2012, in which the Literacy Council addressed Council regarding a funding request which was not approved, stating that now the Literacy Council no longer exists. Councilmember Adams explained that she would love to help local organizations by providing funding but feels uneasy about using tax dollars to do so. She added that there are other organizations in the community that currently serve the same purpose as organizations that would potentially request funding, which would be redundant unless they specifically provide a service related to local government, like 'Tis the Season and the Humane Society.

Councilmember Rogers stated that now is the time for Council to ask questions for clarification or creating further language. She asked Council if there were concerns that there may be overlapping organizations requesting funding. She stated that a randomized amount of money would not be given away, but that there would be an allotted dollar amount for organizations that are functioning in a different capacity than the City way who may need additional support. She stated that, as opposed to the City deciding annually how much funding is provided for various requests, there would be an allotted, premeditated number to go towards those requests, not including organizations like the Humane Society or 'Tis the Season that the City already has current standing with. She asked Council what language is needed to clarify the program further.

Councilmember Adams asked if the guidelines for non-profit qualifications need to be further defined. She stated that she has a list from the Chamber of Commerce of about 55 organizations with opportunities to volunteer in the area. She asked what the focus would be for the program and where people would send their applications, asking if the City staff have to monitor the applications that are submitted. She added that, according to the guidelines that Councilmember Rogers sent out, the applications would be voted on in Council meetings once a year. Councilmember Rogers stated that the applications would be voted on prior to finalizing the budget, so the City would not be guaranteeing money that is not available or financially feasible. She explained that Council would vote on who to award the money to at the same time as the budget.

Mayor Pro Tem Evans asked if the entities Councilmember Rogers is referring to would need to have a 501 form. Councilmember Rogers replied yes, the applicants would need to be an established non-profit, and the applications

would go through the City. She stated that if there is a clerical question of who is creating and receiving the application, then that is something Council can decide. She stated that the motion she is proposing now would be to approve a

\$10,000 line item in the budget. She explained that what Council would need to clarify at a later date is what the application would include, who would be the person to receive applications, on what dates the application would be sent out, what the timeline for applications would be, and any other factors. She stated that those logistics would be up to Council and asked, given that nothing similar to this has been brought before Council before, what else Council needs to clarify everything.

Councilmember Williamson stated that he believes it is a well-intentioned idea, but during his time on the City Council, funding has not been given to non-profits if they performed a service that the City would, like the Chamber hosting the Christmas Parade. He asked Councilmember Rogers if Council would have a list of applications to review right before budget time and then decide who, if any, would receive funding of up to \$2,000 with a total max payout of \$10,000.

Councilmember Rogers stated that there would have a budget of \$10,000 that any approved applicant could receive at max \$2,000 of. She stated that Council would review the applicants who would be eligible for that \$2,000 and stated that, while there are organizations that provide similar services as the City, there is some expectation that the City can support an organization that is benefitting the constituents with whatever their service is. She added that, if it is beyond the scope of the City, then that is not something that would receive a substantial amount of money. She also stated that if the organization has proven trustworthy, is already providing the service, and merely needs the support, then the City would have an allotted fund to do that. She explained that the City would not be handing out money that is not available and that the funding would be for organizations that are benefitting the community beyond the scope of what the City provides. Councilmember Rogers stated that the parameters for who qualifies or the process of how they would receive it would not be determined by herself alone, but by Council as a whole and in an unbiased structure. She mentioned that when the County had a similar program, there were not a lot of parameters, and it was a very broad program.

Mayor Pro Tem Evans asked if it would be included in the parameters that the applicant must state if they have received funding elsewhere and have exhausted all other funding options. Councilmember Rogers stated that that is at Council's discretion and that her current proposal is based solely around money. She added that the details are for Council to decide collectively going forward.

Councilmember Adams asked if it would be worth it to refer to the structure of the United Way's program, whereby instead of the City having a \$10,000 line item, Council may consider donating that money to the United Way and relinquishing application screening tasks to them. Councilmember Rogers

stated that she liked that idea, but still proposed to have the City in control of determining an applicant's eligibility, clarifying that they must be located in the City of Laurinburg in order to receive part of that \$10,000. Councilmember Adams asked the City Manager if that is possible, and if there are any statutory guidelines about how Cities spend money or are giving it back that Council would need to be in compliance with. The City Manager stated that that can be researched further.

Councilmember Rogers stated that what would need to be researched is if the City can exclusively fund organizations, non-profits, and churches. She stated that research would also need to be conducted regarding what the legal implications would be and what the applications would need to look like and include. Councilmember Williamson added that the deadline for organizations to send their applications in would need to be researched, and he stated that a pilot program would be beneficial to see if a program like this would work. Mayor Willis commented that he was previously a part of the United Way Committee and the process to approve applicants is thorough and effective.

Councilmember Rogers stated that, because this program is new, the starting amount should not be too high, like \$50,000. She suggested bringing Board members into the approval process as well, to eliminate any additional bias there may be. Councilmember Adams reiterated that this money would come from the General Fund in the budget, which is funded by citizens' tax dollars, so this may be opposed by members of the public who are paying those tax dollars. Councilmember Rogers stated that there needs to be a discussion among Council that outlines the intent and purpose of the program, for the public's understanding.

The City Manager stated that he will reach out for guidance from the UNC School of Government and will compile any General Statutes with information on the matter to send to Council for review and research in order to discuss this program further.

Councilmember Rainer motioned to table the "Community Pour Back" program to provide financial support to non-profits and other established organizations, as presented by Councilmember Rogers, until further information can be provided to Council. Mayor Pro Tem Evans seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous.

- c. Consider Resolution No. R-2025-14 Awarding the Bid for the Raw Water Lines-Phase I Project to Richard D. Suggs Construction, LLC. in the amount of \$792,037.00.

The City Manager stated that the City received six bids at 2:00 p.m. on June 26th, 2025, for the Raw Water Lines - Phase I Project. He stated that it was determined, with the assistance of Willis Engineering, that the lowest responsible bidder was Richard D. Suggs Construction, LLC. Mayor Willis thanked Mr. Chuck Willis of Willis Engineering for being present at the meeting and available for questions. The City Manager clarified, after the Council vote, that these are raw water lines for two potential wells, one of which will be located on City property on Hall Street and the other on private property near the South Johnson School area. He explained that these raw water lines will transport the water from the wells to the City's Water Treatment Plant on Lauchwood Drive to be treated and distributed into the City's system.

Mayor Pro Tem Evans moved to approve Resolution No. R-2025-14 Awarding the Bid for the Raw Water Lines-Phase I Project to Richard D. Suggs Construction, LLC, in the amount of \$792,037.00, as presented. Councilmember Williamson seconded the motion. The vote was as follows:

Ayes - Adams, Evans, Rainer, Rogers, Williamson
Nays - None

(Copy of Resolution No. R-2025-14 is on file in the clerk's office)

- d. Consider Ordinance No. O-2025-22 to Amend the Fiscal Year 2025-2026 Annual Budget Appropriations Ordinance No. O-2025-17 to appropriate General Fund Balance for the unexpected upgrades needed to the camera/recording system in the Police Department.

The City Manager stated that, on June 7th, it was unexpectedly discovered that the City Police Department's current interrogation video and recording system was no longer supported by Carolina Video Security, Inc. He explained that there was a discontinuation of the use of Motorola Solutions at that company, so there is now an unanticipated need to find new services. He stated that a budget amendment is required, as the cost of the new services was confirmed after the budget for the Fiscal Year was approved. The City Manager explained that there is 5-year financing for the new equipment, totaling to \$35,021.80 each year, which needs to be adjusted in the budget.

Councilmember Williamson moved to approve Ordinance No. O-2025-22 to Amend the Fiscal Year 2025-2026 Annual Budget Appropriations Ordinance No. O-2025-17 to appropriate General Fund Balance for the unexpected upgrades needed to the camera/recording system in the Police Department, as presented. Councilmember Rainer seconded the motion. The vote was as follows:

Ayes - Adams, Evans, Rainer, Rogers, Williamson
Nays - None

Mayor Pro Tem Evans asked Police Chief Johnson to make a comment about the new equipment updates. Chief Johnson addressed Council, stating that, while it is unfortunate to be surprised by such an issue as this, it is a State requirement for the Police Department to have access to adequate recording devices for juveniles and any other investigations. Councilmember Rogers asked Chief Johnson if the issue had interrupted anything thus far, to which he confirmed there had been no interruptions. Mayor Willis asked Chief Johnson if there are any new advantages to the new system or if it is the same as the previous system. Chief Johnson replied that the new system will potentially be purchased through a company called Axon, which he stated has recently undergone software upgrades, making it a more advanced system.

(Copy of Ordinance No. O-2025-22 is on file in the clerk's office)

- e. Consider the approval of a vendor financing agreement with Axon Enterprise, Inc. for the purchase of the camera/recording system for the Police Department through the Sourcewell cooperative purchasing contract #101223-AXN.

The City Manager stated that Axon Enterprise, Inc. is the company that the Police Department wants to pursue for the new recording system and will be able to begin that process the following day once the Sourcewell cooperative purchasing contract is approved by Council.

Councilmember Rogers moved to approve a vendor financing agreement with Axon Enterprise, Inc. for the purchase of the camera/recording system for the Police Department through the Sourcewell cooperative purchasing contract #101223-AXN, as presented. Councilmember Adams seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous.

- f. Consider the sale of surplus personal property in the Police Department to the City of Eden.

The City Manager stated that the City's Police Department has two existing K9 insert kennels that are no longer used or needed. He explained that, through General Statute 160A-274, the City is allowed to dispose of surplus property to other local governments. He stated that Police Chief Johnson has been in contact with the City of Eden regarding selling the kennels, at \$2,800 each.

Councilmember Rainer moved to approve the sale of surplus personal property in the Police Department to the City of Eden, as presented. Councilmember Williamson seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous.

g. Discussion of the rules and regulations on the use of city facilities.

The City Manager clarified that this line item is just a discussion for Council to have a mutual understanding regarding the rules and regulations on the use of City facilities. He explained that in the past few months, the City has received multiple requests to use the facilities by potentially elected officials, and he stated that there has always been an unwritten rule informally prohibiting the reservation of City facilities for political events. He stated that this discussion is to ensure Council is in mutual understanding of this unwritten rule for non-partisan use of City facilities such as Hammond Park, McDuffie Square, and the Art Garden. The City Manager stated that a motion from Council to confirm this verbal understanding would provide the foundation needed to address future requests such as these.

Mayor Willis stated that there is no language in the current rules and regulations for City facilities regarding political parties. The City Manager stated that is correct and that it has always been unwritten. Mayor Willis asked to clarify if the City Manager would like to add specific language to the written policy regarding this topic of discussion. The City Manager stated that Council can do so, or a motion may be made by Council to have something to lean on when denying applications. He stated this is especially the case if the applicant is requesting the space before the next City Council meeting and there is no time to approve the request. Mayor Willis stated that if any radical organization came in, Council would not want to accept the application.

Council collectively agreed that they are comfortable with the current language and procedure for applications affiliated with a political party or other radical organization. No motion was required, as Council will review and discuss further at the next City Council meeting.

Councilmember Adams asked the City Manager if there needs to be a discussion among Council regarding alcohol permitting in Hammond Park since it is located in a residential neighborhood, considering the City does allow alcohol with a permit at other City facilities. Mayor Willis stated that this may need to be discussed, because McDuffie Square and the Art Garden are both downtown, although there are residences across from McDuffie Square, and asked the City Manager to look into those rules and regulations further.

h. Discussion of the proposed Memorandum of Understanding with Scotland

County for the funding of the joint city-county fueling facility.

The City Manager explained that it was brought to his attention that the City had been operating the joint fueling facility for 30 years with an unexecuted copy of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). He explained that, based on the City and County's research into the matter, the language for the MOU was drafted and put into operation in 1997 and the minutes in which it was approved were from 1999, but there was no executed copy. He stated that the original verbiage was presented to the City Attorney for review and that a new proposed MOU was sent to the County. He stated that the County Commissioners' meeting, a couple of weeks ago, involved a discussion of the proposed document which was tabled until their next meeting. The City Manager stated that he has since spoken with the County Manager and explained that there were some misunderstandings in the Commissioners' discussion regarding the proposed MOU.

The City Manager stated that there is a big push from the EPA and DEQ for local governments to remove their underground storage tanks and have storage tanks above ground, which is what the Airport has done. He stated that the City's tanks are approximately 30 years old and that the Capital Improvement Plan is in place, with a conservative cost of \$700,000 to move forward with the EPA and DEQ's efforts. He explained that, in the agreement, all capital improvements are split 50/50 between the City and County and stated that the joint fueling facility is a mutual benefit of both the City and County. The City Manager explained further that this is a crucial asset during natural disasters and that the tax associated with gas is not included upon purchase. He then stated that the City will pause further discussion until there is feedback from the County Commissioners after their August meeting.

Mayor Willis stated that he did not think the City paid sales tax when purchasing fuel this way. The City Manager confirmed that the City does not get charged for road taxes and that City staff handle the counting of it, because there are different cars that are used. He stated that the County is billed per department on what they actually use. Mayor Willis stated that it is cheaper to purchase fuel through the joint facility versus at a gas station, and the City Manager agreed.

Councilmember Adams asked if the County was able to continue using the joint fueling facility while awaiting the County's review and decision. The City Manager confirmed that they are able to use the facility and that they are 50% liable. The City Attorney stated that a decision will need to be made sooner rather than later, but that this situation is similar to a lease that is past its due date, stating that it will become a month-to-month arrangement until a decision is made. He assured Council that this is nothing critical that needs to be acted

on in the meantime, until the City hears back from the County. The City Manager stated that the County Commissioners' next meeting is the first Monday of August, and that there was discussion at their last meeting regarding taking County vehicles off-site. He stated that there are capital improvements that need to be made, and that he has had discussions with the County Manager over the past year and a half about being transparent that these costs are coming down the line.

The City Manager added a side note about the City's new Daupler system implementation, stating that there will be a big PR push over the next two weeks to advertise the new amenity on all social platforms and newsletters. He encouraged citizens to call the number (910) 291-1999 regarding any utilities issues, 24 hours a day, explaining that they will be transferred to the appropriate department to a live person who will be able to assist with on-call utility issues and concerns. He stated that this 24/7 phone number is primarily for after-hours utility issues including, but not limited to, power outages, flooding, and busted water mains for constant access to City assistance. The City Manager stated that this system is currently in operation, although its official start date is August 1st. He reiterated that this phone number is solely for utility issues and that if a citizen needs emergency Public Safety assistance, they should continue to call 911.

7. APPOINTMENTS

- a. Consider the re-appointment of a Planning Board member.

Mayor Willis entertained a motion for the re-appointment of a Planning Board member.

Councilmember Adams moved to approve the re-appointment of Planning Board member, Kathy Williamson, to another 3-year term to expire on June 30, 2028. Councilmember Rainer seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous.

- b. Consider Resolution No. R-2025-15 to request from Scotland County the reappointment of a Planning Board member.

Mayor Willis entertained a motion to approve a resolution requesting from Scotland County the re-appointment of a Planning Board member.

Councilmember Adams moved to approve Resolution No. R-2025-15 to request from Scotland County the re-appointment of Planning Board member,

Scott Gentry, to a 3-year term to expire on August 31, 2028. Councilmember Rainer seconded the motion. The vote was as follows:

Ayes - Adams, Evans, Rainer, Rogers, Williamson
Nays - None

(Copy of Resolution No. R-2025-15 is on file in the clerk's office)

8. COMMENTS FROM MAYOR AND/OR COUNCILMEMBERS

Mayor Willis stated that he was invited to speak with a representative from Governor Stein's office, who came to the City and met with him, the City Manager, and the County's new Economic Developer, Jeff McKay. He stated that the representative is headquartered in Charlotte and wants to establish an ongoing relationship with Laurinburg and Scotland County.

Mayor Willis added that the Highland Hooligans baseball team ended their regular season on July 21st, and they have an out-of-town playoff game on July 23rd. He stated that it had been a successful inaugural season and thanked the City staff for their support and help during the first season.

9. CLOSED SESSION (PERSONNEL)

a. Set City Manager's Salary.

Councilmember Rainer moved to go into closed session at 7:14 p.m. pursuant to NCGS 143-318.11A6 to discuss setting the City Manager's Salary. Mayor Pro Tem Evans moved to second the motion. The vote was unanimous.

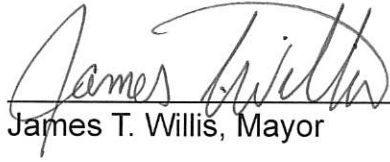
Councilmember Williamson moved to adjourn the closed session at 7:44 p.m. and return to the open meeting. Councilmember Rainer moved to second the motion. The vote was unanimous.

Councilmember Rogers moved to increase the City Manager's Salary by 7%, totaling to \$171,372. Councilmember Rainer seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous.

10. ADJOURNMENT

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

The meeting was adjourned at 7:45 p.m.


James T. Willis, Mayor


Harold W. Haywood, City Clerk

