

**CITY OF LAURINBURG
CITY COUNCIL MEETING
SEPTEMBER 16, 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, September 16, 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 6:01 p.m. Mayor Willis gave the Invocation and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The City Manager noted a correction to Item C on the Consent Agenda, explaining that the application is for the use of the Art Garden, not McDuffie Square.

Councilmember Adams moved to approve the Agenda, as presented.
Councilmember Rainer seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Mayor Willis opened the Public Comment Period and welcomed Mr. Walter Rogers, thanking him for attending the City Council meeting.

There was no one present that wished to make a public comment.

4. CONSENT AGENDA

Mayor Willis read aloud the Consent Agenda:

- a. Consider the approval of the draft minutes for the August 26, 2025, Regular Meeting.
- b. Set a public hearing for Tuesday, October 21, 2025, at 6:00 p.m. to consider a request to rezone 209 Midland Way from Residential-15 to Office/Institutional.
- c. Consider the application to use the Art Garden and closure of applicable streets by the Southeastern Family Violence Center for the Domestic Violence Candlelight Vigil to be held October 9, 2025, from 6:30 p.m. until 8:30 p.m.

Mayor Pro Tem Evans moved to approve the Consent Agenda, as presented. Councilmember Williamson seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous.

5. CITY MANAGER REPORTS

- a. Consider the selection of a firm(s) to provide professional and nonprofessional services related to potential Intergovernmental Support Agreements (IGSA).

The City Manager stated that, in April, a proposed potential revenue source involving Fort Bragg and Camp Mackall was presented to Council, and that there have since been discussions regarding Intergovernmental Support Agreements (IGSA). He stated that these agreements involve funding at the federal level that is allocated toward contracting out maintenance services on military bases, versus employing individuals on-site.

The City Manager explained that he had spoken with two Colonels about the IGSA and that Fort Bragg expressed strong interest in the opportunity. He clarified that no City employees would be responsible for the work, as the federal funds are funneled through local governments to contract services out. He further noted that these agreements are designed to establish partnerships between nearby municipalities and military bases – an approach already utilized by Fayetteville. He further explained that, under this model, funding flows through the local government, with a percentage retained by the local government, while services are contracted out. He noted that, since the City does not have engineers on staff to guide the process, an RFQ (Request for Qualifications) was submitted, which received five responses. The City Manager stated that the committee's recommended firm was being presented to Council

and explained that, once selected, the firm would outline the IGSA process and provide guidance. He further explained that the City currently has no financial responsibility, stating that, once IGSA grants are awarded, compensation will come from a percentage of the grant funding, with a portion going to the firm, a portion to the City, and the work then being carried out. The City Manager noted that, while this is a new opportunity for the City, he believes the recommended firm brings the most experience in our area and neighboring states that utilize IGSA, stating that this is a significant opportunity for the City.

The City Manager stated that, for years, there has been discussion about how Fort Bragg's expansion could benefit the City of Laurinburg, but those benefits have not developed as expected. He emphasized that the City continues to explore new ways to generate revenue - particularly for the General Fund given the low property tax rate - and noted that, if approved by Council, this opportunity could begin as early as October or November.

Councilmember Rainer asked for confirmation that the City would profit from these services through IGSA. The City Manager affirmed, explaining that the Federal Government's intent is to route funds through local governments, and that the City aims to capitalize on its proximity to Fort Bragg and Camp Mackall.

Councilmember Rainer moved to approve the selection of Inframark to provide professional and nonprofessional services related to potential Intergovernmental Support Agreements (IGSA), as presented. Mayor Pro Tem Evans seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous.

b. Update on various agreements with Scotland County.

The City Manager provided updates on the Joint Fueling Facility Agreement and the County Water Agreement discussions between Scotland County and the City of Laurinburg.

Joint Fueling Facility Agreement update

The City Manager explained that the Joint Fueling Facility at Public Works is still ongoing and provided a brief history of the agreement. He stated that the discussion was brought back to Council in February after realizing that the City and County have been operating under the agreement terms without an executed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for 28 years. He explained that the City and County share the cost of capital and bulk gas and that there was an agreement approved by both Boards, but no formally executed copy has been located.

The City Manager stated that the County is reluctant to enter into the updated agreement and share the cost of the facility, as there are some upcoming costs that the Council and County Manager are aware of. He noted that the State is pushing for the underground storage tanks to be removed and replaced with above-ground storage tanks, which are estimated to cost a total of \$700,000. He stated that this cost would be split evenly between the City and County under the Joint Fueling Facility Agreement, and that there needs to be a decision made soon as budget discussions are coming up. The City Manager stated that the County has a Commissioners meeting on October 6th and on November 3rd and would prefer to request that by November 4th we have confirmation if they would like to move forward.

Mayor Willis asked what would happen if the County chose not to sign the agreement, resulting in the City covering the \$700,000 construction cost, and then, a year later, decided to opt into the joint facility.

The City Manager explained that it would be up to City Council how to handle it, with one option being to collect payment from the County. He stated that, since construction began in 1996, all costs have been split equally. He explained that the City buys fuel in bulk, separating the cost by departmental use, and that the City does all fueling facility accounting for the County. The City Manager stated that there are multiple benefits to having this fueling facility and purchasing fuel in bulk, including lower costs than retail, tax reimbursement, and fuel access during natural disasters. He explained that after Hurricane Florence, the City and County were able to keep Police and Public Safety vehicles fueled because the facility's generator provided the power needed to access fuel. He noted that this advantage is an important factor for the County to weigh when considering the Joint Fueling Facility Agreement.

Councilmember Adams suggested requesting a decision from the County after their Commissioners meeting in October, since the agreement updates were brought to their attention in February.

Mayor Willis asked if there was a possibility of the cost increasing any more until the County makes their decision. The City Manager stated that that is always a possibility and that it was not budgeted this year due to the understanding that the County's budget may not have been able to accommodate their half of the cost, so it will be budgeted for next Fiscal Year beginning on July 1, 2026.

Mayor Willis referenced Councilmember Adams' point, asking if October or November would make a difference when starting construction. The City Manager

explained that it will not, emphasizing the need to make a decision in order to begin the planning process. He added that if the County chooses not to move forward with the agreement, the City may have to spread the cost over multiple fiscal years.

The City Attorney explained that, although the agreement may not have been formally executed, it has been approved and has been in course of dealing for years. He noted that both the City and County have been operating under the same assumptions, which effectively establishes an agreement. He added that, unless the City must act prior to the Commissioners' November meeting, he saw no issue with allowing them the time to carefully review and consider each point discussed so they do not feel rushed in their decision-making.

Councilmember Rainer asked what the County's hesitation was in moving forward with the agreement. The City Manager stated that it was due to the capital cost being split, and having to pay \$350,000 may strain their budget.

Mayor Willis stated that there was no action required for this agreement discussion.

County Water Agreement update

The City Manager stated that the City's engineer has been working with the City Attorney to amend the agreement to ensure that actual costs are paid moving forward, although nothing has been confirmed yet. He stated that there were no tracking resources when the agreement was originally created in 1995, but now there are thorough tracking capabilities which code each interaction and track costs. He explained that the agreement ends on November 6, 2025 and that, once it terminates, the County has multiple options: accept the amended agreement; purchase water from the City at the commercial in-City rate; maintain billing in-house; perform collections and administrative tasks in-house; contract out the maintenance work that the City performs. The City Manager reiterated that the agreement's expiration is only a month and a half away.

Mayor Willis stated that Willis Engineers has advised the City that the agreement needs to be updated.

The City Manager stated that the agreement has been in effect for 30 years and that the monetary scale associated with the agreement is based off costs from 1995, with no clause to adjust it as inflation changes, so what has been paid thus far is significantly lower than the actual cost. He referenced one time when the price increased from \$2.25 to \$2.50 per customer. He explained that the updated

agreement states that actual costs will be discussed, and monthly amounts will be adjusted annually, based on an actual cost review over a 12-month period.

Councilmember Rainer asked if the changes would impact the citizens. The City Manager confirmed that they will not. He then reiterated that the County has the option to purchase water from the City and contract out all other services for increased revenue, including billing, maintenance, and repairs.

c. Update on McDuffie Square Improvements.

The City Manager stated that there were photos on the agenda and presented on the screen for Council and the audience to view during the McDuffie Square updates. He explained that the McDuffie Square sign was scheduled to be installed on Thursday, September 18th and that the posts had been installed a couple of months ago. He noted that he attended a Downtown Associated Group meeting on Monday where there was discussion regarding a potential event partnership to reveal the sign and plaque at the same time.

The City Manager noted that renderings of the stage and depot are before Council, and discussions have taken place with the engineer and architect. He stated that, while funds are budgeted in the current fiscal year, there are not enough to complete both projects. He added that, following internal discussions and pending Council approval, the focus will be on the stage. The City Manager described the layout of the 50-foot rail car, donated by Gulf & Ohio, as being at a 45-degree angle on the corner of Gill Street and Railroad. He explained that funds are available this fiscal year to remove the rail car from the tracks, transport it, and refurbish it. He concluded that the engineer is confident the stage could be ready in time for Suds n' Swine 2026, scheduled for April 17th and 18th, marking the start of next year's events.

Councilmember Evans stated that when she was in Pinehurst the other day, there was a rail car sitting on the track at the golf course and it looked beautiful.

The City Manager stated that footers will be made to raise the rail car and make it look as if it is actually on a railroad track.

Mayor Willis asked if the rail car would have the Laurinburg & Southern Logo on it. The City Manager confirmed that it will and that it will all need to be repainted. He stated that the focus must be on construction tasks, including work done in-house, contracted out, or submitted for bids for the rehabilitation of the rail car and the stage, which will be built around it. He emphasized that, if the goal is to be ready by April, work must begin immediately.

The City Manager stated that no action was needed from Council, since these funds are budgeted, and that this is just an update on the project and potential timeline.

Councilmember Williamson asked if the depot would be deferred to the next budget. The City Manager confirmed, clarifying that the cost of the depot is still unknown. He stated that the City feels comfortable moving forward with the stage this fiscal year, and any additional funds would be allocated toward the depot.

6. COMMENTS FROM MAYOR AND/OR COUNCILMEMBERS

Mayor Willis noted that he spoke at the United Way Day of Caring event on Friday at the Scotland County Humane Society. He also noted that he attended the Department of Commerce Economic Development Listening Tour at the University of North Carolina at Pembroke with Mayor Pro Tem Evans, Councilmember Adams, Councilmember Rainer, and the City Manager. He provided a list of notable mentions that also attended the event: Secretary of Commerce, Lee Lilley; Economic Development Director, Jeff McKay; Scotland Healthcare System CEO, David Pope; Governor Stein. Mayor Willis explained that it was a good opportunity to have face-to-face time with State officers to strengthen their relationship with the City. Mayor Pro Tem Evans thanked Representative Pierce for starting that initiative.

Councilmember Adams provided several updates. She stated that the Sky High Expo at the Laurinburg-Maxton Airport was a major success with more than 3,000 tickets sold, and a fantastic fireworks show to finish off Saturday's air show. She recognized the City staff for helping with runway items, public works assistance, and public safety involvement. Councilmember Adams also referenced the Economic Outlook session coming up on Thursday, which Councilmember Evans and Councilmember Rainer are attending virtually at City Hall, and encouraged anyone interested to attend. Lastly, Councilmember Adams noted that she saw Betty Barrett, a retired schoolteacher who was on the Centennial Committee in 1977. She further explained that Laurinburg has its Sesquicentennial celebration of 150 years in 2027, so Ms. Barrett passed along a box of old newspaper clippings from the Laurinburg Century Celebration Charter Day, now safely stored at City Hall with the Deputy Clerk. She also read off a list of some people who participated in that event.

Mayor Pro Tem Evans asked Councilmember Adams when she thinks construction will begin on the extension of the Airport runway. Councilmember Adams stated that it is still in the planning stage because the cost increased to about \$50,000,000 and the Airport only had \$19,000,000 budgeted for it. She stated that the Airport got

confirmation from legislators to begin spending the money needed for tee hangars, site development, and extensions.

Barbara Rogers noted that the Kuumba Festival is the last Saturday in September in Downtown Laurinburg and encouraged everyone to attend.

7. CLOSED SESSION (IF NEEDED)

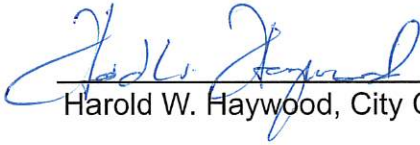
No closed session was needed.

8. ADJOURNMENT

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

The meeting was adjourned at 6:34 p.m.


James T. Willis, Mayor


Harold W. Haywood, City Clerk