

**CITY OF LAURINBURG
CITY COUNCIL MEETING
OCTOBER 17, 2023
CITY HALL AND POLICE DEPARTMENT
303 WEST CHURCH ST.
6:00 P.M.**

Minutes

The City Council of the City of Laurinburg held its regular meeting on Tuesday, October 17, 2023, 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.

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

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The City Manager informed the council that one amendment was needed to add an item to the Consent Agenda.

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

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Jeff Maley with the Scotland County Parks & Recreation spoke to express sincere gratitude on behalf of the Scotland Recreation Foundation, Scotland County, and Scotland County Parks & Recreation to the City of Laurinburg for all the assistance and support the City staff and elected officials provided in the rebuild construction of the new Scotland Yard playground located at the Morgan Complex, 1206 Turnpike Road. He stated the grand opening of the newly constructed playground will be Wednesday, October 25th, 2023 at 4:00 p.m. and he invited everyone to attend.

CONSENT AGENDA

Mayor Willis read aloud the Consent Agenda:

- a) Consider minutes of September 26, 2023 special meeting.
- b) Consider setting a public hearing to be held on November 14, 2023 at 6:00 p.m. to consider a special use permit for the development of an apartment complex on N. Wilkinson Drive.
- c) Consider approval of road closures for Christmas on Main Event.
- d) Consider letter of support for Railroad Bar & Grill to sale alcohol at their outside dining tables in compliance with their ALE permit.

Councilmember Evans moved to approve the Consent Agenda. Councilmember Rainer moved to second the motion, and the vote was as follows:

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

PUBLIC HEARINGS

Ordinance No. O-2023-16 to amend the Unified Development Ordinance to include transitional housing regulations.

Mayor Willis opened the public hearing. Mr. Mac McInnis stated that this request is to amend Article 6 Zoning Districts, Section 6.6 Table of Uses, Article 7 Supplemental Regulations, and Appendix A Definitions of the City of Laurinburg Unified Development Ordinance. The amendment per council's request addresses transitional housing as stated in the Ordinance O-2023-16. The Planning Board heard the request on September 12, 2023, and voted 5-1 to recommend approval.

There were no public comments in favor or in opposition of the request. Mayor Willis then declared the public hearing closed.

Councilmember Evans motioned to approve Ordinance No. O-2023-16 amending Article 6 Zoning Districts, Section 6.6 Table of Uses, Article 7 Supplemental Regulations, and Appendix A Definitions of the City of Laurinburg Unified Development Ordinance because:

- a) The proposed amendments to the UDO advance the public health, safety, and general welfare.
- b) The proposed amendments are consistent with the comprehensive plan and any other adopted plan that is applicable because they reflect technical and substantive amendments to the Laurinburg Unified Development Ordinance in maintaining an updated UDO that will assist all citizens in the use and development of property within the City's planning jurisdiction.
- c) The proposed amendments to the UDO are reasonable and in the public interest because the amendments promote the public health and safety by providing the citizens with an updated UDO consistent with the Future Land Use Plan for the City of Laurinburg's growth in the Central Business and General Business zoning districts.

Councilmember Rogers moved to second the motion, and the vote was as follows:

Ayes: Williamson, Rogers, Rainer, Evans, Adams
Nays: None
(Copy of Ordinance No. O-2023-16 on file in the clerk's office)

Request to rezone Parcel # 01000301004 located on Fairly Street from Residential 6 to General Business.

Mayor Willis opened the public hearing. Mr. Mac McInnis stated that Mr. Scott Gentry owns Parcel # 01000301004, which is a 2.36-acre parcel located on Fairly Street. Mr. Gentry's request is to rezone the parcel from R6 to General Business to install climate control self-storage rental units on the property. The Planning Board heard this request on September 12, 2023, and voted 3 to recommend approval and 3 votes to recommend denial. Mayor Willis asked Mr. McInnis to

elaborate on what it means to rezone from R6 to General Business. Mr. McInnis stated that changing from R6 to General Business will allow any business that is allowed in General Business, which is a lot. Mr. McInnis stated that what Mr. Gentry is proposing is a substantial investment with longevity. With the current R6 zoning, Mr. Gentry can put up to 7 units of multi-family housing which could be low income, middle income or high-income homes on the parcel. Mr. McInnis stated there are pros and cons of both zoning options and it will be up to the council to decide. Councilmember Adams asked if Mr. McInnis could give additional examples of the types of businesses that could result from rezoning the parcel. Mr. McInnis stated any retail business to include restaurants and churches. Councilmember Evans asked if a vape shop would be acceptable with the rezoning, which Mr. McInnis said that it would.

Public Comments in Favor of the Rezoning

Mr. Scott Gentry and Mr. Rich Oglesby, the owners of the corporation that purchased Parcel # 01000301004, spoke in favor of rezoning the parcel. The corporation's sole business is in self-storage building and maintenance, and not involved with any other types of businesses currently. The corporation has multiple self-storage building locations throughout the state. Mr. Gentry stated that they believe that rezoning from R6 to General Business would be good for the community for several reasons to include the need for more self-storage facilities and the ability to fulfill the community's need for climate-controlled storage. Mr. Gentry said that of the current storage facilities in Laurinburg, most are at maximum capacity and none of the facilities are climate controlled. Mr. Gentry addresses that he understands the council is going to hear the arguments against the storage facility to include that the area is a residential community, and it should stay a residential community. He stated he is aware of the argument that the corporation can open the business in any other area already zoned for General Business. Mr. Gentry stated that he will say two things to that to include that the corporation does not own any of the other properties zoned for General Business and that there is a mix of zoning for office, institutional and industrial in close proximity to this parcel. Mr. Gentry stated that the amenity of his climate-controlled storage units would be good for growth. Mr. Gentry states that you will hear the argument that his corporation could put any type of business that they want to on the parcel. He stated that although that is technically true, his corporation has no interest in being in any other type of business than construction and self-storage facilities. Mr. Gentry stated that if a vape shop was put on the parcel, no one would frequent the shop due to the location. He stated the parcel is not suitable for a retail location. He stated that his corporation does not want to make a large investment to lose money but rather to do what they know, for the business to be profitable and for the business to benefit the community. Mr. Gentry also stated that the lights of the business have been an argument against the rezoning. He stated that the lights are no different than a streetlight. He stated that there has been an argument about additional traffic created by this rezoning for his business. Mr. Gentry stated that traffic flow will be the same and not all users of the self-storage will be frequenting the facility regularly. Mr. Gentry said you will hear the argument that the additional traffic will damage the dirt road that accesses the parcel. He stated that his site plan would use one of the two paved roads as the entrance to their facility. Mr. Gentry stated you may hear noise will be a problem with the rezoning. He stated that there will not be any more access to the self-storage facilities than there is at the apartment buildings located around the parcel. Mr. Gentry stated his facility would be a well-lit, gated facility with a code operated gate controlled by an offsite company with surveillance. He stated there will be no crime, no additional traffic, and no noise complaints. Mr. Gentry stated they haven't had any prior issues with neighbor complaints, any calls from police departments or any issues that he knows of in any of his other facilities throughout the state. Mayor Willis asked the Council if any members had any questions for Mr. Gentry. The council had no questions for Mr. Gentry.

Mr. Randy Blackburn, a resident of Church Street, also spoke in favor of the proposed rezoning of Parcel # 01000301004. Mr. Blackburn owns a business on Fairly Street named Paradigm Metal Works. He stated he successfully came before the planning committee a few years ago about changing zoning for his parcel from Industrial to General Business. Mr. Blackburn is in the process of buying the house adjacent to the facility to renovate the house. He stated that he is pro-business for the City of Laurinburg. He stated he understands that there are many options Mr. Gentry has available with this parcel, and he feels that a self-storage facility would be the least of his problem with the use of the parcel. Mr. Blackburn stated that his biggest problem would be if the parcel was turned into low-income housing or other options that would not be advantageous for Fairly Street and the neighbors. He stated he has mixed emotions about the proposed rezoning from R6 to General Business, but he feels that it is pro-business, and we can live with it. Mr. Blackburn stated he has built some of the self-storage facilities like the ones being proposed by Mr. Gentry and the only issues he has seen in the past is trash pickup, but he thinks Mr. Gentry will take care of this at his facility. Mr. Blackburn stated he is on the fence about the proposal, but the revenue would be positive for the city, and he is not going to be opposed to it. Councilmember Adams asked Mr. Blackburn what his intent is with the house he purchased adjacent to the parcel, and he stated that they are going to renovate the home and his son will be moving into the property. Councilmember Adams also asked Mr. Blackburn if the council approves to rezone the parcel from R6 to General Business, will he have a problem if the self-storage facility does not go on the parcel and some other business goes there instead. Mr. Blackburn stated he can't answer that without knowing all the facts. Councilmember Evans stated that the road by the house Mr. Blackburn is purchasing is so close to Mr. Gentry's parcel that she would not want to live in it. Mr. Blackburn stated he came to the council meeting tonight with an open mind and the proposed rezoning is something he is not going to oppose.

Mr. Randy Johnson also spoke in favor of the proposed rezoning of Parcel # 01000301004. Mr. Johnson owns the vacant property next to Parcel # 01000301004. Mr. Johnson stated that he thinks the self-storage facility will be good for the community, he doesn't think it will hurt any future plans he may have with his adjacent property, and he would not have any problems with the self-storage facility being beside his vacant land. Councilmember Adams asked Mr. Johnson if the council approves to rezone the parcel, would he be okay with any other businesses being put on the parcel. Mr. Johnson stated that he would not have any problems with other facilities being put on the parcel.

Public Comments in Opposition of the Rezoning

Mrs. Brandi Jones Bullock spoke in opposition to the rezoning. Mrs. Bullock owns the property across the street from Parcel # 01000301004 on Fairly Street. She stated her grandfather, Thomas L. Jones, built the house she owns in 1953. Mr. Thomas L. Jones was a general contractor with unlimited license, so he built the home himself. Mrs. Bullock stated that her mother still lives in the home, and she is concerned about the self-storage facility being across the street from her mother's home. She stated that she appreciates Mr. Blackburn and Mr. Johnson's remarks, but they do not live there. Mrs. Bullock stated she grew up in the home on Fairly Street and still lived in it when she graduated from Scotland High School in 1996. Mrs. Bullock stated she has a few issues with the rezoning of the parcel to include the parcel would be zoned as business, which would allow any kind of business to end up on the parcel if Mr. Gentry's corporation sold the parcel. She stated these businesses could include a strip mall, a tobacco store, a tattoo parlor, and a convenience store. Mrs. Bullock stated that the lights could be an unintended consequence of the facility. She also stated that in and out traffic could cause a safety issue. Mrs. Bullock said she is an attorney, and she deals with criminal activity daily. She stated she knows what happens in storage facilities. She stated that noise would also be an issue, and no one wants to hear trucks

coming in and out of their neighborhood at 2, 3 or 4 am. Mrs. Bullock stated that Mr. Gentry has made promises that he will not be able to keep because he doesn't know what will happen. Mrs. Bullock asked the council to deny the request to rezone Parcel # 01000301004 as business.

Mr. Howard Whitehurst spoke in opposition to the rezoning. Mr. Whitehurst's wife Madilyn was with him in the audience. Mr. Whitehurst stated his property is about 500 feet from Mr. Gentry's parcel. He stated that he is not opposed to Mr. Gentry, but he feels there are a lot of opportunities to put this facility in a business area in town rather than in an area surrounded by residents. Mr. Whitehurst stated that the parcel has dirt roads on two sides of it and only has a paved road on the third side, which is Fairly Street. He stated that unless Mr. Gentry purchases the small residential lots between the facility and King Street, he would only have the two dirt roads and Fairly Street as access. Mr. Whitehurst states that Mr. Gentry had indicated that maybe he could get an opportunity to buy some of that land to give him access to King Street, but he did not see where Mr. Gentry had mentioned that in his proposal. He stated this leaves only the dirt roads and Fairly Street to access the facility which would cause an increase in traffic. Mr. Whitehurst stated that they have already seen an increase of traffic due to the garden at the Presbyterian Church and the apartments. He stated one of the highest density residential areas in the city is the apartments adjacent to the parcel. Mr. Whitehurst stated a business should be in a business area of town. He suggested the city or county needs to help Mr. Gentry find a suitable lot because his facility is needed in the community, but not in a residential area. Mr. Whitehurst stated that when he moved here, he talked to the real estate agent because some of the businesses down the street caused him concern. He stated that he asked the agent if it was possible for businesses to take up land near him and his home, where he has spent well over \$100,000 on renovating an isolated residential area. He stated his agent told him he should have no worries because it was a residential area. He sees this as a contract. Mr. Whitehurst stated he came back to Laurinburg to retire after doing missionary work and he wants to continue living in the home he loves that is zoned as a residential area. Mayor Willis asked if the council had questions for Mr. Whitehurst. The council did not have any questions.

Mrs. Christine Hayes spoke in opposition to the rezoning. Mrs. Hayes lives on Fairly Street. She feels that it is not feasible to put Mr. Gentry's facility on the parcel. She stated that she feels it wouldn't be safe, it would be noisy, and the lighting would be an issue. She would like the council to keep the parcel residential.

Mrs. Mary McLaurin spoke in opposition to the rezoning. Mrs. McLaurin asked the council before they voted to ask themselves how they would feel if the property across the street from them was changed to General Business.

Mayor Willis asked if anyone else wanted to speak. There were no additional speakers. Mayor Willis declared the public hearing closed.

City Attorney William P. Floyd, Jr. wanted to reiterate that the public hearing tonight about the rezoning of Parcel # 01000301004 is not about a particular use of the parcel such as the storage facility. He stated the council's only consideration should be if General Business is an acceptable use of the parcel. The City Attorney advised the council that this is a legislative hearing, so they are allowed to consider any evidence, testimony, any thoughts, or comments and articles read that will inform them to make a legislative decision is fair game in a hearing such as this. Councilmember Evans stated that, in her personal view, climate-controlled storage facilities are needed, but she feels they would be better some place other than this parcel. She stated that the storage facility would infringe on the public safety of the senior citizens and that Mr. Gentry could not assume there would not be any violence at the location. Councilmember Evans stated

that the City of Laurinburg has been designated as a senior citizen community and she feels it is about time that we start respecting, caring, and loving about what senior citizens need and that is safety. She said that she feels the facility would be better suited at a different location from a public safety standpoint. Councilmember Rogers stated that the council is not deliberating over their opinion of the quality of Mr. Gentry's business, but that the council has a responsibility to consider what the community has voiced to them today about possible future issues that may arise from the rezoning of the parcel. She stated that she can't do due diligence to her seat on the council and uphold her responsibilities to the citizens if a different business came behind Mr. Gentry's business in the future and did the things that Mr. Gentry had promised not to do. Councilmember Rogers stated that she agrees that the storage facility is needed but the rezoning would be a big change to what the area would be, and the council can't guarantee what that would look like beyond today. Councilmember Rogers stated that was her concern as well. She stated that if Mr. Gentry sold the property, the next owner could put any kind of business there because it is zoned for General Business. Councilmember Rogers asked if any parameters could be added if the parcel was rezoned. The City Attorney stated that no parameters could be added if the parcel is rezoned as General Business. Councilmember Williamson advised that before the council voted he wanted to state that, in transparency, he assisted the seller of Parcel # 01000301004 with the selling of the property to Mr. Gentry. He stated he spoke with the City Attorney to make sure he would not be disqualified from casting a vote and was advised he would not. He stated he just wanted to be transparent with the council.

Councilmember Rainer motioned to deny the request to rezone Parcel # 010003 01004 on Fairly Street from Residential 6 to General Business because, in the interest of the public health, safety, and welfare, the rezoning is not reasonable. Councilmember Evans moved to second the motion, and the vote is as follows:

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

CITY MANAGER REPORTS

Ordinance No. O-2023-18 to approve the Amended and Restated Full Requirements Power Sales Agreement between the North Carolina Eastern Municipal Power Agency and the City of Laurinburg.

The City Manager explains that there is a Full Requirement Power Purchase Agreement (FRPPA) in which the City of Laurinburg purchases power with Duke Energy. He stated that there is also the Full Requirement Power Sales Agreement (FRPSA), which is the City of Laurinburg's agreement with the eastern municipal power agency, Electricities, in which the City of Laurinburg purchases power from Duke Energy at wholesale. The City of Laurinburg is one of 32 Electricities members in the east which collectively buy power from Duke Energy through this agreement. The City Manager explains that there was a 10th amendment of the FRPPA, which is the agreement between Duke Energy and the eastern power agency, which changed some of the terms of the agreement. Due to this change in terms in the FRPPA, the terms of the FRPSA needed to change to reflect the same terms as the amended FRPPA. The City Manager explains that the gist of the change was the issue of batteries. The 10th amendment stems from Duke Energy's thought that batteries should be considered generation and didn't want customers to put in big battery projects that were going to reduce the peak. The City Manager explained to the Council that all 32 members must approve the amendment to the wording and it has already been approved by the board of directors of Electricities. He stated the agreement is already in place and the amendment will ensure the

wording of the Full Requirement Power Sales Agreement matches the Full Requirement Power Purchase Agreement.

Councilmember Rainer motioned to adopt Ordinance No. O-2023-18 to approve the Amended and Restated Full Requirements Power Sales Agreement between the North Carolina Eastern Municipal Power Agency and the City of Laurinburg. Councilmember Evans moved to second the motion, and the vote is as follows:

Ayes: Williamson, Rogers, Rainer, Evans, Adams

Nays: None

(Copy of Ordinance No. O-2023-18 and FRPSA on file in the clerk's office)

Update on Police Department Recruitment & Retention

The City Manager provided an update on the recruitment and retention efforts the City of Laurinburg has been promoting for the past 3 or 4 months. He stated that what is in front of the council tonight stemmed from the closed session of the special meeting last month, at which the board could not come out of closed session and vote on it. He explained that the council and Police Chief Mitch Johnson have backed efforts and recommendations for recruitment and retention, specifically within the City of Laurinburg Police Department. The City Manager stated that there have been recommendations for recruitment with initiatives, such as city-paid BLET training and sign-on bonuses. He stated that what is in front of the council tonight is how the City of Laurinburg can reward loyal, dedicated officers that have remained with the City. He stated the recommendation is a one-time step increase, which is a 2.5% salary increase, for all current sworn officers. The City Manager explained that the current police officers would receive a 2.5% increase in addition to the 7% increase approved and already received in July 2023 with the budget approved by the council. He explained that Chief Johnson was in attendance if the council had any questions for him.

Councilmember Rainer asked the City Manager if the funds for the salary increase for the current sworn officers was going to come from the General Fund. The City Manager advised her that it would come from the General Fund. Councilmember Evans asked the City Manager if he had done any research across the state to see what the average salary of sworn police officers is currently. He advised that he had done that research and on September 26th, staff polled 15 agencies in the southeast. He stated that he has already felt that the City of Laurinburg's starting salary is higher than a lot of other agencies. He thinks that the Village of Pinehurst will still be a little ahead of the City of Laurinburg. The City Manager stated that the City of Laurinburg starting salary is currently at \$45,000 and that the Village of Pinehurst's starting salary is around \$46,600, but that is prior to this proposed step increase. He stated the City of Laurinburg's HR director, Betty Galloway, performed this research. He stated that he feels the City of Laurinburg will be extremely competitive where the salary will be moving forward. Councilmember Evans asked if the City of Laurinburg's Police Department salary is competitive with the Scotland County Sheriff's Departments salary. The City Manager advised that the City of Laurinburg's Police Department salary is competitive and higher, and the council has the numbers for the Scotland County's Sheriff's department if they would like to look over them. Mayor Willis advised the council that there were at least two municipalities that would not disclose their salary information when asked by the City of Laurinburg due to the competitive nature of the information. The City Manager advised that the City of Laurinburg will be extremely competitive where it will be going forward, and it will strive to put quality individuals in positions versus focusing on quantity. Councilmember Evans asked if a new salary analysis will be needed after the step increase. The City Manager

advised that the council passed the 7% cost of living adjustment, which is normally unheard of, but the City of Laurinburg tries to do an updated salary rate review every 5 years. He stated that he does not think the current salary rate is a concern for staff. He stated that if the City of Laurinburg made all these efforts to recruit new employees, then the city will have new employees coming in at near the same salaries as seasoned employees. Councilmember Adams asked how many officers the salary increase will impact. Chief Johnson stated that it would affect about 26 officers, but it would not affect civilian officers or himself. It would affect everyone consistently on patrol, in the investigation division and SROs. Chief Johnson stated the premise behind the salary increase is to ensure when they bring in new officers, they do not bring them in at a higher salary than seasoned officers. He stated that not only will this build morale among the department, but it will also allow the department to be competitive to other agencies. Chief Johnson stated that he has watched other agencies have a set starting salary, but they have the capability to hire them at a higher level which leaves them the ability to still hire more officers. He stated that this results in having individuals in supervisory roles that do not have the experience which results in liability issues. He stated this proposed salary increase will allow him to have the right people with the proper experience in the right spots rather than hiring people at about the same salary as tenured employees. Chief Johnson said that at the last count, the police department was short 18 officers and some of his officers may apply for a current Police Chief vacancy in the Town of Wagram. Mayor Willis advised the council that a new police officer for Laurinburg was sworn in today.

Councilmember Williamson motioned to approve the one-step (2.5%) salary increase for all current sworn officers. Councilmember Evans moved to second the motion, and the vote was unanimous.

Ordinance No. O-2023-19 Amending the FY 2023-2024 Budget Appropriations Ordinance (Ordinance No. O-2023-08) for the Police Department

The City Manager advised that this ordinance is to amend the FY 2023-2024 budget for the Police Department salary increase of 2.5% and the benefits attached. He stated there are also contracts for services and various equipment that were procured last fiscal year, such as a fingerprint machine, that the city had hoped would be received by the end of June, so it could be paid out of the FY 2022-2023 budget. The City Manager stated that since the contracts for services and equipment were not completed, the funds rolled back in fund balance for the FY 2022-2023 and the expenses would have to be paid out of the FY 2023-2024 budget. He stated that this ordinance will amend the FY 2023-2024 budget to allow the contracts for services, the equipment, and the 2.5% salary increase for the Police Department.

Councilmember Adams motioned to approve amending Ordinance No. O-2023-19 Amending the FY 2023-2024 Budget Appropriations Ordinance (Ordinance No. O-2023-08) for the Police Department. Councilmember Rainer moved to second the motion, and the vote was as follows:

Ayes: Adams, Evans, Rainer, Rogers, Williamson

Nays: None

(Copy of Ordinance No. O-2023-19 on file in the clerk's office)

Ordinance No. O-2023-20 Amending the FY 2023-2024 Budget Appropriations Ordinance (Ordinance No. O-2023-08) for the Fire Department and Ordinance No. O-2023-21 Amending the North Fire Station Capital Project Ordinance

The City Manager stated that these ordinances are amending and adding to the North Fire Station capital project ordinance. He stated most of this budget increase is due to something great happening to our community, the Sopako project. The City Manager stated that the City of Laurinburg already had plans, DOT permitting, had done sitework, etc. prior to the announcement of Sopako, with its projected 450 jobs and 80-million-dollar project. He stated because of the project, more engineering was needed. He stated the city lost one of its driveways that Hudson paving had already put in, the retention pond needed some additional work. He emphasized that the changes are for a great cause with the Sopako project. The City Manager stated that he had been in contact with the NC DOT Division 8 Engineer, Mr. Chuck Dumas, to discuss the project. He stated that Mr. Dumas has since retired but the City Manager plans to continue discussions with the NCDOT to see if the city can get any assistance, such as reimbursements from the NCDOT. He stated that the NCDOT could not do anything until their project starts, which will be after the holidays. The City Manager hopes that the City of Laurinburg can present the NCDOT with a reimbursement request for the amount spent as long as there no additional cost. He stated that the City of Laurinburg has received help from Representative Pierce, Senator Britt and Senator McInnis that are involved with the NCDOT, but the city can't get an answer until the NCDOT project starts and the city does not want to slow down the fire station project. He stated he hopes that he can report back in a couple of months that the NCDOT will reimburse the city because there was a lot of engineering and other things changed when Creech and Associates and Hawks Builders were awarded the project. Councilmember Evans asked the status of the fire station project. The City Manager stated the contractors are still working on the metal and inside of the building. He stated that hopes are to have the building done by the end of this calendar year. The City Manager stated that there will be modifications to the original plans due to losing the south entrance, but the NCDOT is going to create a major state road that will access Sopako and that will also be used to access employee parking for the fire station. He stated that the City of Laurinburg already had its DOT permits for the driveway, but the NCDOT would not allow this driveway to be in that short of a span to this state road on a major highway, such as Highway 501. Councilmember Rogers asked if the reason for the delay on the project was because there were unforeseen things that needed to be fixed. The City Manager advised that the contractors were already working on the project before Sopako announced. He stated that once Sopako announced the project, the NCDOT became involved in merging the entrances for the fire station entrances and the industrial park entrances.

Councilmember Rainer motioned to approve Ordinance No. O-2023-20 Amending the FY 2023-2024 Budget Appropriations Ordinance (Ordinance No. O-2023-08) for the Fire Department. Councilmember Rogers moved to second the motion, and the vote was as follows:

Ayes: Williamson, Rogers, Rainer, Evans, Adams

Nays: None

(Copy of Ordinance No. O-2023-20 on file in the clerk's office)

Councilmember Rogers motioned to approve Ordinance No. O-2023-21 Amending the North Fire Station Capital Project Ordinance. Councilmember Adams moved to second the motion, and the vote is as follows:

Ayes: Williamson, Rogers, Rainer, Evans, Adams

Nays: None

(Copy of Ordinance No. O-2023-21 on file in the clerk's office)

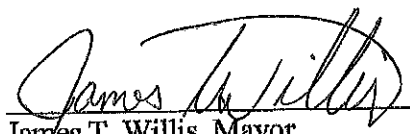
COMMENTS FROM CITY MANAGER, MAYOR AND/OR COUNCILMEMBERS

The City Manager wanted to revisit the permits for food trucks. He stated that previously, the food trucks purchasing the \$50.00 sales permit were only able to set up at three locations, and those are McDuffie Square, the city lot across from the courthouse and the A.B. Gibson parking lot. He stated that if the food trucks went to other locations, they would have to purchase \$25 temporary sales permits each time and each property owner was only allowed 4 temporary sales permits per year. The City Manager stated that the council discussed a \$500 permit, but they agreed on a \$300 annual permit. He stated they have not had any issues with this so far and this permit allows them to go to any commercial property they want, as many times as they want, if they have the property owner's permission. Councilmember Rogers asked if the \$300 annual permit for the food trucks will allow them to take their truck to an event for an entire year. The City Manager stated that some organizations outside of the City of Laurinburg may require additional permits. Councilmember Rogers asked about the Health Department requirements of the food trucks. The City Manager stated that the owners would still be required to have the food trucks inspected by the health department as they previously were. Councilmember Rogers asked for clarification on the prior \$25 fee. The City Manager advised that was the temporary sales permit fee for the City of Laurinburg. Councilmember Williamson went into further detail about the origin of the \$25 sales permit. He stated that on prior visits downtown on South Main Street on Saturdays, it seemed like every business had a sale going and it was really cluttered. He stated the council agreed to limit how many times a business could have these sales to 4 times a year. He stated that then the food truck world began and the need for this change came about. Both Councilmember Rogers and Councilmember Evans stated they have had people approach them and ask the reason for the change and now they have some clarity on the matter. The City Manager stated that the vendors are probably paying less than they were prior and they have access to many more locations. Councilmember Rogers agreed that the vendors now have access to more locations. Councilmember Rainer stated that she also has more clarity and can now better explain it to others now that it has been better explained to her. Councilmember Adams asked a question based on what the council did for Railroad Bar and Grill with the outdoor seating, and she wanted to know the status of the City of Laurinburg's Social District. The City Manager stated that the social district has been approved and they are waiting on proofs from the Umbrella Factory on signage. Councilmember Williamson asked if the council could get an update on community development at some point. The City Manager advised that Mr. Walker McCoy is now fully staffed with the addition of Susan Coble as the downtown coordinator, and Mr. McCoy will be added to next month's agenda to provide an update.

ADJOURNMENT

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

The meeting was adjourned at 7:29 p.m.


James T. Willis, Mayor


Harold W. Haywood, City Clerk