

**CITY OF LAURINBURG  
CITY COUNCIL MEETING  
SEPTEMBER 22, 2020  
CITY HALL AND POLICE DEPARTMENT  
303 WEST CHURCH ST.  
7:00 p.m.**

**Minutes**

The City Council of the City of Laurinburg held its regular meeting on Tuesday, September 22, 2020 in the Council Chambers of the City Hall and Police Department at 7:00 p.m. with the Honorable James T. Willis, Mayor, presiding and physically present. The following Councilmembers were physically present: Mary Jo Adams, Mary Evans, James J. Garby, Jr., Donald Rainer, and Andrew G. Williamson, Jr.

Also present were Charles D. Nichols III, City Manager; Jennifer A. Tippet, City Clerk; and William P. Floyd, Jr., City Attorney (via teleconference).

Mayor Willis called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Councilmember Williamson gave the Invocation and then led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

The City Manager explained that the agenda needed to be amended to add a closed session to prevent disclosure of an award.

Councilmember Garby requested that the agenda be amended to include a discussion of I. Ellis Johnson School.

Motion was made by Councilmember Rainer to approve the agenda with amendments. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Garby, and the vote was as follows:

Ayes: Rainer, Garby, Evans, Williamson, Adams

Nays: None

**PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD**

No public comments were submitted.

**CONSENT AGENDA**

Mayor Willis reviewed the Consent Agenda:

- a) Consider minutes of August 18, 2020 regular meeting

Councilmember Garby moved to approve the Consent Agenda. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Adams, and the vote was as follows:

Ayes: Garby, Adams, Williamson, Rainer, Evans

Nays: None

## **CITY MANAGER REPORTS**

### **STATE OF COVID-10 IN OUR COMMUNITY – MR. GREG WOOD**

Mayor Willis introduced Mr. Greg Wood, Chief Executive of the Scotland Health Care System.

Mr. Wood provided an update on COV-19 in the community with highlights as follows:

- COVID-19 is difficult to predict. There have been 200,000 deaths in the US.
- Seeing gradual declines in number of persons affected, but there are still some spikes.
- Unsure of the effect the upcoming flu season will have.
- People need to continue wearing masks and practicing social distancing.
- Patients are not as sick as they were in the beginning of COVID-19.
- Staff has been working very hard.
- Approximately 1,000 people infected in Scotland County, and 12 deaths.
- Nine (9) different companies have advanced to Phase 3 of development of a vaccine for COVID-19. Hopefully by end of 2020, there will be a vaccine. But it will be a long time before everyone gets vaccinated.
- Used CARES Act funds to increase testing in the community so that everyone has access to testing.
- Biggest concern at the hospital is space since winter is the busiest season. Hospital has created additional ICU space.
- People need to promote safety by wearing masks, practicing social distancing, and to get tested if one has any potential symptom.

### **CONSIDER RESOLUTION APPROVING SALE OF LAND**

The City Manager explained that Mr. Alfred Thompson, dba Dilette Properties, LLC has offered to purchase PIN ID 010068 03004 from the City at the appraised value of \$2,600.00.

Following discussion, Councilmember Williamson moved to approve Resolution No. R-2020-07 approving sale of Lot PIN ID 010068 03004 to Mr. Alfred Thomson dba Dilette Properties, LLC, and authorizing the execution of a deed conveying the property to Mr. Alfred Thompson dba Dilette Properties, LLC for the appraised value of \$2,600.00. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Adams, and the vote was as follows:

Ayes: Williamson, Adams, Rainer, Evans, Garby

Nays: None

(Copy of Resolution No. R-2020-07 on file in city clerk's office)

## **CONSIDER ORDINANCE TO AMEND FISCAL YEAR 2019-2020 BUDGET APPROPRIATION ORDINANCE**

The City Manager explained that this ordinance and the ordinance in the next item on the agenda are to transfer \$1 million from the Water/Sewer Fund to the Water/Sewer Capital Project Fund. The Water/Sewer Capital Project Fund was set up in April, 2019 with \$3.55 million set aside to begin six (6) major capital projects in the Water/Sewer Fund. Ordinance No. O-2020-11 amends the Water/Sewer Fund by \$1 million, and Ordinance No. O-2020-12 amends the Capital Project Fund. The additional money is needed to keep the projects moving forward.

Councilmember Adams moved to approve Ordinance No. O-2020-11 amending FY 2019-2020 Budget Appropriations Ordinance No. (O-2019-17) by Increasing the Water/Sewer Fund Balance by \$1 Million, and Increasing Expenditures in Water/Sewer Transfer to Capital Projects. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Evans, and the vote was as follows:

Ayes: Adams, Evans, Garby, Rainer, Williamson

Nays: None

(Copy of Ordinance No. O-2020-11 on file in city clerk's office)

## **CONSIDER ORDINANCE AMENDING FISCAL YEAR 2019-2020 BUDGET APPROPRIATION ORDINANCE**

Councilmember Evans moved to approve Ordinance No. O-2020-12 amending FY 2019-2020 Budget Appropriations Ordinance No. (O-2019-17) by Increasing Revenue in the Water/Sewer Fund by \$1 million, and Increasing Expenditures in the Water/Sewer Capital Project Fund by \$1 million. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Garby, and the vote was as follows:

Ayes: Evans, Garby, Rainer, Adams, Williamson

Nays: None

(Copy of Ordinance No. O-2020-12 on file in city clerk's office)

## **DISCUSSION OF AND DIRECTION CONCERNING FUTURE COUNCIL MEETINGS**

The City Manager explained Governor Cooper had moved the state into Phase 2.5 of opening, which allows for up to 25 people in a room. He added that there would be public hearing coming up on a Conditional Use Permit.

Following discussion, it was consensus of Council to keep City buildings closed to the public in order to protect citizens and staff, and to continue with the current format for council meetings.

## **DISCUSSION OF I. ELLIS JOHNSON SCHOOL**

Councilmember Garby explained that there had been discussion of partnering with the Scotland County School System and Scotland County concerning the now vacant I. Ellis Johnson School. He had heard that Scotland County was not in favor of partnering with the City concerning the school building, and that the Scotland County School System may possibly be ready to auction the school.

Councilmember Rainer stated that he had been told that the School System had already made that decision to auction the school because there were three (3) buyers interested in purchasing I. Ellis Johnson School, and for such a price that it would be in the best interest to sell the school. He added that there was discussion that a new recreation center would be much better due to the cost of the upkeep of I. Ellis Johnson School.

Councilmember Garby discussed the City taking I. Ellis Johnson School and possibly operating the gym only. He also discussed leasing the rest of the school for events.

Discussion ensued concerning the current ownership of the school building and its disposition. Councilmember Garby suggested that the Scotland County School Board, current owner, could transfer the school property to the City without cost.

Upon question by Councilmember Adams, the City Attorney explained that if the Scotland County School System sells the school property, then the proceeds from the sale go back to Scotland County. Councilmember Adams added that as Councilmember Rainer had indicated earlier, then the proceeds could be used for some kind of recreation in the City. Council could strongly encourage Scotland County to spend the money on the north side of town.

Discussion ensued concerning the auction and bidding for I. Ellis Johnson School. The City Manager explained I. Ellis Johnson School had not been placed up for auction. North Laurinburg School is being auctioned, and the current bid is around \$490,000.00.

Mayor Willis discussed subdividing the school property with the City taking the gym and the field behind the gym.

Further discussion ensued concerning subdividing the school property.

Councilmember Garby suggested that since each classroom has a bathroom, the City could put a homeless shelter or something similar in the school building. He added that there had to be grants for things like that.

Councilmember Adams discussed the need for recreation in the north part of the City, and also other areas of the City. She discussed the current financial unknowns for the City due to COVID-19, and the need for Council to be cognizant of everything that is going on in the community. She added that if the City were going to ask for the gym and the field behind the gym, the City would need Scotland County Parks and Recreation to partner with the City to run the facility.

Councilmember Evans explained that she believed that I. Ellis Johnson School could be an investment for the City.

Councilmember Williamson expressed concern about potential expenses if the City obtained I. Ellis Johnson School. He added that a joint meeting with the Scotland County Board of Commissioners, or even a sub-committee of each of the governing boards, could be held to discuss this issue, along with other issues in the community.

Mayor Willis discussed the possibility of obtaining the gym and partnering with the Scotland County Parks and Recreation Department for funding personnel costs in the same manner that the City partnered with Scotland County for the City's dispatchers moving over to the E911 Center.

The City Manager explained the Memorandum of Understanding between the City and Scotland County for transitioning the City's dispatchers to become County employees in the E911 Center.

Councilmember Rainer explained that some type of recreation center was definitely needed on the north side of town. However, if a recreation center is going to be provided, it needs to be suitable. He added that the gym at I. Ellis Johnson School needed new windows and air conditioning. He discussed the 13 acres of land behind I. Ellis Johnson School that could be used for a future recreation center.

Further discussion ensued. The City Manager explained that the first step would be for him to work with the City Attorney to determine the legal owner of the school property and the processes for disposing of the school property.

Councilmember Adams reiterated Councilmember Williamson's suggestion to have a joint meeting with the Scotland County Commissions about this matter. She suggested the council chambers since it is large enough.

Councilmember Garby suggested that Mr. Mark Ward, Scotland County Economic Development Director, be included in the discussions because there could be economic development uses of some of the school property.

Following further discussion, the City Manager explained that he would research ownership, costs to operate, and maintenance on the I. Ellis Johnson School property, and would email the information to Council.

#### **MAYOR/COUNCIL COMMENTS**

Councilmember Adams reminded everyone that participation in the 2020 Census was essential, and that the deadline was September 30, 2020.

#### **CLOSED SESSION**

At 8:02 p.m. Councilmember Evans moved to go into closed session pursuant to NC G Statute 143-318.11(a)(2) to prevent the premature disclosure of an honorary degree, scholarship, prize or similar award, pursuant to NC GS 143-318.11(a)(4) for economic development, and NC GS 143-318.11(a)(3) to consult with the attorney. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Garby, and the vote was as follows:

Ayes: Evans, Garby, Adams, Rainer, Williamson

Nays: None

At 8:41 p.m. Councilmember Williamson moved to adjourn the closed session and resume the regular meeting. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Garby, and the vote was as follows:

Ayes: Williamson, Garby, Rainer, Evans, Adams

Nays: None

### **ADJOURN**

Motion was made by Councilmember Rainer, seconded by Councilmember Williamson to adjourn the meeting. The vote was as follows:

Ayes: Rainer, Williamson, Adams, Evans, Garby

Nays: None

The meeting adjourned at 8:41 p.m.

---

James T. Willis, Mayor

---

Jennifer A. Tippet, City Clerk