

**CITY OF LAURINBURG
COUNCIL MEETING
SEPTEMBER 22, 2015
MUNICIPAL BUILDING
303 WEST CHURCH ST.
LAURINBURG, NC
7:00 P.M.**

MINUTES

The City Council of the City of Laurinburg held its regular monthly meeting on September 22, 2015 at 7:00 p.m. in the council room of the Municipal Building with the Honorable Thomas W. Parker III, Mayor, presiding. The following Councilmembers were present: Mary Jo Adams, Dolores A. Hammond, Curtis B. Leak, Andrew G. Williamson, Jr. and J. D. Willis.

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

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

Councilmember Willis requested a moment of silence and then led the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Mayor Parker explained that the agenda needed to be amended to include an Update on the Electric Rate Study to be given at the end of the City Manager's Reports and also a closed session to discuss a personnel issue.

Motion was made by Councilmember Leak, seconded by Councilmember Willis, and unanimously carried to approve the agenda as amended.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no one present to speak

CONSENT AGENDA

The City Manager presented the Consent Agenda as follows:

- a) Consider minutes of July 8, 2015 special meeting; July 14, 2015 special meeting/work session; and July 21, 2015 regular meeting; August 11, 2015 special meeting/work session; and August 18, 2015 regular meeting
- b) Consider Ordinance No. O-2015-12 and Ordinance No. O-2015-13 amending the FY 15-16 Budget Appropriations Ordinance (Ordinance No. O-2015-09)
- c) Set public hearing to be held at 7:00 p.m. on October 20, 2015 to consider text amendments to the City of Laurinburg Unified Development Ordinance
- d) Consider Resolution No. R-2015-13 authorizing the City Manager to execute loan documents for financing an automated side loader in the amount of \$265,000.00

Councilmember Adams motioned to approve the Consent Agenda. Councilmember Hammond seconded the motion, and it was approved by the following vote:

Ayes: Adams, Hammond, Willis, Leak, Williamson

Nays: None

DELEGATIONS

Stephanie Speece, Update on Project Greenbuild

Ms. Stephanie Speece, Director of Project Greenbuild for the Lumber River Council of Governments (COG), provided an update on Project Greenbuild. She explained that Project Greenbuild targets high school dropouts or youth who are basic skills deficient, with the intent to help them transition and be competitive in the work force. She provided information on the successes of the program including the following: six (6) participants have obtained their high school diploma or GED; 21 have obtained and maintained employment, and none have re-offended. She added that the program currently has openings for 10 participants, and that in December or January the program will be looking for partnerships and she hoped that the City will continue to be a partner.

Mayor Parker thanked Ms. Speece for what she and the program are doing in the community.

Upon question by Councilmember Hammond, Ms. Speece explained that details concerning administration of the work keys were being worked on by Adrian Lowery of the COG and with a representative of Richmond Community College.

Pastor Michael Edds-Request for Curfew or Other Method to Deal with Crime

Pastor Michael Edds explained that he and Ms. Mary Evans wanted to address Council about their concerns for youth and crime in the community. He presented Council with a packet of information, a copy of which is attached to and incorporated in these minutes. He discussed violence, gangs and lack of activities for youth as challenges for the community. He also praised the Police Department for the work its members are doing in the City and working with youth. He discussed the need for parents to be held accountable for their children. He discussed the use of curfews in other municipalities and the effectiveness. He added that he had spoken with the Sheriff, the judicial system, and the Police Chief who expressed support for a juvenile curfew. He requested that Council consider the information he has provided.

Upon question by Councilmember Adams, Pastor Edds explained that he had not spoken with the District Attorney (DA).

Councilmember Adams explained that in 2008 the idea of a curfew was tabled by Council because the DA indicated at that time she was opposed to a curfew.

Ms. Mary Evans explained that she is a resident and also a grandmother to two (2) teen boys and is concerned for their future. She expressed concern that free recreation areas needed to be developed to provide activities for teens to keep them out of trouble.

Councilmember Leak discussed the Crime and Drug Committee and the need to bring parties including law enforcement, the school system, the judicial system and citizens together to help tackle the crime, drug and gang problems in the community.

Mayor Parker thanked Pastor Edds and Ms. Evans for their input.

CITY MANAGER REPORTS

CONSIDER AUTHORIZING THE CITY MANAGER TO EXECUTE CONTRACT WITH CREECH & ASSOCIATES FOR DESIGN SERVICES FOR NEW CITY HALL AND POLICE DEPARTMENT

Mr. Harold Haywood, General Services Director, presented a brief PowerPoint providing an overview and to highlight concerns about the existing City Hall and Police Department.

Upon question by Mayor Parker, the City Attorney explained that he had reviewed the contract. He explained that there is an early termination clause that requires seven (7) days' written notice and payment with interest for accrued work under the contract. He added that that could include the balance of the contract including anticipated profit.

Discussion ensued concerning the terms for termination in the contract. Councilmember Willis explained that he was not concerned because during the interview process, the representatives of Creech & Associates indicated that they would move as fast or as slow as the City wanted.

The City Manager explained that if Council wants liquidated damages added to the contract, staff could negotiate with the firm.

Councilmember Williamson expressed concern about the possibility of having to pay the entire contract amount.

Upon question by Councilmember Willis, the City Attorney explained that the contract is a standard architectural contract and is fair to be parties.

Councilmember Adams expressed concern about approving the contract since the audit had not been received by Council and she would like to wait until the audit was completed.

Upon question by Councilmember Adams, the City Manager explained that no specific dollar amount had been budgeted for the new city hall and police department; however, there were funds in Contingency.

Following further discussion, motion was made by Councilmember Willis, seconded by Councilmember Williamson, and carried by a 4-1 vote to authorize the City Manager to execute contract with Creech & Associates for design services for new City Hall and Police Department. Councilmember Adams cast the dissenting vote citing concern that the Fiscal Year audit had not been completed.

UPDATE ON JULY UTILITY BILLING ISSUES AND NEW PROCEDURES

Ms. Tammie Simmons discussed the following concerning the July utility billing issue with some citizens receiving utility bills for up to 39 days:

- The normal reading cycle varies between 28-38 days.
- Because of the July 4th holiday and medical issues with two (2) of the meter readers' families, the July billing for some customers was longer than the normal reading cycle.
- For the customers receiving billing for a longer cycle for July, the previous month's cycle was shorter than normal.
- July was a very hot and humid month, which affects electric consumption.
- Water and electric meters are read for customers on the same day. Since water meters are still read manually, it takes longer to read meters.

She explained that staff would like to read water meters on the same schedule as currently done with a cycle of between 28-33 days, and read electric meters in one (1) day. She added that because of the different routes for meter reading that there may be customers in November and December that have more than 33 days of electric usage during the transition period. She further added that although staff would work diligently to adhere to the cycle of 28-33 days, software issues or the weather could affect the cycle.

Discussion ensued concerning utilizing overtime to ensure that the reading cycle could be adhered to, the proposed plan to read electric meters one (1) day each month and the transition period necessary if that plan is approved.

Councilmember Williamson suggested that should the number of days utility customers are billed is in excess of the normal 28-33 day cycle, notice of that fact be inserted with the utility bill.

Following further discussion, Councilmember Willis moved to keep the billing procedures as they currently exist and authorize the use of overtime to ensure that all meters are read within the normal billing cycle of 28-33 days. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Adams, and carried unanimously.

UPDATE ON POLICE DEPARTMENT ACTIVITIES

Police Chief Williams provided the following update on Police Department activities:

- Because he is working with federal agents on charging repeat offenders at the federal level to face stiffer penalties and get them out of the community, he called in television station WPDE to cover the murder that occurred on Washington Street.
- The body cameras have been received and one (1) shift will be outfitted to conduct testing.
- Community cook-outs held at Tara Village and Stewartsville Road Community Center to connect with the community, and will continue having them in other neighborhoods.
- Talked with Sheriff about a local task force.
- Cross training occurring for the Gang Unit and the Unit is developing a database of gang members.
- He is increasing patrols in senior areas and in the high crime areas.

- Hiring young, local kids for the department.

Upon question by Councilmember Adams, the City Manager requested that Chief Williams notify him or the City Clerk when the next community cookout will occur so that the information can be shared with Council.

CONSIDER NOMINATION TO THE ELECTRICITIES BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Mayor Parker explained that he had requested this item on the agenda and had discussed the nomination with the City Manager. He added that Mr. Nichols wanted to become more seasoned and network more with members of ElectriCities.

The City Manager explained that he has been on the Board of Commissioners for the North Carolina Eastern Municipal Power Agency (NCEMPA) for two (2) years.

UPDATE ON ELECTRIC RATE STUDY

The City Manager explained that the electrical engineering consultant is nearing completion of the electric rate study. He added that the consultant is reviewing the City's capital needs and the new wholesale electric costs. He further added that the consultant is trying to make the rate structure more customer friendly. He explained that he hopes that the consultant will be at the October work session to make his recommendation.

Upon question by Councilmember Hammond, the City Manager explained that a public hearing would have to be held to amend the electric rates.

Mayor Parker explained that each member of the North Carolina Eastern Municipal Power Agency (NCEMPA) has a different set of circumstances with electric rates due to growth of the municipality and its share of ownership in NCEMPA. He added that Council, staff and the consultant are trying to be thorough with the electric rate study.

Councilmember Leak expressed concern that the City's electric rates be fair and equitable with the other electric providers in the area.

APPOINTMENTS

Motion was made by Councilmember Hammond, seconded by Councilmember Willis, and unanimously carried to appoint the City Manager the voting delegate to the North Carolina League of Municipalities Annual Conference.

Following a brief discussion, motion was made by Councilmember Willis, seconded by Councilmember Adams, and unanimously carried to appoint Councilmember Hammond as the alternate voting delegate to the North Carolina League of Municipalities Annual Conference.

CLOSED SESSION

At 8:36 p.m. Councilmember Adams moved to go into closed session pursuant to North Carolina General Statute 143-318.11(a)(6) for the purpose of considering the qualifications, competence,

performance, character, fitness, conditions of appointment, or conditions of initial employment of an individual public officer or employee. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Hammond, and unanimously carried.

At 8:51 p.m. Councilmember Adams moved to adjourn the closed session and resume the open meeting. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Willis, and unanimously carried.

COMMENTS FROM MAYOR AND/OR COUNCILMEMBERS

Councilmember Hammond explained that she had been contacted by a citizen concerning the uncut grass on the bridge near Wal-Mart.

The City Manager explained that he had talked with a citizen about this issue. He added that the NC Department of Transportation (DOT) mowed that area earlier in the day.

Councilmember Adams explained that she and Councilmember Hammond met earlier with the City Attorney to discuss the Scotland County Economic Development Corporation (EDC) bylaws. She added that she recommended that the City Attorney, the County Attorney, the Mayor, County Commission Chair McCook, the City Manager and the County Manager get together and work on the bylaws.

Councilmember Hammond recommended that the City and County Attorneys review the bylaws and revise the document.

Following further discussion, the City Attorney explained that he would make revisions to the bylaws and submit to Council.

Upon question by Councilmember Willis, the City Manager explained that Mr. Warner will provide an update on Community Development at the October Council meeting.

Councilmember Adams reminded everyone about the Downtown Associate Program presentation in the Council Chambers at 8:00 a.m. tomorrow morning, September 23, 2015.

ADJOURNMENT

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

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Thomas W. Parker III, Mayor

Jennifer A. Tippet, City Clerk