

**CITY OF LAURINBURG
CITY COUNCIL MEETING
SEPTEMBER 20, 2022
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, September 20, 2022 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; Jennifer A. Tippet City Clerk; and William P. Floyd, Jr., City Attorney.

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 requested that the agenda be amended to remove Item 3a from the Consent Agenda as requested by the City Clerk.

Motion was made by Councilmember Adams to approve the agenda with amendment as requested. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Evans, and the vote was unanimous.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

There was no one present to speak.

CONSENT AGENDA

Mayor Willis reviewed the Consent Agenda:

- a) *removed*
- b) Request from Railroad Bar & Grill to change date of October Bike Night from October 27 to October 20
- c) Consider setting public hearing to be held on October 18, 2022 to consider request to amend various sections of the Unified Development Ordinance to allow microblading in the Downtown Zoning District
- d) Consider Resolution No. R-2022-26 Application for Rural Transformation Grant

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

Ayes: Evans, Williamson, Rainer, Adams, Rogers

Nays: None

PUBLIC HEARING

CONSIDER REQUEST FOR SPECIAL USE PERMIT TO OPERATE AN RV PARK ON OLD JOHNS ROAD

Mayor Willis opened the public hearing and stated that since his son was the applicant, he recused himself and relinquished the public hearing to the Mayor Pro Tem.

Mayor Pro Tem Evans requested that anyone wishing to speak during the public hearing come forward and be sworn in by the City Clerk, and the speaker must provide name and address.

Mr. Mac McInnis, City Planner/Code Enforcement Officer, and Mr. Thomas Willis, applicant, were both duly sworn.

Mr. Mac McInnis, City Planner/Code Enforcement Officer, being first duly sworn, explained that Mr. Thomas Willis was requesting a special use permit for a 58-acre piece of property, identified as Parcel #010245 01015, on Old Johns Road in order to operate a Recreational Vehicle (RV) park. The property is zoned Residential-20 Mobile Home and allows the use as an RV park with a special use permit. The property was formerly used as a mobile home park. Electric and water/sewer services are already available. The entrance to the property is gated. The specific area that will house the RV park is about one-quarter (1/4) mile from the paved road. The idea is to have spaces for five (5) to 10 RVs to accommodate people who are working in the area for extended periods of time. There are no plans presently for overnight space rental. Planning Board heard this request on August 9, 2022, and the vote was four (4) in favor of the request, and one (1) vote against.

Upon question by Councilmember Adams, Mr. McInnis explained that there was no reason not recommend approval of the request. The area where the RV park would be operated is one-quarter (1/4) mile from Old Johns Road, and the zoning allows for the use, and the property has always been that kind of use. Staff recommends approval of the request.

The City Attorney asked if anyone opposed to the request wanted to ask questions of Mr. McInnis at this time.

Ms. Lilly Bostick, 906 Glenn Street, Laurinburg, being first duly sworn, explained that she rode by the subject property and saw the school close to the property. She explained that she was concerned that because a person driving an RV does not have to have recommendations, they do not have to go through any type of registration. She added that the RV park is so

close to the school that she is concerned that child molesters or anything like that that would come to that RV park.”

The City Attorney asked Ms. Bostick if she owned any property in the area of the subject property and if she had any vested financial interest in any property in the area.

Ms. Bostick stated that she did not own any property nor did she have any vested interest, and that she just saw the school there and it concerned her.

Mr. Bill Purcell explained that he represented Mr. Willis on this request. He added that Mr. Willis’ request was to be allowed to put RVs on the back of his property where he is currently allowed to put a mobile home park.

Mr. Willis displayed a map of his property. He pointed out the entrance to the property and the gate that existed so that everyone that uses the property must the gate. He added that he also has cameras on the property. The RVs would be located at the very back of the property, almost at the railroad track that runs along the back of his property. He added that the RV park would be located a long way from the school. He wants to rent to long-term people such as nurses and construction workers in the area for several weeks or months at a time. The RV park would be shielded from sight by woods on the property.

Councilmember Rogers wanted to know if Mr. Willis had any type of protocol in place other than a camera and a keypad for entry back into the RV park. She mentioned obtaining information from individuals who are coming to stay in order to determine if they have a criminal background or are a registered sex offender. She also asked Mr. Willis if there was any type of incident in the RV park if he would provide access to the camera footage if needed.

Mr. Willis stated, “yes.” He added that he could do background checks on people if needed. He added that most of the people that would be renting in the RV park must provide to their employers where they are living. He added that most of the people that would stay in the RV park would be working people. He further added that he would provide access to pictures or footage if needed. He explained that he has a camera at the gate, and would probably add more cameras.

Upon question by Councilmember Rainer, Mr. Willis explained that the renters would be given the code to the keypad in order to enter the RV park. He added that one of the RV parks in Scotland County is switching owners; therefore, renters are leaving that park. Thus there is a need for an RV park in the area.

Mr. Purcell stated that because of COVID, more people are working away from home. He added that he has seen that fact evidenced at the hospital. He stated, “the school came to the mobile home park, the mobile home park didn’t come to the school.” He added that usually the RVs are parked and the owner has a car or vehicle to drive. He added that there is a doctor at the hospital who drives his RV back and forth for his shifts.

Mr. Willis explained that at LOF (sic. Pilkington) the float will be rebuilt in the next year, so there would be 300-400 people on site working that will need somewhere to stay.

Upon question by Councilmember Rogers, the City Attorney stated that Council could make it a condition of the special use permit for background checks of renters at the RV park to be completed.

Mayor Pro Tem Evans expressed concern about the transient nature of an RV park versus the mobile home park that had been previously located on the property. She asked, "How can you guarantee us that nothing will happen at that park that will impact the school?" She added that she was concerned about the infrastructure of the road and whether it would accommodate all of the traffic of the workers and the school buses and other cars.

Mr. Purcell stated that he did not believe there would be constant traffic going in and out of the RV park. He added that most of the nurse contracts at the hospital are for six (6) weeks. The nurses would park at the RV park for six (6) weeks and then move on, or they could renew their contracts. With the small number of RVs that Mr. Willis is discussing, five (5) to 10, he did not believe there would be much RV traffic in and out. Mr. Willis will not accept overnight renters. He added that with as good intentions as Mr. Willis has, he cannot guarantee anything, any more than one can guarantee the individuals staying in hotels are not going to cause a problem. He further added that Mr. Willis has a vested interest in making sure his other tenants are not bothered, so he will be screening tenants.

Upon question by Mayor Pro Tem Evans, the City Attorney stated that Council could not restrict the number of units. He asked Mr. McInnis to provide the density of the property.

Mr. McInnis explained that he did not have that information with him. He added that the largest density in the zoning districts would be no greater than 15-20 units if it ever got to that number. He further added that the tenants would be temporary for a couple of weeks and would be stationary.

Mr. Willis explained that there would be no school bus traffic on his road in and out of the RV park.

The City Manager explained that Old Johns Road is a state maintained road and the property is outside of the City limits, but within the City's Extra-Territorial Jurisdiction (ETJ).

Upon question by Mayor Pro Tem Evans, Mr. Willis stated that he had talked with the superintendent of the school system after the Planning Board meeting on August 9, 2022, and explained to her his plans. He added that she expressed some concern about a sex offender.

Councilmember Rogers explained that the background checks and protocol would be for Mr. Willis, not just for the school and students. She added that the people would be transient and coming in and out of the RV park just like the hotels. She further added that she felt it was the City's best bet to require the background checks if Council approves the request.

Upon question by Mayor Pro Tem Evans, Mr. Willis explained that the rental payments he collects would be his income and collection of funds.

Mayor Pro Tem Evans explained that she asked the previous question because of the potential impact on area hotels. She added that most companies, especially construction companies, have RVs on the site. She further added that most companies will pay for hotels for their workers temporarily.

Mr. Purcell explained that the area had just lot one (1) hotel, and currently the hotels in Laurinburg are completely booked. He added that this concern is not part of the City's UDO requirements as to whether it impacts other competitors. He further added that if the tourism tax was changed to include RV parks, then that might come into play. He stated that he did not think it was appropriate to make a zoning decision based on the possible impact on area hotels.

Councilmember Williamson explained that Mr. Willis could open a mobile home park on the property at this time. He asked if Mr. Willis would be open to requiring a background check on tenants.

Mr. Willis stated that if Council required background checks, then he was willing to have them performed.

Mayor Pro Tem Evans stated that there would be more control on a mobile home park versus an RV park.

Mr. Purcell stated that there would not be more control. He added that the price of RVs being so high, this would somewhat control the people that would be on the property.

Councilmember Rogers stated that she suggested the background checks, not as a judgement, but more of a safety protocol.

Mr. Purcell stated that people who are working at the hospital are already receiving a background check. He added that if it was Council's pleasure, background checks could be performed for the RV park, but background checks are not required for people moving into a neighborhood or moving into a mobile home park as that could be a civil liberties issue.

Mayor Pro Tem Evans stated that the school is a public facility, and that one does not normally find an RV park and a school in city limits.

Mr. Willis stated that his property was not in the City limits.

The City Manager explained that the school was annexed into the City by request.

Mr. Purcell stated that he would think that if the school system had concerns that they would have been present. He added that when the site was chosen for the school, he would have thought that the school system would have taken into consideration the former mobile home

park across the street from the school location.

Mayor Pro Tem Evans explained that citizens had raised concerns about the location of the school with a chemical facility nearby.

The City Attorney reminded Council that the hearing was to elicit evidence, and Council does not offer evidence. He added that when a councilmember makes statements, they are not allowed to present evidence in a quasi-judicial hearing if they were not witnesses. Council is allowed to ask questions.

Mayor Pro Tem Evans stated that the superintendent was not the school board. She asked Mr. Willis if he had spoken with anyone on the school board.

Mr. Willis explained that he did not talk to anyone on the school board, but talked with the Superintendent. He added that the school board received a letter, so the board could have come tonight.

Ms. Shirley Campbell, 913 Isabel Street, Laurinburg, being first duly sworn, explained that she was against the request. She stated that she has nephews and nieces attending the school. She expressed concern about the possibility of “people laying out there in the field with all of the sex people that we have now”. She added that it was very, very bad in Scotland County. She further added that if the RV park was going to exist, that she recommended going in the country, not around the school kids. She expressed concern for the school children and the need to protect them.

Upon questions by Mr. Purcell, Ms. Campbell stated that she did not own any property adjacent to the property, nor did she have any financial interest in any property adjacent to the property.

Upon question by Mr. Purcell, Ms. Campbell stated that she had seen “many drug addicts laying around on the campground”. She refused to state where or when this occurred. She stated “that with all the people in Scotland County that do not have any place to stay, that will happen”.

Mr. Purcell asked Ms. Campbell if the individuals she just mentioned do not have a place to stay, how will they afford to stay in an RV park.

Ms. Campbell replied that they would not rent a camper. She added “they will be laying out there”.

Mr. Purcell asked Ms. Campbell if there was any reason they could not be doing such now.

Ms. Campbell replied that there was a possibility.

Mr. Purcell suggested that Ms. Campbell was just speculating.

Ms. Campbell replied that she “was not speculating, that the individuals probably were out there.” She added that she had seen it happen, not at this site.

Mr. Purcell asked Ms. Campbell where she had seen this.

She replied, “I will not tell you that because that is not necessary.” She added that she had expressed her concern on how she feels and that the community does not need the RV park in Scotland County or by the school. She reiterated that there were beautiful places “out in the country that I think would be just right for it. But not here, not right here by the school”.

Councilmember Adams explained that typically when there is a public hearing on a zoning request, the City sends letters to neighbors within 200 feet and signs are posted. She added that apparently Mr. Willis had a communication with the superintendent. The City put signs out, sent letters, it has been on WLNC Radio about the request on Old Johns Road. She asked Mr. McInnis if there was anyone present from the school system at the Planning Board who spoke in opposition to the request.

Mr. McInnis replied, “no, there was no one at the Planning Board meeting and there have been no calls in the office.”

Mayor Pro Tem Evans stated that there was one member of the Planning Board that was opposed to the request.

Mr. McInnis explained that the Planning Board member was opposed to the request due to it being located across from the school.

Mr. Purcell stated that on behalf of Mr. Willis, he reminded Council that it cannot take speculation as evidence, and Council is supposed to consider evidence in these proceedings. Testimony about some activity on a campground that is not identified does not qualify as real evidence. He added that as Mr. Willis indicated, he has a locked gate to the RV park and will not be accessible to everyone. His customers will not be just overnight tenants. The intent is that people who are coming to the community to work to have a place for RVs. He added that the application meets the UDO requirements. He urged Council to approve the special use permit. He added that Council was in support of economic development in the community, and Mr. Willis was trying to turn an abandoned mobile home park into something that generates some income.

Mayor Pro Tem Evans closed the public hearing.

The City Attorney explained it was appropriate after the closing argument(s) that Council to deliberate about what Council has heard that was presented as evidence. He added that council consider competent evidence has been submitted at the hearing tonight. He reminded Council that the ordinance says that Council is to only consider evidence that is through testimony, documents, reports that is competent evidence. He explained that the women who spoke in opposition to this request are concerned citizens; however, that type of input is more appropriate in a zoning hearing versus a quasi-judicial hearing. He reminded Council that the

people who are competent to testify at a quasi-judicial hearing are those that have some financial interest in the outcome of the hearing. He added that is designed to protect the Constitutional Rights of the landowner who is making the application. It is not competent evidence to have just general comments from people who would not be directly affected by the issuance of the special use permit.

Mayor Pro Tem Evans asked if a letter was sent to the Scotland County Board of Education.

The City Manager and the City Clerk responded that a letter was sent to the Scotland County Schools. The City Clerk stated that she mailed a letter to the Scotland County School Board.

Councilmember Williamson explained that he was inclined to make a motion to approve the special use permit. He added that he was sensitive to the concerns about the need, potentially, for a criminal background check, and he also does not want to overburden Mr. Willis. He further added that he did not know the expense of a criminal background check. He added that if Council was insisting upon for Mr. Willis, to do, then he would include that in his motion. He added that he could make a motion and then it could be amended.

Councilmember Rogers explained that if Councilmember Williamson made a motion, she would be willing to amend the motion to make the criminal background checks required.

Councilmember Adams explained that she understood why Council should require background checks, but she wanted to hear from the City Attorney about civil liberties.

The City Attorney explained that the UDO states that Council can place reasonable conditions on a special use permit. He added that it seemed reasonable to him that because of the location of the proposed RV park and the school, requiring that a background check seemed a reasonable requirement. He added that he understood Mr. Purcell's argument that if someone built a house across the street from the school, no background check would be required, or if a neighborhood was built. He added that due to the fact that the people who would be coming and going to the RV park would not be permanent residents, there would be a greater influx of people, it would be more reasonable to require something like a background check.

Councilmember Rogers explained that she thought that if the school board had any push back, they would have been present at the meeting. She added that realistically teachers and school administration may not be realistically available to attend the meeting. She further added that the opportunity to attend the meeting was there. She explained that she could not just consider one person being concerned about the RV park's proximity to the school. She further added that she felt it was Council's job to require the stipulation of having a criminal background check. She asked the City Attorney if he was suggesting that requiring a criminal background check was infringing on civil liberties, or if it was a double standard. She added that if it was considered a double standard, if someone is living in a community long-term, then they are paying taxes here and there is enough correspondence to track who that person is and their activity in the City. She explained that she did not want to appear to want high surveillance to every citizen, but there would be a larger influx of people at the RV park, and

that she felt that with the proximity to the school, some type of protocol should be in place for the safety of Mr. Willis and the individuals renting in the RV park.

Councilmember Williamson moved to approve the special use permit to operate a RV park on Parcel #010245 01015 on Old Johns Road conditioned upon a requirement that the property owner conducts background checks on all tenants and because

- (1) The development is within the planning jurisdiction of the City AND
- (2) The application is complete AND
- (3) The development is in substantial compliance with the regulatory provisions of the UDO (for example, setbacks, decommissioning plan, location, clustering, etc.)

And further because

- (1) The establishment, maintenance, or operation of the special use will not be detrimental to or endanger the public health, safety, or general welfare; AND
- (2) The special use will not be injurious to the use and enjoyment of other property in the immediate vicinity for the purposes already permitted, nor diminish or impair property values within the neighborhood; AND
- (3) The establishment of the special use will not impede the normal and orderly development and improvement of the surrounding property for uses permitted in the district; AND
- (4) The exterior architectural appeal and functional plan of any proposed structure will not be so at variance with either the exterior architectural appeal and functional plan of the structures already constructed or in the course of construction in the immediate neighborhood or the character of the applicable district, as to cause a substantial depreciation in the property values within the neighborhood; AND
- (5) Adequate utilities, access roads, drainage, parking, or necessary facilities have been or are being provided; AND
- (6) Adequate measures have been or will be taken to provide ingress and egress so designed as to minimize traffic congestion in the public streets; AND
- (7) The special use shall, in all other respects, conform to all the applicable regulations of the district in which it is located; AND
- (8) Public access shall be provided in accordance with the recommendations of the city's land use plan and access plan or the present amount of public access and public parking as exists within the city now. If any recommendations are found to conflict, the system requiring the greatest quantity and quality of public access, including parking, shall govern. The proposed use shall be consistent with recommendation and policy statements as described in the adopted land use plan; AND
- (9) The proposed use shall be consistent with recommendation and policy statements as described in the adopted land use plan.

The motion was seconded by Councilmember Adams.

Mayor Pro Tem Evans suggested that the vote be roll call.

Ayes: Williamson, Adams, Rogers, Rainer

Nays: Evans

CITY MANAGER REPORTS

UPDATE TO LUMBER RIVER REGIONAL HAZARD MITIGATION PLAN

Mr. Robert Sampson, Director of Scotland County Emergency Management Services, explained that the Lumber River Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan (the Plan) must be updated every five (5) years, and it was last updated in 2018. The plan covers four (4) counties – Scotland, Anson, Montgomery, and Richmond. The Plan has been approved by the State and Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

Councilmember Evans moved to approve Resolution No. R-2022-27 approving update to the Lumber River Hazard Mitigation Plan. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Rainer, and the vote was as follows:

Ayes: Evans, Rainer, Rogers, Adams, Williamson

Nays: None

(copy of Resolution No. R-2022-27 on file in city clerk's office)

UPDATE ON ACTIVITIES OF CHURCH COMMUNITY SERVICES

Mr. Vince Bateman of Church Community Services provided an update on activities of Church Community Services. He is responsible for the clothes closet, and Mrs. Denise Riggins is responsible for the financials and Christmas Cheer program. He discussed the increased usage of Church Community Services' programs, particularly utilities and rent assistance. He thanked the City for obtaining a grant from Duke Energy which enhanced its food pantry. He requested that in the future the City consider providing funding for Church Community Services.

Upon question by Mayor Willis, Mr. Bateman explained that he was not requesting money at this time.

CONSIDER REQUEST FROM SCOTLAND COUNTY TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Mr. Cory Hughes, Executive Director of the Scotland County Tourism Development Authority (TDA), and Mr. Chris English, President of the Laurinburg/Scotland County Area Chamber of Commerce, appeared before Council to request that development of a Social District in downtown Laurinburg. Mr. Hughes explained that House Bill 890 allows municipalities to create Social Districts House Bill 890 to provide opportunities for downtown areas to enhance commerce, encourage new businesses to come into downtowns and to allow communities to manage their own approach and process to develop Social Districts. Social Districts would allow individuals to purchase an alcoholic beverage in a downtown restaurant and walk around in the designated area with a specific cup holding the

alcoholic beverage. No one can bring in their own beverages. The stores in the designated area of the social district could opt in or out for allowing beverages in their stores. The process would be coordinated with the Alcoholic Beverages Control Board.

Mr. Chris English explained that there had been great strides in improving Laurinburg and especially the downtown area. Having a designated Social District would make downtown more vibrant, increase number of people downtown, and bring more growth and businesses to downtown.

Upon question by Mayor Willis, Mr. Hughes explained that the Social District would have a boundary designation as well as restrictions on how it operated.

Following discussion, it was consensus of Council for staff to research Social Districts and bring back information and/or ordinance from cities similar in size to Laurinburg.

CONSIDER REQUEST FOR FUNDS FOR CONSTRUCTION OF THE SCOTLAND COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION SPEC BUILDING ON WALLACE WAY

Mr. Mark Ward, Executive Director of the Scotland County Economic Development Corporation (EDC), explained that he was following up on the discussion last month of the short-fall of funds necessary to complete construction of the shell building on Wallace Way. He added that Council wanted to know the County's contribution for the construction short-fall was before committing City funds. The shortfall was \$950,000, and the Scotland County Board of Commissioners approved funding of \$650,000, leaving a shortfall of approximately \$340,000.

Councilmember Adams explained that she had requested the City Manager and Finance Director to see what the City could afford to contribute.

The City Manager explained that he and the Finance Director looked that the possibility of using the American Rescue Plan funds (ARP) that had been set aside to purchase a new rescue truck. He added that the State Budget surplus funds had provided funding for that purchase; therefore, the ARP funds were available if Council wanted to use them for this short-fall. The amount that had been budgeted was \$375,000.

Councilmember Evans moved to provide \$340,000 of American Rescue Plan funds to supplement construction of the spec building. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Rogers, and the vote was as follows:

Ayes: Evans, Rogers, Adams, Rainer, Williamson

Nays: None

CONSIDER ORDINANCE AMENDING CHAPTER 10 CEMETERIES OF THE CITY CODE

The City Manager explained that staff recommended approving the draft ordinance amending the City Code regarding memorial sizes in Hillside Memorial Park.

Following a brief discussion, Councilmember Rainer moved to approve Ordinance No. O-2022-25 amending Chapter 10 Cemeteries, Article VII. Hillside Memorial Park, Division 7. Memorial Work, Section 10-455 and Section 10-460 of the City Code of the City of Laurinburg. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Evans, and the vote was as follows:

Ayes: Rainer, Evans, Williamson, Rogers, Adams

Nays: None

(copy of Ordinance No. O-2022-25 on file in city clerk's office)

UPDATE ON REGULATIONS FOR VACANT BUILDINGS DOWNTOWN

Mrs. Mary Allison Yancey, Downtown Coordinator, explained that she, the City Attorney, and the Zoning Director had been discussing the regulations for vacant downtown buildings, with the intent to not be as strict as Kings Mountain. The intent would be to go to property owners with an action plan to support and assist them with improvements to buildings to make them usable and not vacant.

Upon question by Councilmember Rogers, Mrs. Yancey explained that there had been mixed reactions with property owners.

CONSIDER AMENDING CERTIFICATION LIST

The City Manager explained that Mrs. Betty Galloway, Human Resources/Risk Management Director, has recommended that the Certification List be amended to add more certifications.

Motion was made by Councilmember Adams to amend the Certification List as presented. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Rogers, and carried unanimously.

CONSIDER RESOLUTION SETTING PUBLIC HEARING FOR NON-CONTIGUOUS ANNEXATION

The City Manager explained that the property on which the North Fire Station is to be located needs to be annexed into the city limits. Resolution No. R-2022-28 starts the process for annexing the non-contiguous annexation by setting the public hearing to be held on October 18, 2022.

Following a brief discussion, Councilmember Williamson moved to approve Resolution No. R-2022-28 setting the public hearing to consider non-contiguous annexation to be held on October 18, 2022 at 6:00 p.m. The motion as seconded by Councilmember Rainer, and the vote was as follows:

Ayes: Williamson, Rainer, Adams, Rogers, Evans

Nays: None

(copy of Resolution No. R-2022-28 on file in city clerk's office)

CONSIDER AGREEMENT WITH SCOTLAND COUNTY SCHOOL SYSTEM FOR SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS

The City Manager explained that the updated Memorandum of Understanding was approved last month with the understanding that an agreement with the Scotland County School System would be brought back to Council this month for approval. The City Attorney has been working on the agreement. He then asked the City Attorney if Council could approve the agreement pending completion,

The City Attorney explained that the agreement is very straightforward for a year and which the City could terminate with notice at any time. It provides the funding mechanism for the four (4) school resource officers (SROs) that the City provides. The amount he was provided is for the four (4) combined the Scotland County School Board would pay the City \$254,894.08 which is compensation and benefits for the SROs.

The City Manager explained that the salary and fringe benefits have been reimbursed to the City by the School System for at least 15 years. The City provides equipment and uniforms, vehicle and all of the training.

The City Attorney explained that he talked with the School Board attorney and received a good template for the agreement; however, it needed some additional work. He would like Council to give the City Manager authority to execute the agreement once he has completed it.

Motion was made by Councilmember Adams, seconded by Councilmember Williamson, and carried unanimously to authorize the City Manager to execute the agreement with the Scotland County School System pending completion by the City Attorney.

TIS THE SEASON FUNDING REQUEST CLARIFICATION

The City Manager explained that the Tis the Season group placed an order for decorations from a company in China. He provided his City Visa card to Tis the Season in order to purchase the decorations; however, the VISA Corporation denied the charge. Since the inception of Tis the Season, the City has funded its activities at \$7,500 annually with the City owning the ornaments or lights that are purchased. The Tis the Season group requested and was granted \$5,000 additional funding this past year in order to purchase the additional ornaments and more activities. The Tis the Season group has ordered the ornaments from China, in an effort to save money, and would like the City to reimburse it for the purchase.

Motion was made by Councilmember Williamson for the City to reimburse Tis the Season for the cost of the ornaments purchased from China. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Rainer, and carried unanimously.

THOMAS CONSULTING GROUP DISCUSSION

The City Manager explained that The Thomas Consulting Group presented information to Council at the July meeting concerning the Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Agency's Distressed Cities Technical Assistance (DCTA) program, and had presented earlier to the Scotland County Board of Commissioners. As directed by Council, the City Manager, with the assistance of Mr. David Richardson of the Lumber River Council of Governments (COG) has researched the DCTA program, and spoke with a HUD representative. No municipality in North or South Carolina participates in the DCTA program which was started in 2018. The HUD representative stated that the technical assistance was HUD's role, and that HUD preferred not to have consultants involved. He added that there were some red flags concerning staff involvement and if additional staffing was needed. The HUD representative explained that this program is more of a county grant program that municipalities partner with the county. Mr. Richardson and the City Manager would like to talk to a community that has participated in the DCTA program, particularly a municipality of similar size to Laurinburg. He added that the use of these grants is wide open, and the HUD representative indicated that HUD likes to come in to small communities and help with financial and accounting services that do not have the staff.

Upon questions by Councilmember Rogers, the City Manager explained that the COG would perhaps assist the City in applying for a DCTA grant; however, the COG is leery of the program since it has been in existence since 2018 and no municipality in North or South Carolina has applied to participate. He added that the COG was uncertain as to the involvement required for the program and wanted to determine staffing and time involvement before committing to assisting with grant application. He further added that he had not discussed the concerns with the Thomas Consulting Group, and that HUD preferred that a consultant not be brought into the process. He explained that it appeared that most of the participants with the DCTA grant so far were located in the west and mid-west.

Discussion ensued as to whether HUD could provide the names of communities the size of Laurinburg/Scotland County that have participated in the DCTA program.

Upon question by Councilmember Rogers, the City Manager explained that Council could reach out to Thomas Consulting Group to determine what similar municipalities she had worked with on this grant program.

Upon question by Councilmember Rainer, the City Manager explained that the City had identified seven (7) primary stormwater projects. He added that finally the Army Corps of Engineers was working on Leith Creek which involved several of the projects. He further added that in August staff submitted three (3) of the stormwater projects for a grant. These projects include one (1) that is located outside the City limits and is on private property, and the other two (2) are located on private property. He added that two (2) stormwater projects were completed with USDA funds.

Upon question by Councilmember Rainer, the City Manager explained that the Army Corps of Engineers would only work on Leith Creek, from Gill Street to East Church Street.

Councilmember Rogers stated that she would contact Ms. Thomas to find out what municipalities she has worked with on the DCTA program. She then asked what Scotland County's decision was on the DCTA program.

The City Manager explained that he briefly discussed this with the County Manager. He added that the COG and City staff were interested in obtaining as much information about the program as possible. He added that the HUD representative said that a community of our size should work with the county in order to save time.

Upon question by Councilmember Adams, the City Manager explained that he would check with the County Manager to determine if the County wanted to work with the City on this grant program.

ELECTRICITIES ANNUAL REPORT.

The City Manager explained that the ElectriCities Annual Report was received by him, and this is the first time the City had been highlighted. The City's Electric Department was highlighted due to workforce development.

GIS ONLINE SOFTWARE

The City Manager explained that the City's online GIS was being hosted by a company that had recently been sold. Staff was informed that as of December, 2022, the company would no longer host GIS. He added that staff has been in discussion with ESRI regarding hosting the City's GIS, and that staff hoped the City's GIS would be back online in a couple of days.

MAYOR/COUNCILMEMBER COMMENTS

Councilmember Adams explained that she had provided Council with information concerning activities of the Lumber River Council of Governments.

Upon question by Councilmember Rogers, the City Manager explained that a budget amendment would be provided for the remainder of the \$34,000 that was not spent on the spec building.

Upon question by Councilmember Evans, the City Manager explained that those funds could not be used for stormwater issues as the problem areas are on private property. He added that a grant application for stormwater projects was submitted last month.

CLOSED SESSION

At 7:47 p.m., Councilmember Rogers moved to go into closed session to discuss personnel. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Rainer, and carried unanimously.

At 8:01 p.m., Councilmember Evans moved to adjourn the closed session and resume the regular meeting. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Rainer, and carried

unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion was made by Councilmember Williamson, seconded by Councilmember Rogers, and unanimously carried to adjourn the meeting. The meeting adjourned at 8:01 p.m.

James T. Willis, Mayor

Jennifer A. Tippet, City Clerk