

**CITY OF LAURINBURG
COUNCIL MEETING
AUGUST 18, 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 August 18, 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, and J. D. Willis. Councilmember Andrew G. Williamson, Jr. was absent.

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 Adams requested a Moment of Silence and she then led the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

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

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Mr. Terrence Williams expressed concern about his recent electric bill.

Mayor Parker explained that one of the reasons why some customers experienced higher electric bills was due to the fact that some readings were six (6) to seven (7) days longer than normal and that this was not the norm. He also discussed the electric rate structure study that is being conducted by the City's electric engineering consultant which should result in lower electric rates for the City's electric customers.

Brief discussion by Council ensued concerning the electric bills and the number of days some customers were billed and the electric rate structure study.

Councilmember Leak explained that citizens were requesting that the City allow them some flexibility in paying the bills that were included electric readings beyond the normal reading cycle.

Ms. Loretta Renee McNeill expressed concern that there are citizens who are spending about three-fourths (3/4) of their income on their electric bill.

Mr. Wayne Gibson, a resident of Moody Grass Hill, expressed concern about the high July electric bill.

Ms. Willie Ruth Campbell expressed concern about her July electric bill.

Ms. Brandy McLeod expressed concern about her July electric bill.

Mayor Parker explained that Council and staff realize there is a problem, and that he felt staff would work to with customers to solve the problem. He added that over the course of the 365 days in a year, the problem would self-correct itself.

The City Manager explained that he and staff have discussed this problem and are working on procedures. He added that in the future if there is going to be a longer than normal reading cycle, staff will plan to make sure it is not in a hot or a cold month.

Mayor Parker explained that the City can conduct an energy audit to see if there are ways for the customers to reduce electric consumption.

The City Manager explained that in order to aid in customers' budgeting, the City offers an Equal Payment Plan whereby the payment is the same each month and is determined by annual costs.

Councilmember Leak explained that the citizens feel that 30 days should be the maximum number of days in an electric billing cycle.

Councilmember Willis suggested that rather than having to pay the electric bill in one (1) month, the City could level load it over three (3) to four (4) months to lessen the burden for customers.

Upon question by Councilmember Adams, the City Manager explained that a longer than normal billing cycle had happened in the past. He added that it shouldn't happen in month like July.

Ms. Clementine Fields explained that on January 30, 2015 her house burned down when her neighbor was burning trash. She questioned why her Scotland County tax bill was for the amount as before her house burned down. She added that no one was charged for burning her house. She further added that she would like for the fire to be investigated. She added that she did not live in the City.

Upon question by Councilmember Willis, Ms. Fields explained that she had not been before the Scotland County Board of Commissioners and/or the County Manager.

CONSENT AGENDA

The City Manager presented the Consent Agenda as follows:

- a) Consider minutes of June 8, 2015 reconvened meeting; June 9, 2015 reconvened

meeting; June 9, 2016 special meeting/work session; June 15, 2015 reconvened meeting; June 16, 2015 regular meeting

b) Authorize Mayor to execute Order to Collect Taxes to Tax Collector

c) Authorize the City Manager to execute General Agreement for Joint Use of Poles between the City of Laurinburg and Bellsouth Telecommunications, LLC, d/b/a AT&T North Carolina

Councilmember Willis moved to approve the Consent Agenda. Councilmember Adams seconded the motion and it was approved by the following vote:

Ayes: Willis, Adams, Leak, Hammond

Nays: None

DELEGATIONS

Hal Jernigan, Laurinburg Presbyterian Church – Request for a Columbarium

Mr. Jernigan, a member of Laurinburg Presbyterian Church, explained that the members of the church wanted to locate a columbarium in a garden to be installed at the church. He added that there were two (2) or three (3) columbaria located in the community.

Following a brief discussion, motion was made by Councilmember Adams, seconded by Councilmember Leak, and unanimously carried to approve the location of a columbarium at Laurinburg Presbyterian Church for its members.

Noran Sanford, Crime & Drug Committee – Update and Request for Approval of Amendments to Committee Guidelines

Mr. Noran Sanford, Chair of the Crime & Drug Committee explained that in an effort to ensure quorums at the Crime and Drug Committee, the Committee is requesting changes to the Committee Guidelines. The changes are as follows:

- Move the meetings from the first Monday of the month to the first Thursday of the month.
- Reduce the number of members by two (2) – one (1) from the City appointments and one (1) from the County appointments.

Upon question by Councilmember Hammond, Mr. Sanford explained that the Committee had not yet met on a Thursday, but would do so in September if the amendments to the Guidelines were approved.

A brief discussion ensued concerning ex-officio members.

Mr. Sanford explained that the Committee prioritized its programs for the coming year as follows:

- Support a Gang Awareness Workshop with the joint support of Eastpoint and the Juvenile Crime Prevention Committee of Scotland County.
- Revive the effort to consolidate information on no-cost or low-cost events/services for youth in the community to create a one-stop portal for services.
- Organize a community grief response for any family who loses a young person 16 years of age or younger to violent crime and to the family of any first responder who dies in the line of duty.

Councilmember Hammond suggested that Mr. Sanford talk with the Chamber concerning the Gang Awareness Workshop.

Upon question by Councilmember Adams, Mr. Sanford explained that the Committee was requesting to eliminate the Secretary position on the Committee since the City Clerk attends and prepares minutes.

Motion was made by Councilmember Hammond, seconded by Councilmember Adams, and unanimously carried to approve the revised Committee Guidelines for the Crime & Drug Committee.

Mayor Parker lauded Mr. Sanford's efforts in the community including obtaining a grant to utilize the abandoned prison in Wagram to acclimate people to the straight and narrow, and the forum he organized to gather all of the non-profits to work together, in addition to his work with the Crime & Drug Committee.

Discussion ensued concerning the need for cooperation to make this Committee successful.

COMMENTS BY MAYOR OR COUNCILMEMBERS

The City Manager explained that staff wanted to hear Council's comments concerning the draft street signs for downtown. He added that staff was trying to order before the end of the week before a sale ended. He added that \$30,000.00 was included in the budget for these signs, but if purchased during the sale, the cost would be a little over \$20,000.00 which would leave funds for trash cans for downtown.

Mayor Parker explained that Mr. Warner had met with Ms. Liz Parham and it sounded encouraging that the City might be approved for the Downtown Associate Community Program which is a step towards becoming a Main Street Community.

CLOSED SESSION

At 7:54 p.m. Councilmember Adams moved to go into closed session pursuant to North Carolina General Statute 143-318.11(a)(3) to consult with an attorney employed or retained by the public body in order to preserve the attorney-client privilege between the attorney and the City. Councilmember Hammond seconded the motion, and it carried unanimously.

At 8:17 p.m. Councilmember Willis moved to adjourn the closed session and resume the open meeting. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Adams, and carried unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT

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

The meeting adjourned at 8:18 p.m.

Thomas W. Parker III, Mayor

Jennifer A. Tippet, City Clerk