

**CITY OF LAURINBURG
SPECIAL CITY COUNCIL MEETING
JULY 12, 2011
305 W. CHARLES BARRETT ADMINISTRATIVE BUILDING
LAURINBURG, NC
7:00 P.M.**

Minutes

The City Council of the City of Laurinburg held a special meeting July 12, 2011 at 7:00 p.m. in the conference room of the W. Charles Barrett Administrative Building located at 305 West Church St., Laurinburg, NC with the Honorable Mayor Pro Tem, Thomas W. Parker, III presiding. The following Councilmembers were present: Curtis B. Leak, Herbert M. Rainer, Jr., Thomas W. Parker, III, Kenton Spencer and Joy Ellison. Mayor Block was absent.

Also present were: Edward F. Burchins, City Manager, Dolores A. Hammond, City Clerk, and Charles L. Hicks, Jr., Assistant City Attorney.

Mayor Pro Tem Parker called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. Councilmember Spencer gave the invocation.

Mayor Pro Tem Parker explained that the purpose of this meeting is to discuss the City of Laurinburg Employee Survey and to go into closed session to discuss personnel issues and economic development.

CLOSED SESSION

At 7:03 p.m., Councilmember Spencer moved to go into closed session pursuant to General Statute 143-318.11(a)(4) to discuss matters relating to the location or expansion of industries or other businesses in the area served by the public body including an agreement on a tentative list of economic development incentives that may be offered by the public body in negotiations.

Councilmember Rainer seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

At 7:23 p.m., motion was made by Councilmember Leak, seconded by Councilmember Parker, and unanimously carried to adjourn the closed session and resume the open meeting.

CITY OF LAURINBURG EMPLOYEES SURVEY

Mayor Pro Tem Parker opened the floor for discussion.

Councilmember Ellison stated that the purpose of the survey was to give employees the opportunity to speak what has been on their minds for a number of reasons including that

there have been no recent increases in salaries and that evaluations have not been conducted in a couple of years.

She then stated that as she has mentioned a couple of times that “we cannot get better until we get honest”.

Councilmember Ellison suggested that Council should review the survey results, talk about the comments in the survey, and make sure that Council is going in a direction that is going to improve employee morale and make the City more efficient.

Councilmember Rainer stated that the survey is a lengthy report and there could be some very lengthy discussions. He explained that he feels that Council should review the survey and then discuss the results at a retreat scheduled for that purpose.

Mayor Pro Tem Parker stated that he did not want to go into detail at this time but asked that Councilmember Ellison give an overview of a few results or comments that she thought should be discussed.

Councilmember Ellison stated that the results that are of most concern to her are the results in the all departments section in regards to total supervision, total management, total employee relations, total commitment, the group work, the training, and productivity. She expressed that the ratings should be reviewed particularly those that were rated 64.5 percent and lower.

Mayor Pro Tem Parker stated that he understands that the City Manager and staff have been meeting with employees and debriefing them to better understand their comments.

The City Manager replied that the Mayor Pro Tem’s understanding was accurate.

Mayor Pro Tem Parker wondered how some of the comments would change after the employees had time to think about the comments, listen to public comment, and listen to the staff side of it.

Councilmember Ellison stated that she would think that after a year’s time or some substantial length of time, Council would be able to evaluate whether or not things have changed.

Mayor Pro Tem Parker stated he is of the opinion that the comments are raw and that they need to be analyzed. He then stated that he felt that they were candid but wondered whether, after the staff met with employees, employee feelings have been lessened.

Councilmember Leak expressed that his perception regarding the employee survey is that the City is in the middle of recession and, with money being tight, some employees did not feel as if they were being treated fairly and equitably. He explained that Council needs to listen to employees and to what they have to say.

Councilmember Ellison stated that any department that rated below 75-80 percent should be reviewed and discussed with some changes being implemented.

Councilmember Spencer expressed his opinion regarding employee surveys as a whole. He commented that every survey is usually initially negative because of the circumstances of when the survey is completed. He stated that if there have been changes in an organization that some employees may immediately respond with a negative attitude. He then stated that possibly after six weeks – or up to a year - the same survey could be given and the results may be different.

Councilmember Spencer commented that when an employee survey is completed and considered it needs to be a part of a process where Council looks at and takes it in proper context because Council is trying to decide policy. He explained that no one wants policy based on opinion that can change quickly.

Councilmember Spencer stated that there needs to be a larger approach and that Council should decide where the organization should go. He commented that Council needs to decide whether it wants the City organization to be process driven, value driven or performance driven. He continued discussing the types of organization that Council may want. He mentioned that the employees have been asked to make suggestions and place them in a suggestion box.

The City Manager stated that there have been nineteen suggestions received with six suggestions having been implemented.

The City Manager stated that, in his situation with the department heads, even though it is his second year, it is still relatively early in a manager's time in a community. He also stated that, during the evaluations, he had asked department heads to tell him what their feelings and thoughts were about the organization. He explained that his focus was on communication.

Councilmember Spencer stated that the key person who should be involved in this process is the Human Resources Officer.

The City Manager explained that he had not asked the Human Resources Officer to attend tonight's meeting.

Councilmember Leak stated that the Human Resources office is the process because it is the first line of communication with the employees.

Councilmember Spencer then questioned Council as to what the overall plan for the City is and where the survey falls in the development of a team or of the process to create and bring about an effective plan?

A lengthy discussion ensued regarding the employee survey and the next step.

Councilmember Spencer stated that Council should give a 30-60 day time line for the executive team, including the Human Resources Officer, to come back to Council with a strategic plan and that Council agree on a performance based initiative. He explained that this plan should incorporate the survey as well as the pay rate study.

Upon question by the City Manager, Councilmember Spencer stated that the manager should recommend to Council what direction he sees for the organization. He suggested that the City Manager present what he thinks is going to work with the employees and the executive team. He further stated that the plan should be reflective of, take into consideration and improve some of the survey issues. He added that the recommendation for the pay plan could be merit based or some other performance strategy such as a bonus. He also recommended that the City Manager present more than one scenario to allow Council to have information for different situations based on projections as to what each strategy would accomplish and what each would cost.

Councilmember Ellison stated that she would also like to see how the areas in the survey that fall below the 70 percentile could be addressed. She explained that in reviewing the survey she feels that some of those percentages could be improved.

Mayor Pro Tem Parker stated that Councilmember Spencer's suggestion is a good idea and that he would like the City Manager to give three scenarios but recommend to Council which one he believes would be best.

The City Manager stated he would like the pay and classification plan to be completed before he presents any scenarios to Council so that everything is taken into consideration.

Following further discussion, there was consensus among Council that the City Manager begin working on a strategic plan that incorporates the direction of the organization and the results of the employee survey. There was also consensus that the City Manager can revise his plan once the pay and classification plan is completed.

CLOSED SESSION

At 8:15 p.m., Councilmember Spencer moved to go into closed session pursuant to General Statute 143-318.11(a)(6) for the purpose of considering the qualifications, competence, performance, character, fitness, conditions of employment or conditional of initial employment of an individual, public officer or employee. Councilmember Rainer seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

At 9:12 p.m., motion was made by Councilmember Spencer, seconded by Councilmember Leak, and unanimously carried to adjourn the closed session and resume the open meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion was made by Councilmember Leak, seconded by Councilmember Rainer, and unanimously carried to adjourn.

The meeting adjourned at 9:13 p.m.

Matthew Block, Mayor

Dolores A. Hammond, City Clerk