CITY OF LAURINBURG
COUNCIL MEETING
JUNE 21, 2011
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 June 21, 2011 at 7:00 p.m. in the council room of the Municipal Building with the Honorable Matthew Block, Mayor, presiding. The following Councilmembers were present: Curtis B. Leak, Thomas W. Parker, III, Kenton T. Spencer, and Joy Ellison. Councilmember Rainer arrived at 7:45 p.m.

Also present were: Edward F. Burchins, City Manager, Dolores A. Hammond, City Clerk, and William P. Floyd, Jr., Assistant City Attorney.

Mayor Block called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m. Councilmember Leak gave the invocation.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Mayor Block asked that following the regular meeting that Council continue budget discussions.

Councilmember Leak moved to adopt the agenda as amended. Councilmember Spencer seconded the motion and it unanimously carried.

CONSENT AGENDA

Mayor Block reviewed the Consent Agenda:

a. Minutes from the regular meeting of March 22, 2011 and agenda workshop minutes of April 12, 2011
b. Agreement between the City of Laurinburg and the North Carolina Department of Transportation to relocate existing overhead electric facility located on private property along SR 1105 Turnpike Road for new highway right-of way (DOT to reimburse City cost of relocation of electric facilities)
c. Consider Ordinance No. O-2011-10 which amends the Budget Appropriation Ordinance (O-2010-12) by transferring funds in several departments for the City of Laurinburg

Councilmember Parker moved for the approval of the Consent Agenda as submitted. Councilmember Spencer seconded the motion, and it was approved by the following vote:

Ayes: Parker, Spencer Ellison, Leak
Nays: None

ORDINANCE NO. O-2011-11 (BUDGET APPROPRIATION ORDINANCE) WHICH APPROPRIATES FUNDS FOR THE OPERATION OF CITY OF LAURINBURG GOVERNMENT PROPOSED BUDGET

Mayor Block explained that this public hearing is in order for citizen input on 2011-2012 Proposed Budget for the operation of the City of Laurinburg.

Mayor Block declared the public hearing open.

There was no one present to speak for or against this request.

Mayor Block closed the public hearing.

No action was taken at this time.

MR. CHIP SHYTLE – LAURINBURG HOUSING AUTHORITY APPOINTEE SWEAR IN

Mayor Block appointed and swore in Mr. Wilbur Chip Shytle, Jr. to fill an unexpired term to the Laurinburg Housing Authority which ends June 30, 2013.

Mayor Block explained that Ms. Maria Dudley was appointed to the Laurinburg Housing Authority to fill an unexpired term of as member who resigned. Ms. Dudley will now need to be appointed to begin her full term which will expire June 20, 2016. This is a five-year appointment**.**

Mayor Block appointed Ms. Dudley to the Laurinburg Housing Authority to a term which will expire June 20, 2016.

RESOLUTION NO. R-2011-05 WHICH REQUESTS THAT THE NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION (DOT) INSTALL A PEDESTRIAN FOOT BRIDGE OVER HIGHWAY 74 BY-PASS AND WEST BOULEVARD

The City Manager explained that this request is to request that DOT install a pedestrian foot bridge over Highway 74 By-pass and West Boulevard. He stated that the Assistant City Attorney reviewed the proposed resolution and a revised copy of the resolution is now before Council.

The City Manager explained that the amount of this project will cost approximately $500,000.00 and requires a local match of $250,000.00. He then explained that the proposed resolution requests a partnership with the City and Scotland County. He stated that he has not heard anything from Scotland County regarding their participation in this project. He informed Council that Scotland County will need to discuss its participation once their Board meets

Councilmember Spencer stated that this project has been in discussions for a long time. He further stated that Mr. David Burns, Scotland County’s representative on the DOT Board, has worked very hard to help this project through and the proposed resolution will help Mr. Burns with the process.

Motion was made by Councilmember Leak, seconded by Councilmember Spencer, and unanimously carried to adopt Resolution R-2011-05 which requests that the North Carolina Department of Transportation install a pedestrian foot bridge over US Highway 74 By-Pass and West Boulevard.

Ayes: Leak, Ellison, Spencer, Parker
Nays: None

DISCUSSION ON CONTINUATION OF AGENDA WORKSHOPS

The City Manager explained that Council needs to set dates and times for the remaining year for agenda workshops.

The dates are as follows:

July 12, 2011
August 9, 2011
September 13, 2011
October 11, 2011
November 15, 2011
December 13, 2011

A discussion ensued on the agenda workshop dates.

Councilmember Parker motioned to set the agenda workshop meeting dates to begin on September 13, 2011 with the following dates of October 11, November 15, and December 13, 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. Councilmember Spencer seconded the motion and it unanimously carried. Councilmember Ellison was the only dissenting vote.

APPOINTMENT TO LAURINBURG PLANNING BOARD

Mayor Block explained that Mr. James Thomas' appointment to the Laurinburg Planning Board expires June 30, 2011. Mr. Thomas has expressed an interest to continue serving on the Board. This is a three-year appointment with the term expiring June 30, 2014.

Motion was made by Councilmember Leak, seconded by Councilmember Parker, and unanimously carried to reappoint Mr. James Thomas to the Laurinburg Planning Board to as term which expires June 30, 2014.

COMMENTS FROM MAYOR AND/OR COUNCILMEMBERS

Councilmember Parker informed Council that he had spoken to Mr. Jim Willis, Laurinburg Downtown Revitalization Corporation (LDRC) President, and was informed that LDRC does have a plan for the downtown area.

A discussion ensued on the funding that the City provides for LDRC.

Councilmember Leak stated that he would like LDRC to present a written plan to Council for review and consideration.
Councilmember Parker informed Council that a plan would be forthcoming for Council review.

DISCUSSION ON ESTABLISHING A JOINT CRIME AND DRUG COMMITTEE

Councilmember Leak discussed re-establishing a joint crime and drug committee for the citizens of Laurinburg and Scotland County because of the current crime activity in the City.

He stated that the purpose of this committee would be to formulate ideas, input, and suggestions on ways citizens can help the community.

He continued by stating by appointments of 6-10 citizens will be made by the City and 6-10 citizens by Scotland County. He also stated he had discussed the committee with the City of Police and the Sherriff and that they are on board with the committee.

Councilmember Spencer stated that he would like to have a representative with an educational aspect and a representative from the youth.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Philippe Laurent, Humane Society Board Member, appeared before Council in order to emphasize how important the Humane Society is in the City and County. He also asked that Council strongly consider the request for increase in its proposed budget request. He stated that the proposed budget requests an additional position for the Humane Society. This position will help with the adoption process and also be responsible with guiding a number of the volunteers with a leadership role in the organization. The request also accommodates for the increase in the number of animals coming into the shelter as well as increased costs due to inflation.

At 7:32 p.m., Council recessed for a short break before continuing the budget review process.

The meeting resumed at 7:44 p.m.

General Fund

The City Manager stated that Council has not had discussion on the proposed tax rate. He explained at the current tax rate is .42 cents per $100.00 valuation and remains the same in the proposed budget. He reminded Council that Scotland County conducted a tax revaluation this past year. The special tax district remains the same at .22 cents.

Upon question by Councilmember Parker, the City Manager stated that with the revaluation the current tax rate adds additional revenue. The City Manager also stated that if the tax rate remains revenue neutral that the tax rate could be .40 cents.

Councilmember Rainer arrived at 7:45 p.m.

A discussion ensued on the current tax rate.

Upon question by Mayor Block, Mrs. Cindy Carpenter stated that the fund balance was projected to increase, but monies from the fund balance will need to be used for the upgrades to the fueling facility until the State reimburses the City.

Upon question by Councilmember Rainer, Mrs. Carpenter stated that $360,000.00 will be added to the fund balance from this current budget to the upcoming 2011-2012 proposed budget.

The City Manager stated that this projected figure will be the closest the City has been in keeping with its Fund Balance Policy.

A discussion ensued on the amount of monies allocated in the Contingency Fund which is now at $435,000.00. She explained that some of those monies are earmarked for use, but Council could allocate those funds back to the appropriate line item.

Mayor Block stated that most of the complaints he hears from citizens is the electric rates and not as much concerning the tax rate. He then stated that the City of Laurinburg's tax rate is one of the lowest in the area.

A discussion then ensued on the City of Laurinburg Electric Rates and transfers from the Electric Fund to the General Fund.

The City Manager explained that there is a projected rate increase from ElectriCities in electric rates in 2015.

Upon question by Councilmember Rainer, Mrs. Carpenter stated that the largest revenue income is from taxes (property tax, franchise tax, sales tax, etc.).

Following discussion, Mayor Block asked if any Councilmember would like to reduce the tax rate by one cent.

There was no consensus on this issue at this time.

ELECTRIC FUND

Mrs. Cindy Carpenter reviewed the revenue portion of the 2011-2012 proposed budget.

Upon question by Councilmember Parker, the City Manager explained that he is working with ElectriCities to provide packages to our electric customers of light blubs and other devices that help with energy conservation. He also explained that staff continues to educate our customers on time of use rates.

A discussion ensued on electric fund revenues and expenses.

A discussion ensued on the pole attachment agreement with AT&T and Time Warner.

The City Manager explained that AT&T and Time Warner are reviewing the proposed pole attachment agreement. The recommendation from staff is to raise the pole attachment fee to $13.00 per pole.

He also explained that AT&T has a disparity of approximately 500 poles. He stated that the poles are being counted and identifying measures in place for AT&T and the City.

There was no action taken at this time.

Building Maintenance- Public Works

Stacey McQuage gave an overview of the proposed budget. He explained that there is very little change in the proposed 2011-2012 budget from the 2010-2011 budget.

Electric Fund Non-Departmental

Cindy Carpenter gave an overview of the proposed budget. She explained that there is very little change from last year's budget.

Consumer Billing

Cindy Carpenter gave an overview of the proposed budget. She explained that there is very little change from last year's budget. She then explained that there is a request for a customer care phone service. The service allows customers to call in and make inquiries about their account without talking to a customer service representative. It also allows customers to make payments over the phone.

Mrs. Carpenter explained that there is $7,000.00 in a building design cost that is shared with two other departments for the redesign of City Hall.

The meeting recessed at 8:50 p.m.

The meeting resumed at 8:53 p.m.

The City Manager stated that he and the Finance Officer would work on the revenue numbers for the Electric Department and bring back to explain on how they are calculated.

RECESS

Motion was made by Counclmember Rainer, seconded by Councilmember Spencer, and unanimously carried to recess the meeting until Wednesday, June 22, 2011 at 6:30 p.m. in the upstairs council room of the Municipal Building located at 303 West Church St., Laurinburg, NC to continue budget discussions.

The meeting recessed at 8:55 p.m.

Matthew Block, Mayor	Dolores A. Hammond, City Clerk