

**CITY OF LAURINBURG
CITY COUNCIL MEETING
FEBRUARY 16, 2021
CITY HALL AND POLICE DEPARTMENT
303 WEST CHURCH ST.
7:00 p.m.**

Minutes

The City Council of the City of Laurinburg held its regular meeting on Tuesday, February 16, 2021 in the Council Chambers of the City Hall and Police Department at 7:00 p.m. with the Honorable James T. Willis, Mayor, presiding and physically present. The following Councilmembers were physically present: Mary Jo Adams, Mary Evans, James J. Garby, Jr., Donald Rainer, and Andrew G. Williamson, Jr.

Also present were Charles D. Nichols III, City Manager; Angela H. Taylor, Deputy City Clerk; and William P. Floyd, Jr., City Attorney (via teleconference).

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

Councilmember Rainer gave the Invocation and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion was made by Councilmember Rainer to approve the agenda as submitted. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Garby, and the vote was as follows:

Ayes: Williamson, Rainer, Evans, Adams, Garby

Nays: None

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

The City Manager read aloud the following emails received:

Mr. Michael Edds, received February 10, 2021 at 11:17 a.m.:

“The recent report from the Laurinburg Police Department concerning calls reporting “shots fired” was alarming! ‘Shots fired’ increased from 304 to 724 in 2020! This is stunning! According to the most recent reports released by the FBI, September 2020, 98% of the cities in America are safer than Laurinburg. According to this same report, there were 160 violent crimes, 762 property crimes in the City. The City’s violent crime rate is 10.67% per thousand and 50.79% non-violent crimes per thousand. The overall total crime rate was an astonishing 61.46% per thousand. Chances of becoming a victim of crime in Laurinburg are 1 in 17. In the September 2020 FBI report, the City of Laurinburg non-violent crime rate was 148% higher than the national average. The City’s violent crime rate is 186% higher than the national average. Currently, the City

has one of the highest crime rates in the nation. Year after year the City's crime rate has steadily increased. When similar statistics were presented to council in times past, councilmembers and staff dismissed the statistics as being incorrect. However, time has proven for statistics to be true. They can debate the current statistics with the FBI if they wish.

For 8 years, citizens have come before city council asking that action be taken to address this critical issue. Citizens have presented the council with "best practices" from other cities that have brought their crime rates down. Numerous proactive measures to address the rising crime have also been presented to the council. The only response from the council was a proposal to hire a crime consultant to advise them on how to deal with the crisis. To my knowledge, this has not been done. In fact, the council has taken no decisive action as crime, gun fire and violence overtake our city.

This past May, there was a shooting at the intersection of Church Street and Main, which left 1 wounded and 1 dead. This is 2 blocks from city hall. I received numerous fearful calls from friends concerning gunfire near their homes. Laurinburg has become a war zone.

Recently the council took swift action on permitting chickens to be raised in city limits. The value of a human life is far greater than the life of a chicken. The council and administration can no longer ignore this crisis. Inaction can no longer be tolerated. Decisive action must be taken immediately concerning the increased violence in our city. 8 years is more than enough time to address this issue. The future of Laurinburg lies in the council's hands.

Dr. Martin Luther King once wisely said, "Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter." Citizens are expecting and demanding leadership out of our elected city council. As John Kenneth Galbraith once observed, "All of the great leaders have had one characteristic in common: it was the willingness to confront unequivocally the major anxiety of their people in their time. This, and not much else, is the essence of leadership." It is time for council to arise to the level of leadership.

*Michael Edds
1207 Blue Drive
Laurinburg, NC"*

Mr. Donald Anderson, Tuesday, February 16 at 3:45 a.m.
Subject: Public Comment for City Council Meeting 2/16/2021

"To City Manger (sic) Charles Nichols,

I am requesting that my comment be read in whole during the City Council Meeting on 2/16/2021. The comment falls within the parameters of the City's Public Comment Policy and is approximately 3 minutes in length.

Public comment from Donald M. Anderson Jr., a Laurinburg resident residing at 11560 Sweetgum Circle in Laurinburg, NC 28352:

At last month's City Council Meeting, a distasteful rhetoric ensued when the Mayor, without any factual proof of wrongdoing, belittled a member of the Council for a nearly noticeable decision to meet with the entity who conducts the city's annual audit without clearly communicating it with other members of the Council. While the mayor's initial inquiry of the matter may have been done with noble intentions, his continued badgering of the Council Member after that clearly demonstrates a narrative that he once criticized his predecessor for: That of using the Mayoral seat for personal influence and gain. If the Mayor was so hard pressed or suspicious of the Council Member's action, then why did he not go directly to Carl Head and ask in reference to what their meeting was about? Having no definitive proof of any wrongdoing, the Mayor should have accepted the Council Member's answer at face value and having any other grievances against her decision, should have taken it up in closed session.

However, the Mayor could not help himself but to interject politics into a meeting where he himself has declared that such agenda is not welcomed. Standing in his very seat in the evening of December 10, 2019, he stated that (Direct Quotation) "We are now governing, and are not campaigning. The time for campaigning has ended and it is now time for us to govern" (End Quote). So far, the Mayor the has not made on this promise as last month's incident was not the first time he has displayed a bias tone against this Council Member. During a special City Council Meeting of May 4, 2020, the Council Member convened the Council to address the issue of a string of crimes occurring in the city. During the meeting the Mayor can be seen repeatedly displaying a negative body language and even rushing the Council Member through the meeting.

For someone who has criticized his predecessor for similar actions, we, as citizens are correct to hold this Mayor in the same esteem that he promised the citizens when he took his oath in office. The singling out of a Council Member whose seat is up for reelection this year by the Mayor contradicts the very position he took on this type action in his first day in office. And to mask this purely political attack under the veil of a somewhat legitimate reprimand is a reflective of how he has been conducting business in the Office of Mayor since being elected. The Mayor has other platforms in which to engage in political meanderings, however, the Mayoral seat is not one of them, and more exclusively so in that he himself declared it off limits. If the Mayor wishes to continue engaging in such bias rhetoric against the Council Member, we have the right to assert our opinion that this Mayor is no better than his predecessor, he is just an alternate version of him. Thank you for your time.

Donald M. Anderson, Jr.

"The eyes and ears of ONE person can defeat the corruption of an entire legion. Never assume ONE person cannot make a change, you need only the TIME and OPPORTUNITY to make it happen".

*Donald M. Anderson Jr., MS
11560 Sweetgum Circle
Laurinburg, NC 28352*

An email with an undetermined sender was submitted but was not entered into the minutes because the email failed to comply with the City's policy that speakers or submissions for Public Comment must have the name and address of the speaker or submitter.

Ms. Linda Covington, Tuesday, February 16
Subject: Conditional Use Permit to Operate a Yard Waste Incinerator

"The citizens of Stewartville Rd, are petitioning against the box being placed in the area of Reed St. and Stewartville Rd. We are asking for a plan B, to place this box in another location or to come up with another solution besides burning the debris between Reed St. and Stewartville Rd? Although it has been mentioned that the box doesn't give off much smoke, we do not want this area to be a dumping ground for these types of projects. We are concerned about the value of our homes and the area we live in."

CONSENT AGENDA

Mayor Willis reviewed the Consent Agenda:

- a) Consider R-2021-01 to amend R-2018-21 to approve the revised Citizen Participation Plan for the CDBG-I Grant for the Produce Market Road Area Sewer Project
- b) Consider Releases, Discoveries and Adjustments to Tax Levy
- c) Authorize Tax Collector to Advertise Tax Liens the Week of March 8-12, 2021

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

Ayes: Williamson, Rainer, Evans, Adams, Garby
Nays: None

CITY MANAGER REPORTS

CONSIDER APPROVAL OF BUDGET AND FAÇADE GRANT TERMS FOR DOWNTOWN ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The City Manager explained that Mr. Jay Todd, Chairman of the Downtown Advisory Committee, (DAC) would present the budget for Fiscal Year 2021-2022 for the DAC and provide the terms of the Façade Grant.

Mr. Todd thanked Council for all the time and support given to the Downtown Advisory Committee. Over the past three (3) years the DAC has averaged spending \$33,000.00 per year in the Façade Grant Program, and the total amount spent since 2018 is approximately

\$94,000.00 that was matched with private contributions from the downtown business and property owners. So the total invested for improvements downtown has been almost \$300,000.00. Typically the Façade Grant Program is extended for one (1) year at a time; however the DAC has requested that the Façade Grant Program be extended for three (3) years through December 31, 2024, with no changes in the program. The money for the Façade Grant Program is generated from the Municipal Service District (MSD) for the Central Business District, which generates approximately \$24,000.00 per year, and allocated to the Downtown Fund. The City matches that every year, for a total of approximately \$48,000.00 per year. There is currently approximately \$94,000.00 in the Downtown Fund.

Mr. Todd discussed the Fiscal Year 2021-2022 DAC budget request. The DAC would like to maintain a reserve of \$40,000.00 in the DAC line item so as to not deplete the funds, and also so that perhaps some of the money could possibly be used for economic development. The proposed budget is as follows:

Advertising (promotions for downtown events)	\$15,000.00
Departmental Materials & Supplies	\$ 2,000.00
Other Improvements (Façade Grants)	<u>\$33,000.00</u>
Total Downtown Fund Budget	\$50,000.00

Upon question by Mayor Willis, the City Manager explained that proposed budget would be included in the official Fiscal Year 2021-2022 Budget that Council would consider in the next couple of months if Council is satisfied with the proposal. The DAC is also requesting that Council extend and approve the changes in the Façade Grant Program that were recommended by the Main Street Program. The Façade Grant Program expired December 31, 2020.

Mr. Todd added that were at least two (2) property owners who were waiting on the extension of the Façade Grant Program to submit their applications for grants.

The City Manager explained that prior to being in the Main Street Program there were funds in the City's budget with revenue and line item expenses. Because the City is a Main Street City, a detailed line item budget for the Downtown Fund must be submitted each year to the Main Street Program.

Following discussion, Councilmember Adams moved to approve the upcoming Fiscal Year 2021-2022 budget for the Downtown Fund and to approve the Downtown Investment Grant (Façade Grant Program) terms and conditions for an additional three (3) years. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Evans, and the vote was as follows:

Ayes: Williamson, Rainer, Evans, Adams, Garby

Nays: None

CONSIDER EXTENDING EMERGENCY PAID SICK LEAVE FOR COVID-19 TO MARCH 31, 2021

The City Manager explained that staff was requesting that Council extend the Emergency Paid Sick Leave for COVID-19 until March 31, 2021 in order to encourage employees that may have been exposed to COVID-19 or do not feel well to stay home and not have to use their personal sick leave. The federal Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) expired December 31, 2020, and it is anticipated that the FFCRA will be reinstated retroactively by Congress and extended until September, 2021.

Councilmember Adams moved to approve the extension of the Emergency Paid Sick Leave for COVID-19 effective from January 1, 2021 to March 31, 2021. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Rainer, and the vote was as follows:

Ayes: Williamson, Rainer, Evans, Adams, Garby

Nays: None

CONSIDER ORDINANCE NO. O-2021-05 AMENDING THE FY 2020-2021 BUDGET APPROPRIATIONS ORDINANCE (ORDINANCE NO. O-2020-04) TO RECEIVE REVENUES OF \$48,000 FROM STATE GRANT FUNDS AND APPROPRIATE \$12,000 FROM GENERAL FUND BALANCE FOR THE CITY'S 20% MATCH FOR THE NC DOT BICYCLE PLAN PLANNING GRANT.

The City Manager explained that the City applied for a Bicycle Planning Grant and staff recently was notified that the City was awarded \$48,000.000. Just like the Pedestrian Plan adopted by Council several years ago opened up the door for potential grant funding from NC Department of Transportation (DOT), the Bicycle Planning Grant will help with future sidewalks and future safe pedestrian and bicycle passage ways and open the door for potential grant funding. The City was awarded \$48,000.00 with a 20% match required from the City. Because there are no funds budgeted for the 20% match, a budget amendment is necessary.

Motion was made by Councilmember Adams to approve Ordinance No. O-2021-05 amending FY 2020-2021 Budget Ordinance (Ordinance No. O-2020-04) to receive revenues of \$48,000.00 from state grants and appropriate \$12,000.00 from General Fund Balance for the City's 20% match for the NC DOT Bicycle Plan Planning Grant. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Rainer, and the vote was as follows:

Ayes: Williamson, Rainer, Evans, Adams, Garby

Nays: None

(copy of Ordinance No. O-2021-05 on file in city clerk's office)

DISCUSSION OF SIDEWALK GRANTS FROM TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVES FUND AND NC DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION PROCESS

The City Manager explained that the City had three (3) major sidewalk projects in the NC Department of Transportation (DOT) State Traffic Improvement Plan (STIP) for approximately four (4) years because the City had the approved Pedestrian Plan for a total of

\$1.9 million. The projects had been approved by DOT and are on the STIP whereby DOT funds 80% and the City must match with 20% of the funds, so the City's match is approximately \$380,000.00, spread out over four (4) years. The projects are as follows:

- South Main Street from Lauchwood Drive to Crepe Myrtle with idea to eventually have sidewalks all the way from St. Andrews University to the downtown area
- West Boulevard from Turnpike Road all the way into town
- Atkinson Street

The City Manager explained that because of the DOT funding shortfalls, staff was recently notified that DOT had changed its policy on implementing the STIP funds. Municipalities are now required by DOT to have an engineer design the project, bid it out and take the project from start to finish with DOT reimbursing the municipalities monthly. This could create a funding issue for the City's projects. He added that staff was requesting permission to send letters to Senator McInnis and Representative Pierce for assistance in obtaining the sidewalk funds. The City is one of the few municipalities that have an adopted Pedestrian Plan. He added that he would not push for the City to handle a project of \$500,000 to \$600,000 with the requirement that the City fund up front, and handle the entire project. He further added that staff has been applying for these grant funds for years, it was disappointing that DOT has changed its grant funding method due to DOT's budget issues.

Further discussion ensued concerning DOT's change in grant funding methodology and the potential roadblocks and problems that could be encountered should the City decide to move forward with a project and expect reimbursement from DOT.

Upon question by Mayor Willis, the City Manager explained that the City would have to purchase right-of-ways, and that the cost estimates were over a year old.

It was consensus of Council for the City Manager to send a letter to the elected officials and DOT concerning the grant funding requirements and its negative impact on the City.

DISCUSSION OF COMMONWEALTH BRIDGE PROJECT

The City Manager reviewed the timeline of the Commonwealth Bridge Project that began on January 6, 2011 when the City, CSX Railroad, NC Department of Transportation (DOT) and the Division of Federal Highway Program started working on repairing the bridge. The bridge leads into East Laurinburg and has very little traffic, and the road on the East Laurinburg side of the bridge is full of potholes. The original cost estimate was \$300,000.00 with the City being responsible for 20% of the cost. When the project was finally bid in June 2016 with DOT's assistance, the low bid was \$920,000.00. Since the bid came back at three (3) times the original cost estimate, all parties thought it best to not pursue the project and close it. Costs were incurred by the City, CSX Railroad, DOT and the Federal Highway Program, primarily for engineering costs. The total amount was \$262,000.00 comprised of \$124,000.00 for a CSX deposit that was returned to the City. The Division of Federal Highway Program was requesting its portion of the money spent, or \$116,093.00. He suggested that if the City had to send money back to the Division of Federal Highway Program, then it should only be

20% and not the full amount. He added that he was requesting Council's approval to write a letter to DOT, the Division of Federal Highway, Senator McInnis and Representative Pierce about this matter and the hardship for the City.

It was consensus of Council for the City Manager to send a letter as requested.

CONSIDER ORDINANCE O-2021-06 AMENDING FY 2020-2021 BUDGET APPROPRIATIONS ORDINANCE (O-2020-04) TO TRANSFER \$83,331 FROM SOLID WASTE CONTINGENCY TO THE SANITATION DEPARTMENT CONTRACTED SERVICES FOR YARD WASTE GRINDING/MULCH HAULING AND SITE PERMITTING

The City Manager explained that the City currently has two (2) Yard Waste Notification sites for mulching/composting limbs and one (1) Land Clearing Inert Debris (LCID) site for leaf disposal. Following a recent inspection by the NC Department of Environmental Quality on December 18, 2020, the City was notified of several issues with these sites. Yard Waste Notification sites are only allowed to be two (2) acres in size and can now only process/store 6,000 cubic yards of yard waste at "any one time," versus the previous regulation that we could process/store 6,000 cubic yards of yard waste per quarter or 24,000 cubic yards per year. Under the previous regulation, the City could store yard waste and mulch once per year and allow the mulch to remain onsite until it was taken away by residents or anyone that wanted to use it, since the City had two (2) sites to work with. However, with this new regulation, the City will need to get at least one (1) of the sites permitted as a Large Type 1 Compost Facility in order to not be limited to size or amount of yard waste that can be stored as long as operational guidelines are adhered to. In order to begin this process, the Sanitation Department needs to hire a contractor to grind up the material on the site that will be permitted and haul the resulting mulch away so that staff can work on any site upgrades required during the permitting process. The estimated cost is approximately \$150,000.00 for the contract work, site upgrades, and permitting process. These additional funds will need to come from the Solid Waste Contingency line item in the current FY 21 budget, as well as additional funds from the Solid Waste Fund Balance.

The LCID site the City was using for leaf disposal/street sweepings will need to be completely closed and will no longer be allowed to accept any more debris/leaves. This site was only supposed to be two (2) acres in size, but has out-grown the allowable size since 2005 when it was opened. This site close-out will include sloping around the perimeter and covering the entire site with at least twelve (12) inches of soil and three (3) inches of mulch for erosion control. The funds to cover this cost will be requested in the FY 22 budget request. Leaves will now have to be taken to the Large Type 1 Compost Facility to be processed with the limbs and the street sweepings will need to be taken to the Scotland County Transfer Station going forward.

The City has been researching an alternative for both limbs and leaves for the past couple of years. The Sanitation Department has submitted a Conditional Use Permit request to the City to place and operate a yard waste incinerator on City property that was approved by the Planning Board at its November, 2020 meeting. If this alternative is approved, the City would include

funds in the FY 22 budget request to purchase the incinerator and necessary material handling equipment to operate it.

Following a lengthy discussion, motion was made by Councilmember Williamson to approve Ordinance No. O-2021-06 amending FY 2020-2021 Budget Ordinance (Ordinance No. O-2020-04) to transfer \$83,331.00 from Solid Waste Contingency to the Sanitation Department contracted services for yard waste grinding/mulch hauling and site permitting. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Garby, and the vote was as follows:

Ayes: Williamson, Rainer, Evans, Adams, Garby

Nays: None

(copy of Ordinance No. O-2021-06 on file in city clerk's office)

CONSIDER ORDINANCE NO. O-2021-07 AMENDING FY 2020-2021 BUDGET APPROPRIATIONS ORDINANCE (O-2020-04) TO APPROPRIATE \$67,000 FROM SOLID WASTE FUND BALANCE TO THE SANITATION DEPARTMENT CONTRACTED SERVICES FOR YARD WASTE GRINDING/MULCH HAULING AND SITE PERMITTING

Motion was made by Councilmember Williamson to approve Ordinance No. O-2021-07 amending FY 2020-2021 Budget Ordinance (Ordinance No. O-2020-04) to appropriate \$67,000.00 from Solid Waste Fund Balance to the Sanitation Department Contracted Services for yard waste grinding/mulch hauling and site permitting. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Garby, and the vote was as follows:

Ayes: Williamson, Rainer, Evans, Adams, Garby

Nays: None

(copy of Ordinance No. O-2021-07 on file in city clerk's office)

CONSIDER AMENDING THE SCHEDULE OF FEES TO INCLUDE ADDITIONAL CIVIL PENALTY FOR RECYCLING CONTAMINATION

The City Manager explained that the Sanitation Department was requesting the addition of a civil penalty in the Schedule of Fees for recycling contamination. Recycling is collected on a bi-weekly basis from residents in Laurinburg. This material is taken to the City's Recycling Center where it is hand-sorted for plastic bottles, newspaper, cardboard, aluminum and steel cans, and glass bottles, then sold on the market. The City is not permitted to operate a mixed waste facility, only a recycling recovery facility. Therefore, when loads of recycling come in that are contaminated with a lot of garbage, these loads have to be taken to the Scotland County Transfer Station and reduces the City's opportunity to recover recyclable materials. This problem is becoming more and more widespread.

The additional civil penalty will allow the staff to first educate those residents that are not recycling properly and then give the staff authority to remove recycling carts and the potential for further contamination of loads for those that are not going to adhere to the policy. This would be done by issuing a written warning for first offenses, the removal of cart plus \$50.00

civil penalty to return cart for second offenses, and finally the removal of cart permanently for third offenses. This will hopefully allow residents to become more aware of proper recycling habits and procedures, less contamination of loads, and more recovery and sorting of recyclable material for the City's program.

The City Manager discussed the history of recycling in the City and explained that the City and staff were very much in favor of recycling.

Councilmember Adams explained that the quarterly newsletter could list the recyclable items that the City accepts. Further discussion ensued concerning ways to educate citizens about recycling.

Motion was made by Councilmember Williamson, to approve the amended Schedule of Fees. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Adams, and the vote was as follows:

Ayes: Williamson, Rainer, Evans, Adams, Garby

Nays: None

CONSIDER APPROVAL OF RETAIL STRATEGIES CONTRACT

The City Manager explained that Retail Strategies is the consultant which the City partnered with three (3) years ago with ElectriCities assistance. ElectriCities paid 50% of the cost for the City for three (3) years with Retail Strategies. He proposed approval of a three (3) year contract with Retail Strategies with the cost being \$20,000.00 the first year, and \$30,000.00 for the remaining two (2) years. He cited retail growth and construction in the City over the past few years.

Upon question by Councilmember Garby, the City Manager explained that Retail Strategies has probably been responsible in part for all of the growth in the City.

Following further discussion, motion was made by Councilmember Garby, to authorize the City Manager to execute the professional consulting services contract renewal with Retail Strategies. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Evans, and the vote was as follows:

Ayes: Williamson, Rainer, Evans, Adams, Garby

Nays: None

SET PUBLIC HEARING TO BE HELD ON MARCH 23, 2021 AT 7:00 P.M. TO AMEND THE PROJECT AREA AND BOUNDARY FOR THE CDBG-I GRANT FOR THE PRODUCE MARKET ROAD SEWER IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT

The City Manager explained that a public hearing needed to be scheduled for Tuesday, March 23, 2021 to consider amending the project area and boundary for the CDBG-I Grant for Produce Market Road Sewer Improvement Project because the project costs came back under funding with approximately \$250,000.00 in grant funds available. Therefore, the engineer recommended extending the project. In order to extend the project, a public hearing must be

held. He added that the extension of the project area was definitely a good thing for the community.

Following discussion concerning the manner for the public to participate in the public hearing and that the contractor will clean up the project area at the end of the project, motion was made by Councilmember Evans, to set a public hearing to be held on March 23, 2021 at 7:00 p.m. to amend the project area and boundary for the CDBG-I grant for the Product Market Road Sewer Improvements Project. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Rainer, and the vote was as follows:

Ayes: Williamson, Rainer, Evans, Adams, Garby

Nays: None

CONSIDER SETTING DATE FOR COUNCIL RETREAT

The City Manager explained that because of COVID-19, the budget process with Council was minimal last year, and he suggested that Council hold a retreat. He also suggested that the department heads be present at the retreat to answer any questions concerning their department budgets. He suggested Tuesday, March 30, 2021 or Wednesday, March 31, 2021.

Following discussion, it was consensus of Council to hold a retreat on Tuesday, March 30, 2021 at 6:00 p.m., and that the City Clerk would arrange dinner.

CONSIDER SETTING DATE FOR CITIZEN INPUT SESSION OR ALTERNATIVE PROCESS

The City Manager explained that with COVID-19 and the uncertainty of citizen participation, staff suggested that citizens could submit their input for the Citizen Input Session electronically rather than having an actual meeting. He added that staff would advertise this on Facebook, the City's website, on both local radio stations, and in *The Laurinburg Exchange*.

Upon question by Councilmember Williamson, the City Manager explained that citizens could also mail in their input.

Councilmember Garby suggested that the meeting be livestreamed also.

Upon question by Councilmember Williamson, the City Manager explained that the input would be made available to Council before the March 30, 2021 special meeting/retreat.

DISCUSSION ABOUT PUBLIC HEARINGS

The City Manager explained that there were several Planning Board topics such as rezoning requests that are not controversial, and that he wanted to make sure that Council wanted staff to begin scheduling public hearings.

Discussion ensued concerning the necessity to have additional microphones for speakers and to make sure that social distancing and that the number of people in the room were followed according to the Governor's regulations.

COMMENTS FROM MAYOR AND/OR COUNCILMEMBERS

Councilmember Adams discussed the Annual Advance that the Lumber River Council of Governments has every year. She added that this year it would be a virtual planning event this year, and like last year, Dr. Michael Walden, Economist at NC State University, would provide information about the local economy.

Upon question by Councilmember Williamson, the City Manager explained that the hanging baskets for downtown had been purchased. He added that the Community Development Department was looking at possible available funds, including a \$5,000.00 grant from ElectriCities, in order to complete the parking project and other projects that could be completed.

Councilmember Rainer requested an update on the stormwater projects with Cape Fear Engineering. Discussion ensued concerning the amount of rain and the problems it had caused all over town.

Mayor Willis discussed a meeting of the Scotland County Economic Development Corporation board held to discuss the organizational structure and by-laws.

CLOSED SESSION (CONSULT WITH ATTORNEY)

At 8:37 p.m. Councilmember Rainer moved to go into closed session pursuant to NC GS 143-318.11(a)(3) to consult with the attorney. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Garby, and the vote was as follows:

Ayes: Williamson, Rainer, Evans, Adams, Garby
Nays: None

At 9:13 p.m. Councilmember Rainer moved to adjourn closed session and return to open meeting. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Garby, and the vote was as follows:

Ayes: Williamson, Rainer, Evans, Adams, Garby
Nays: None

ADJOURNMENT

Councilmember Williamson moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Garby, and the vote was as follows:

Ayes: Williamson, Rainer, Evans, Adams, Garby
Nays: None

The meeting adjourned at 9:15 p.m.

James T. Willis, Mayor

Jennifer A. Tippet, City Clerk