CITY OF LAURINBURG
CITY COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING
SEPTEMBER 26, 2023
CITY HALL AND POLICE DEPARTMENT
303 WEST CHURCH ST.
6:00 P.M.

Minutes

The City Council of the City of Laurinburg held a special meeting on Tuesday, September 26, 2023, 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, and Barbara Rogers. Councilmember Andrew G. Williamson, Jr. was absent from the meeting.

Also present were Charles D. Nichols III, City Manager; William P. Floyd, Jr., City Attorney; Harold W. Haywood, Administrative Services Director / City Clerk.

Mayor Willis called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. and gave the Invocation and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The City Manager informed the council that due to the meeting being a special meeting nothing can be added to the agenda, but item six needs to be removed. He stated that they received notice from the county that are waiting until the funds are received and the commissioners approve the buy back.

Councilmember Adams moved to approve the amended agenda with a second by Councilmember Evans and the vote was unanimous.

RECOGNITION

Mayor Willis also recognized a retiree in the Laurinburg Police Department by presenting a plaque of appreciation to Alonzo Spruill. The wording on the plaques read as follows:

PRESENTED IN RECOGNITION AND SINCERE APPRECIATION TO

ALONZO SPRUILL
LIEUTENANT

MARCH 1, 1999 – AUGUST 17, 2023

In special tribute for over 27 years of dedicated public service as an employee of the City of Laurinburg. Alonzo took an Oath of Office and became a Laurinburg Police Officer on March 1, 1999; and then was assigned on March 19, 2007, as a Narcotics Officer, in October 2010 he returned as a Patrol officer. Lieutenant Spruill completed his intermediate Law Enforcement Certificate on December 14, 2012, and was promoted on January 2, 2015, to police Lieutenant where he remained until his retirement. Alonzo Spruill has shown a great desire to serve the community and the residents of Laurinburg.

The Mayor and the Laurinburg City Council express their sincere appreciation for his unselfish professional service to the citizens of Laurinburg and this community. He worked to make our city a better place to live for all the citizens of Laurinburg.

We wish him many more years of continued success in this next chapter of his life.

Presented this the 26th day of September 2023, by the Mayor and City Council.

Mayor James "Jim" Willis

Mayor Pro Tem Mary Evans

Councilmember Mary Jo Adams

Councilmember Rosemary Rainer

Councilmember Barbara Rogers

Councilmember Drew Williamson

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

There was no one present to speak.

CONSENT AGENDA

Mayor Willis read aloud the Consent Agenda:

a) Consider minutes of August 22, 2023 regular meeting.
b) Consider setting public hearing to be held on October 17, 2023, at 6:00 p.m. to consider amendments to the Unified Development Ordinance to include transitional housing regulations.
c) Set a public hearing on Tuesday, October 17, 2023, at 6:00 p.m. for a request to rezone property known as Parcel # 010003 01004 located on Fairly Street from Residential-6 to General Business.
d) Consider approval of site plan for Hobby Lobby on Scotland Crossing Drive.
e) Consider Resolution No. R-2023-13 for Application for Federal Clean Water Act Grant.
f) Consider Resolution No. R-2023-14 to Convey Surplus Property to the Town of Gibson
g) Consider First Amendment to Water Tank Option and License Agreement between the City of Laurinburg and T-Mobile South, LLC.
h) Consider the approval of the revised Schedule of Fees to increase the amount for food truck permits from $50 to $300 per year.
i) Consider Letter of Support for Robeson Health Care Corporation's grant application to the Bureau of Primary Health Care.
j) Consider approval of road closure for Live Like Madison event at St. Andrews.
k) Consider approval of road closure for Highland Games event at McDuffie Square.

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

Ayes: Adams, Evans, Rainer, Rogers
Nays: None
(Copy of Resolution No. R-2023-13 and R-2023-14 on file in Clerk's office)

CITY MANAGER REPORTS

UPDATE ON WATER/SEWER CAPITAL PROJECTS AND RESOLUTION NO. R-2023-15 TO ACKNOWLEDGE RECEIPT OF THE MERGER REGIONALIZATION FEASIBILITY STUDY FOR LAURINBURG AND SCOTLAND COUNTY WATER SYSTEMS

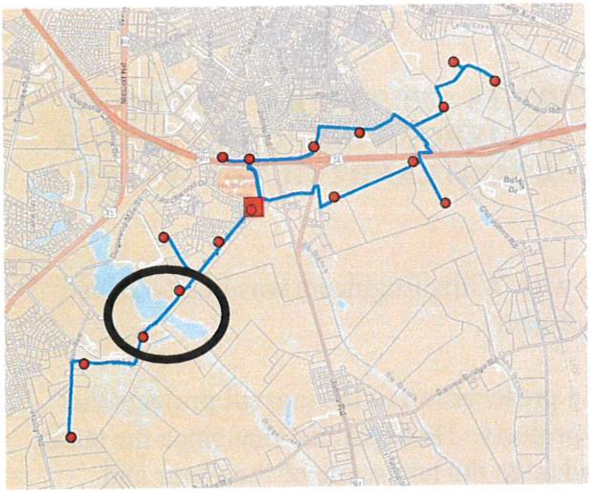
The City Manager explained that Mr. Chuck Willis with Willis Engineers was in attendance to provide an update on all the water/sewer capital projects.

Mr. Chuck Willis, with Willis Engineers, provided a presentation of the current projects that are ongoing and a summary of the projected future projects. He explained that since the state budget has been approved and made public it does change the landscape of the water and sewer finances. Mr. Willis explained that the most recently finished projects were the water line project near the water plant and the continued improvement of the raw water wells. He stated that they also embarked on a study with the county to investigate the possibility of merging the county and city water systems.

Mr. Chuck Willis explained that the completion of the distribution water line system by the water plant was phase one of a large water line that extends from the water plant to the Caledonia Road tank. He explained that phase one went well with Sanford Contractors and finished the project on time and the project finished under budget. Mr. Willis explained that the project included construction of some large diameter pipelines and some interconnections of the system. He explained that the overall goal for the project was to replace and abandon a 20- inch diameter asbestos cement pipeline that conveys water through the middle of town. Mr. Willis stated that the original pipeline has been very problematic and when it does have breaks, it creates a lot of trouble. He explained that it is being replaced with ductile iron pipes and will make the water distribution system more reliable.

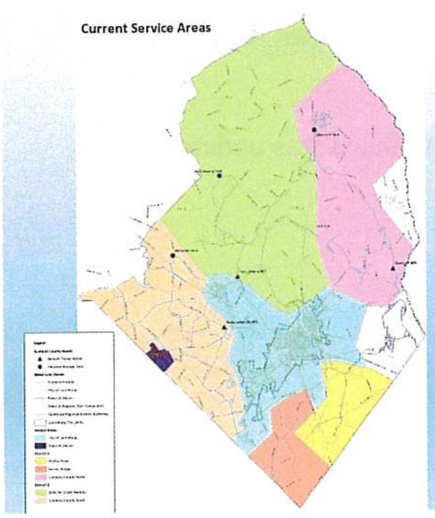
Mayor Willis inquired about the pictures regarding the ones that have asbestos in them. Chuck Willis explained to the council which pictures and the color of the asbestos reflected in the pictures. He explained that the word asbestos scares everyone but there is not any asbestos that is being transmitted to consumers. Mr. Willis explained that when the pipe is cut with a pipe saw it does create airborne asbestos. He explained that the real problem with the asbestos in the pipeline is that it is brittle and if it breaks it does not just break but it shatters which creates a larger problem.

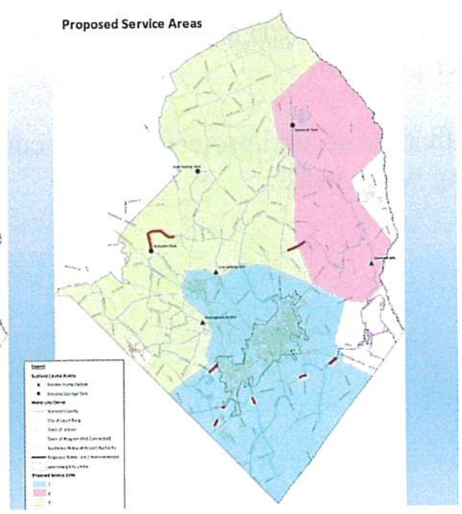
Mr. Chuck Willis explained that the second project that was completed was updating wells no. 8 and no. 9 of the drinking water wells.



Mr. Willis explained that the red square in the above picture reflects the water treatment plant. The two red dots located inside the circle are well no. 8 and well no. 9 that were replaced due to not being able to repair them any longer. The total construction cost of that project was $737,897.00.

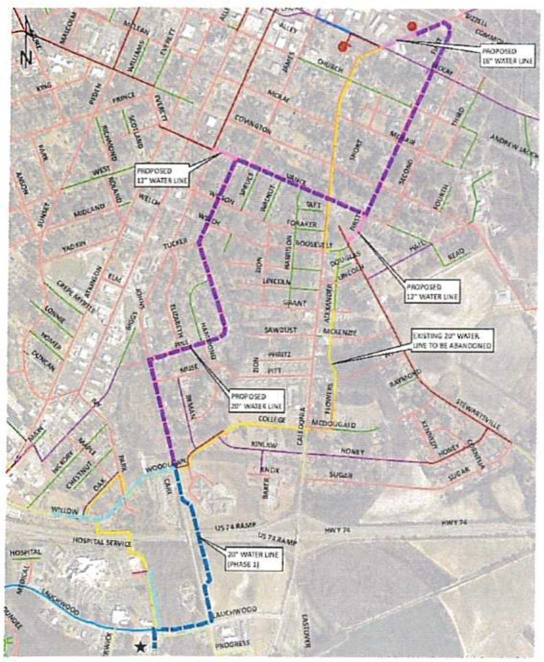
Mr. Chuck Willis explained that the third completed project was the Water System Merger Regionalization Feasibility Study. He explained that the City of Laurinburg applied for a grant of $50,000 to have the study completed in May 2023. The grant assessed county owned assets, developed a water system model, proposed interconnections, and operation changes, and identified basic requirements of an interlocal agreement. He explained that they did a very thorough inspection of the county owned water tanks, pump stations and built a water distribution model to study the hydraulics between the systems to see if they could be integrated. Mr. Willis explained that some of the county owned facilities were in pretty good shape and the tanks have recently been serviced but the pump stations will need some attention. He explained that it would take a good amount of money to rebuild those pump stations due to them not being upgraded since the original construction. Mr. Willis explained that the biggest benefit will be that the county will not have to manage multiple water distribution systems with multiple permits due to the system being broken up into separate pieces.





Mr. Willis explained that the map on the left above shows all the different water systems that are operational. He explained the blue area on the map is the system that is operated by the city and all the colors surrounding are operated by the county. Mr. Willis explained that if we consolidate those together it would make the testing and compliance work a lot easier. He explained that this would operate as three different pressure zones of the same system. Mr. Willis explained that from an operation standpoint it would make a lot of sense to consolidate. He explained that unfortunately though the project being highly feasible and has a lot of benefits, the county decided that they did not want to pursue it.

Mr. Chuck Willis stated that the current projects that are underway now are phase two of the Distribution System Improvements and the Leith Creek WWTP – Influent Pump Station that will become very visible. He explained that construction for phase two will begin this week and they will install casing under some of the major road crossings. Mr. Willis explained that the pipeline will extend from the end of the phase one project all the way through the middle of town shown on the purple broken lines in the picture below to the Caledonia Road tank.



Mr. Willis explained that they tried to create a route that would have the least amount of impact on people, but the pipeline cannot run parallel to the existing pipeline. He explained that the contractor for this project is Metcon, Inc. and will take approximately a year to complete construction. Mr. Willis explained that the project is being funded with a low interest loan from the state with a construction cost of $5,796,083.00 and it came in under the approved loan amount. He explained that supply chain continues to be an issue, but they are working with that.

Mr. Chuck Willis explained that the second project is the Leith Creek WWTP – Influent Pump Station and it is currently underway. He explained this is a replacement of the influent pump and screening system. He explained that the project is also being funded with a low interest rate from the state with a construction cost of $10,315,000.00.

Mr. Chuck Willis explained that there are three major upcoming projects. The first one will be the Bridge Creek and College Park Sewer rehab. The City received funding through the State Water Infrastructure Authority. He explained that the bids came in double what they anticipated them to be, and the city rejected those bids in July 2023. Mr. Willis explained that the city is going back to the state to ask for them to convert some of the funding that can be received into grants versus a loan due to them changing the scoring system. He explained that the engineers are considering splitting the project up into multiple phases to try to attract more bidders. Mr. Willis stated his team is reinspecting the project to see what items they can fix themselves and then structure a contract for items that they cannot fix. He explained they are not going over the initial approved dollar amount.

Councilmember Evans inquired if he felt that the bids that were received seemed realistic to him. Mr. Chuck Willis explained that he feels as if the contractors provided a high number due to their workload. He explained that he has seen this cycle before in the past where contractors state they are not taking on any more work due to workload and the price of contracting continues to increase from there.

The City Manager asked if Mr. Chuck Willis could explain this issue with the project and how much I & I we are getting in and how much we will save ourselves from building a wastewater treatment plant. Mr. Willis explained that it is very important that the city limits the amount of water that comes into the system that is not sewage. He stated that the limitations that the city has with the system are not from customer contributions, it is coming from rain, infiltration and inflow from the excess water that is coming into the plant. Mr. Willis explained that the wastewater plant is getting to the point of maximum capacity, which means the city will be at the point where it will not be able to accept new customers due to treating rainwater. He explained that that is why the system needs to be fixed so there can be continued growth. Mr. Willis explained that there are different sources of water, infiltration from ground water that seeps into the cracks and defects of the system and inflow is when there is a major rain event, and it pours down into the sewer from the storm drains that are incorrectly cross connected with the sewer system. He explained that storm water should be going to the creek but instead it is going to the sewer plant. Mr. Willis explained that the College Park basin is where the ground water is really high, and water just stands there. He explained that if there is a crack anywhere it lets water into the sewer system constantly and runs to the sewer plant. Mr. Willis explained that the Bridge Creek basin is an old part of the system and when it rains that pump station gets washed out due to the amount of water coming into the old part of the system.

Mr. Willis explained that the wastewater treatment plant is rated for an average of four-million-gallon flow. He stated that when it rains, we get more than that, but that plant is up in the three-million-gallon range now. The City Manager explained that we know how much water we are putting in the system because it is being treated. He explained that we know it is coming from the basins that need repair. The City Manager explained that once you get to eighty percent capacity the state makes you plan for expansion and at ninety percent you are required to start construction. He explained that we should be around two-million-gallons a day on average now.

Councilmember Rainer inquired on what are the plans to get rid of the rainwater that is coming in. Mr. Chuck Willis explained it will continue to go through the storm drains but it cannot go into the sewer system. The City Manager explained that the purpose of the nine million dollars funded for this project is to find the issues and repair them, so we are improving systems overall.

Mr. Chuck Willis ensued conversation on what a "Find and Fix" Contract is meant to do. He explained that it is not a clean contract like building a pipeline from point A to point B.

Councilmember Rogers inquired if it was one contractor that does the "Find and Fix" project.

Mr. Chuck Willis explained that the one contractor would have multiple subcontractors under them working on the project.

Mr. Chuck Willis explained that the second project that will be underway is a continuing project from the capital improvement program. He explained that they recommended in the CIP that the city renovate two to three pump stations per year. Mr. Willis explained that last year's state budget directly appropriated $7,360,000.00 for pump station renovations. He explained that they have completed the design, and it is currently under regulatory review. Mr. Willis stated that with that grant amount, the city will not be able to complete all seventeen pump stations, but the design review will be completed, and the city will complete as many as possible within that grant amount. He explained that the remaining ones can be broken up to be renovated over the years to come like they suggested in the initial CIP proposal.

Councilmember Evans inquired about the current year's budget and how it would be directed. Mr. Chuck Willis explained that this project was still using last year's state budget funding and that in this year's state budget the city was appropriated twenty million dollars of water and sewer projects in it. He explained that when it becomes law, it is hopeful that the city can receive guidance from the state whether any of those funds can be shifted to other projects. Mr. Willis explained that he feels that the state will let the city proceed with shifting the funding to be effective with it. He explained that the following pictures reflect a before and after of one of the recently renovated pump stations.

Mr. Willis explained that the newly renovated pump station is much safer and easier to access than the original pump stations.

Councilmember Evans inquired about the old water plant on McGirt's Bridge Road and conversation ensued regarding that location and the usage of the water tank and issues at another new pump station located near there on Geneva Street.

Mr. Chuck Willis explained that the last and most visible project will be the Elevated Storage Tank Improvements. He explained that the city has four storage tanks in total, a couple of which will need some minor improvements, one will need a full rehab, and the oldest one will need to be demolished. The estimated start timeframe will be the summer of 2024. Mr. Willis explained that the 401 north tank was erected in 2014 and they will only be doing some cleaning on that tank. He stated the 401 south tank was erected in 1997 needs to be repaired from where the cell phone provider that leases the space has drilled numerous holes moving their antenna around. He added the tank will also need to be recoated once the repairs have been made. Mr. Willis explained that the biggest project will be the Caledonia

Tank that was erected in 1976. He explained that the tank is a 750,000-gallon tank and it has lead-based paint on it. Mr. Willis stated that to get that lead-based paint off they will have to drape a heavy-duty piece of canvas over it while it is being sandblasted and this process will take several months to complete the renovation. The McKay Tank was erected in the 1920's, he explained that the tank needs to be demolished and removed due to being over one hundred years old and past the end of its useful life.

Discussion ensued regarding all the water tanks and the overall system.

Councilmember Adams moved to approve Resolution No. R-2023-15 to acknowledge receipt of the Merger Regionalization Feasibility Study for the Laurinburg and Scotland County Water Systems. Councilmember Evans moved to second the motion, and the vote was as follows:

Ayes: Rogers, Rainer, Evans, Adams
Nays: None
(Copy of Resolution No. R-2023-15 on file in the Clerk's office)

CONSIDER ACCESS EASEMENT & RESTRICTION AGGREEMENT BETWEEN NC LAURINBURG SCOTLAND, LLC AND THE CITY OF LAURIBURG

The City Manager explained that the council is being asked to consider an Access Easement and Restriction Agreement between NC Laurinburg Scotland, LLC and the City of Laurinburg. He explained that an Access Easement and Restriction Agreement is a bi-lateral agreement and not just a grant of easement, therefore, the Council will need to approve. The important points are that if the remaining acreage, not included in the incentive agreement, at the Hobby Lobby site is sold and a business is located on the property that uses the access easement across the Hobby Lobby property, the business owner will have to pay an annual maintenance fee on the easement. Also, the easement agreement restricts the kinds of businesses that can use the easement.

City Attorney Bill Floyd informed the council that the city is not paying a fee for that access easement at this point. He explained it will only be used if the site is developed and a building placed back there. Mr. Floyd explained that there is a list of businesses that Hobby Lobby would not want to be able to occupy that space.

Councilmember Evans moved to approve the Access Easement & Restriction Agreement between NC Laurinburg Scotland, LLC, and the City of Laurinburg, pending any additional minor amendments to be made by the City Attorney prior to closing, and authorize the Mayor to execute said document. Councilmember Adams moved to second the motion, and the vote was unanimous.

COMMENTS FROM CITY MANAGER, MAYOR AND/OR COUNCILMEMBERS

Mayor Willis wanted to recognize Councilmember Rogers, Councilmember Adams, and Councilmember Rainer for their presence during the playground build. He added that the city was called on for many duties and he wanted to provide a huge thank you to everyone that has helped during this time. Councilmember Rogers added that she was very appreciative of everyone from the city that has devoted time to this playground project.

Councilmember Evans stated that she was glad that the council approved the letter of support for Robeson Heath Care Corporation. She stated that during her recent zoom call with the Lumber River Council of Governments they just received a grant for $73,000.00 to help the communities regarding COVID-19.

CLOSED SESSION – CONSULT WITH CITY ATTORNEY & PERSONNEL

Councilmember Adams moved to go into closed session at 6:58 p.m. pursuant to NCGS 143-318.1 l(a)(3) to consult with attorney and pursuant to NCGS 143-3 18.11 (a)(6) for personnel. Councilmember Rogers moved to second the motion, and the vote was unanimous.

Councilmember Rainer moved to adjourn the closed session at 7:49 p.m. and return to the open meeting. Councilmember Rogers moved to second the motion, and the vote was unanimous.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion was made by Councilmember Rogers, seconded by Councilmember Evans, and unanimously carried to adjourn the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:50 p.m.

James T. Willis, Mayor

Harold W. Haywood, City Clerk