

**CITY OF LAURINBURG
CITY COUNCIL MEETING
APRIL 16, 2024
CITY HALL AND POLICE DEPARTMENT
303 WEST CHURCH ST.
6:00 PM**

Minutes

1. CALL TO ORDER

The City Council of the City of Laurinburg held its regular meeting on Tuesday, April 16, 2024, 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 unable to attend.

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

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

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Mayor Willis asked the Council to add an item to the agenda. He said that Item 6) would be for the Council to revisit the recycling changes and have more discussion about the changes. He stated that there has been a lot of feedback about the changes to the recycling program. Councilmember Adams wanted to add that possible action would be taken.

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

3. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

There was no one present to speak.

4. CONSENT AGENDA

Mayor Willis read aloud the Consent Agenda:

- a. Consider the approval of the draft minutes for the March 19, 2024, Special Meeting and March 19, 2024, Regular Meeting.
- b. Consider the approval of the use of McDuffie Square on May 3, 2024, from 12:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. for a Candidates for November Election event.
- c. Consider the approval of the State Aid to Airports Block Grant Agreement and Transportation Reserve Fund Grant Agreement between the NC Department of Transportation (Division of Aviation) and the Laurinburg-Maxton Airport Commission and authorize the Mayor to execute the documents.

Councilmember Evans moved to approve the Consent Agenda.

Councilmember Adams moved to second the motion and the vote was unanimous.

5. PUBLIC HEARINGS

- a. Consider amendments to the Electric Rate schedules.

Mayor Willis opened the public hearing to consider amendments to the electric rate schedules. He asked the City Manager to explain the amendments to the electric rate schedules. The City Manager explained that a rate study was done by Utility Financial Services with the assistance of Electricities. He advised that costs have increased, and the City of Laurinburg has not had a rate increase since January 2015. He stated that there have been two decreases in that timeline. The City Manager stated that natural gas prices the past two years have really hit all utilities hard, including the City of Laurinburg's utility provider, the North Carolina Eastern Municipal Power Agency (NCEMPA). The City Manager explained that the results of the rate study suggested a revenue increase of 13.9%. He explained that this would result in a \$12.01 increase on the average bill, which is 1000 kw monthly. He advised that this increase would still give the City of Laurinburg competitive advantage, with it still being lower than Duke and most local co-ops. The City Manager stated that he is bringing this before the Council tonight to move forward with the electric rate changes during the milder part of the season to try to minimize the impact on citizens.

Mayor Willis asked if anyone wanted to speak in favor of or in opposition to this action. There wasn't anyone present that wanted to speak before the Council regarding the action.

Councilmember Adams motioned to approve Ordinance No. O-2024-16 amending the electric rate schedules and service regulations. Councilmember Rainer moved to second, and the vote was as follows:

Ayes: Adams, Evans, Rainer, Rogers

Nays: None

(Copy of Ordinance No. O-2024-16 on file in the clerk's office)

- b. Consider a request to rezone the property located at 803 North Main Street from Residential-15 to Residential-6.

Mayor Willis opened the public hearing to consider a request to rezone the property located at 803 North Main Street from Residential-15 to Residential-6. He asked Mr. Mac McInnis to explain the request for rezoning.

Mr. Mac McInnis stated that Mr. Jimmy Wood is here on behalf of the property owner to request the property located at 803 North Main Street to be rezoned from R-15 to R-6 for the construction of a four-unit, multi-family dwelling. He stated that the rezoning request came before the planning board on March the 12th, and it was recommended that the Council approve the request. He stated that the vote was four to one in favor of approving the rezoning.

Mr. Jimmy Wood from Raeford, NC spoke before the Council. Mr. Wood stated that he was representing Mrs. Gold Omogbehin, which owns the property located at 803 North Main Street. He stated that she wants to build some apartments at the location which already has a rental house. He stated that there is an additional house on the parcel that will be taken down if the rezoning is approved. He stated this will allow a location to build the apartments. He stated that Mrs. Omogbehin wants to have an additional income from the apartments. A conversation ensued about the condition of the house that would be removed. Mr. Wood stated that the home is dilapidated. A conversation ensued about how much the rent would be at the apartments if the rezoning is approved. Mr. Wood stated that it has yet to be determined, but the rent will be by-income. Mr. Wood advised the Council that the design of the apartments would be approximate to the sketch that was provided in their agenda packet. A conversation ensued about the difference

in a property being zoned R-15 and R-6. It was advised that the difference is that R-6 allows multi-family units.

Mayor Willis asked if anyone else had any questions for Mr. Wood. There weren't any additional questions. Mayor Willis asked if there was anyone else in attendance that wanted to speak in favor of or in opposition to the request. There wasn't anyone else in attendance that wanted to speak in favor of or in opposition to the request. Mayor Willis closed the public hearing.

Councilmember Evans motioned to approve Ordinance O-2024-17 rezoning from Residential-15 to Residential-6 the property located at 803 N. Main Street and identified as Scotland County Parcel Number 01003101025 because it advances the public health, safety, and welfare, and based upon the following:

The rezoning of Scotland County Land Parcel number 01003101025 on 803 N. Main Street from Residential-15 to Residential-6 is consistent with an adopted comprehensive plan and any other officially adopted plan that is applicable because:

1. The Residential 6 district is established to allow a variety of medium density residential uses, such as single family residences, two family residences, and multi-family residences from 7 to 12 dwelling units per acre.
2. The Comprehensive Plan 2035 Future Land Use Map indicates the development of some mixed uses, office & institutional uses, and a variety of residential uses in the area where this parcel is located. Desired uses in this area are development of single family & multi-family residential uses along with some office and institutional uses.
3. There are already a large number of R-6 zoned properties along with R-15 and OI zonings in the area. The rezoning will allow for residential uses compatible with desired future development in this area.

And it is reasonable because of the following:

1. The rezoning to R-6 will allow uses consistent with other existing uses;
2. The rezoning to R-6 will help maintain the present character of the City of Laurinburg, while promoting diversity and future growth.
3. The rezoning to R-6 will have no detrimental impact to values of the surrounding land owners; and
4. The rezoning will require no infrastructure improvements by the City of Laurinburg.

Councilmember Rogers moved to second the motion and the vote was as follows:

Ayes: Rogers, Rainer, Evans, Adams

Nays: None

(Copy of Ordinance No. O-2024-17 on file in the clerk's office)

- c. Consider a request for a Special Use Permit for the development of a 48-unit apartment complex on Plaza Road.

Mayor Willis opened the public hearing to consider a request for a special use permit for the development of a 48-unit apartment complex on Plaza Road. He provided information concerning the process for conducting a quasi-judicial hearing, to include individuals being sworn in to testify, ensuring the Council understood its role and informed the public of the process.

Mr. Mac McInnis, after being duly sworn, stated that Mr. Steve Sceranka is the Director of Real Estate at Buckeye Community Hope Foundation Housing, and they are requesting a special use permit for the development of a 48-unit low income multi-family apartment complex on Plaza Road. He stated that the complex would consist of 6 buildings with 8 units on a little over 9 acres. Mr. McInnis stated that the project would be entered and exited through West Boulevard. He stated the development rested on receiving a grant through the North Carolina Housing Agency's Low Income Tax Credit Program. He stated that the request was heard by the planning board on March 12, 2024, and resulted in a 5 to 0 vote to recommend that the Council not approve the rezoning request. A conversation ensued about other rezoning requests that have been submitted for this same site. Mr. McInnis stated that the property is a little different, but it is the same parcel. He stated that this time the request would use the part of the parcel on the West Boulevard side, and nothing goes out on the Plaza Road end. A conversation ensued about how far off the road the development would be. Mr. McInnis advised that the development would be further behind Lowes and Planet Fitness. The City Attorney got confirmation from Mr. McInnis that they are submitting the site plans and the information presented to the planning board in their decision as part of the record. Councilmember Adams asked Mr. McInnis if he had stated that the planning board's vote, to recommend that the Council deny the request, was unanimous. Mr. McInnis confirmed that the planning board's vote was unanimous.

Public Comments in Favor of the Special Use Permit

The following was sworn in by the City Clerk: Aaron Bowman, an architect

from North Charleston, SC, representing the Buckeye Hope Foundation. Mr. Bowman stated that Mr. Steve Sceranka, the Director of Real Estate, and Todd Brockman of Brockman Law were also in attendance today representing Buckeye Hope Foundation. He stated that they are here tonight with an application for an affordable housing project that is moving through North Carolina Housing Finance Agency's Low Income Housing Tax Credit Program. He stated that it is a tax credit subsidized housing project that they are proposing. Mr. Bowman addressed the prior statement that rezoning requests for the parcel had come before the Council in the past. He stated that it did come before the Council last year and was approved for an 84-unit development. He stated that they are here tonight with a different floor plan. He referenced a PowerPoint slide that he provided which showed the proposed layout of the project. Mr. Bowman stated that he wanted to address the question about access to the development. He stated that, based on their preliminary site research, they understand that the south portion of the site has unsuitable soil and potential wetlands areas, which would not be suitable for development. He stated that this is why the project is consolidated in the north part of the parcel. Mr. Bowman stated that the project is set back from the road, and they are respecting all buffers as required by the ordinance. He stated they are not here requesting any sort of variance in any of the requirements as they understand it. Mr. Bowman stated that, at this point, this is a preliminary design due to the nature of the request. He stated that they are committing to a number of units, to building sizes, to this location and this layout. He stated that the PowerPoint slide also shows that there are elevations and materials that they are proposing to use, including brick, cement siding, and asphalt shingled roof. He stated that a lot of this is driven by a couple of things, including the tax credit program's standards of quality. Mr. Bowman stated that this would not be a cheaply thrown up vinyl siding box that's just sort of left out on a field. He stated that there are requirements for quality materials. He stated that some of the opposition that they have heard, which they recognize, is concern about maintenance and durability of materials. Mr. Bowman stated that one of the things that they pointed out during their presentation to the planning board is that the development will have onsite maintenance. He stated that there would be a community building with community laundry, an onsite manager's office, and maintenance facilities. He stated that Buckeye would be hiring local vendors for other services, such as landscaping. Mr. Bowman stated that Buckeye is a developer, and they partner with RLJ Management, which manages its properties for them. He stated that they are collaborative partners and have worked together for years on a number of properties. He stated that Buckeye Community Hope's headquarters is in Columbus, Ohio and they have an office in North Charleston, South Carolina. He stated that the team working on this development was located in the North Charleston, SC location. Mr. Bowman

stated that they currently are working on a project in Kernersville, North Carolina that is scheduled to open later this year, and they have another in Asheville, NC that they hope will be under construction later this year. He said that they have existing properties in South Carolina that they currently manage as well as a 20-year-old property that they are fixing to renovate. Mr. Bowman stated that they are in this for the long term, and this is a 30-year commitment in the tax credit world. He stated that they manage these properties and there are annual inspections of the properties to ensure that they are up to compliance. He stated that they understand the concerns about maintenance. Mr. Bowman stated that the two other main points that they have heard include how the location was chosen and if there is need for this development in Scotland County or Laurinburg in particular. He stated that the Council had been provided with a copy of the Housing Market Summary from the PowerPoint slide he referenced. He stated that they did not have the information from the Housing Market Summary when they made their presentation to the planning board. Mr. Bowman stated that when they applied to the North Carolina Housing Finance Agency for the tax credit program, the agency hired a third party consultant to do a market study to verify the need for this kind of development in the location. He stated that they looked at what they considered the Laurinburg market area, which includes Laurinburg, Scotland County and Robeson County. He stated that they found that there was a 0.4% and 0.5% vacancy rate in that entire area. He stated that they were looking at market rate units and tax credit properties. Mr. Bowman stated that there were 4 specific properties identified as comparable to Buckeye's development, which included 2 market rate units and 2 tax credit units. He stated that there was 1 vacancy found between the 4 properties. He stated that different developers have come back to this location because there have been documented market studies that indicate that there is a need for this type of development in Laurinburg and Scotland County. Mr. Bowman stated that what drives his group to properties in a given locality is the fact that the zoning is already in place and the site is a transitional site between a commercial area and a residential area. He stated that the buildings in their development would be two stories, around a 30-foot maximum height and the size of a large house but less than a giant apartment building. Mr. Bowman stated that this would be a property that they would fence and secure. He stated that they had retained a civil engineer that had done preliminary work on the plans and the engineer had worked closely with Mr. McInnis to ensure that they were complying. Mr. Bowman asked the Council to recognize that they did not know if the project would be funded, allowing them to move forward. He stated that it is a competitive application process. He stated that it was submitted last year, and it was not selected to be awarded. Mr. Bowman stated that the way that North Carolina prioritized counties this year, Scotland County has moved up. He stated that they feel that this gives the

development a better chance of being selected this year. Mr. Bowman stated that the other big concern they hear a lot is about the impact on property values. He stated that he knows that this impact on property values is one of the 9 criteria listed in the City's ordinance. He referenced a PowerPoint slide which displayed information from the North Carolina Housing Finance Agency regarding low-income housing tax credit and neighborhood property values in North Carolina. He stated that similar literature can be found online from other entities. Mr. Bowman stated that the information shown on the PowerPoint slide was from around 2018 or 2019. He stated that the North Carolina Housing Finance Agency looked at both urban and rural areas in places where they have funded tax credit projects for the information they provided. He stated that they showed no documented impact on property values. He stated that they understand that it is a fear and concern of people. Mr. Bowman stated that they were unsuccessful with the planning board in conveying many of these points and hope to have a more productive discussion tonight with the Council. He stated that they understand that there are concerns in the communities. He stated that they are here to build the best building that they can and to their knowledge they have complied with all the requirements of the ordinance. He said the discussion has largely been about the proposed use of the parcel. Mr. Bowman stated that they know that this has been approved before for a project that was twice the size and twice the impact on the community. He stated that they feel that their project is more appropriately scaled for Laurinburg, and he asked the Council to approve their request tonight.

Mayor Willis asked if there were any questions for Mr. Bowman. A conversation ensued about what actions would be taken on the land that was found unsuitable for building. Mr. Bowman stated that they would not buy that land, and they would not be doing anything to that property. A conversation ensued about the entrance to the development. Mr. Bowman referenced the PowerPoint displaying the entrance on West Boulevard and advised there is a roundabout to turn around at the end of the road. He stated that this has been designed to meet the requirements of emergency vehicles, trash trucks and those sorts of things. A conversation ensued about the criteria being set for the individuals that would be living in the units. Mr. Bowman advised that they are subject to fair housing guidelines and can't discriminate against applicants being accepted to live in the development. He stated that this tax credit housing program is an income-based qualification. Mr. Bowman stated that the development is considered a family development, so it is not age restricted. He stated that tenants will apply, and income will be verified. He stated that the rent for these developments would be based on the tenants' income. Therefore, the tenants could range from a young teacher fresh out of school or a retiree living on a fixed income. Mr. Bowman stated that the rent

will vary according to how the tenants' income compares to the area's median income. He stated that Buckeye does not set the rent in these developments, but it is dictated to Buckeye as HUD rent, which is controlled by census data. Mr. Bowman stated that there is a Fannie Mae tool that allows them to calculate the rent to see what it may be, but it isn't locked in until they get the award, and tenants move in. A conversation ensued about the capacity of the development. Mr. Bowman stated they are proposing 48 units that will consist of 1, 2 and 3 bedroom units. A conversation ensued about the design of the development. Mr. Bowman stated that they are proposing a mix of brick and siding with sloped roofs. He stated that there would be 4 units downstairs and a central stair that would lead upstairs to 4 additional units. A conversation ensued about whether Buckeye Community Hope owned the property being proposed for the development. Mr. Bowman stated that Buckeye Community Hope does not own the property at this time, but they are willing to purchase the property from C.F. Smith Property Group if the development is approved. A conversation ensued about the new entrance road leading into the development and how far it is located from the nearest property.

Councilmember Evans asked if there were any guidelines that would prevent the road from being a certain distance from the nearest property. The City Manager stated that he isn't aware of any because it is not a NCDOT road or a city road but a private entrance on the parcel. Mr. Bowman stated that there would be buffers from the property lines that are required by zoning.

Councilmember Adams asked Mr. Bowman if there would be any way for them to change the site plan so that there could be access to the development from Plaza Road. Mr. Bowman stated that they do not have a way to access Plaza Road due to the wetlands or unsuitable soil. A conversation ensued about who would own the property if the development were approved. Mr. Bowman stated that Buckeye would create an entity that would own the development and once the compliance period is up, Buckeye would buy it and send it back through the program to renovate it and recycle it. He stated that Buckeye's intent was to keep the development in operation. The City Attorney stated that he wanted to ensure that the sworn opponents have the opportunity to ask the applicants any questions they may have once the opponents have given their testimony. The City Clerk swore in all individuals that wished to testify at the hearing in opposition to the special use permit as a group.

Public Comments in Opposition to the Special Use Permit

The following had been sworn in by the City Clerk: Lewis McCormick from Carolina Park in Laurinburg, NC. Mr. McCormick stated that he has been in Carolina Park for 81 years. He stated that he can tell you first-hand

what housing projects can develop into. He stated that these developments bring crime, trash, and disrespect. He stated that his family members are afraid for him to work in his yard because of traffic, shootings, and threats. He stated that if you want to do something to help with housing for low-income people, build individual houses with backyards so that kids will have somewhere to play. Mr. McCormick stated that the kids do not even have a park to play in anymore. He stated that this is something to look into, and they are taking advantage of poor people in his community. He stated that people need homes, so they should build individual homes with three rooms and backyards for the kids.

The following had been sworn in by the City Clerk: Paula Lewis from Sunset Drive in Laurinburg, NC. Mrs. Lewis stated that she wanted to read something from the City's Unified Development Ordinance. Mrs. Lewis read section 1.3 of the City's UDO as follows: This Unified Development Ordinance and Zoning Map are made in accordance with a Comprehensive Plan and is designed to promote the public health, safety, and general welfare. To that end, these regulations may address, among other things, the following public purposes: to provide adequate light and air; to prevent the overcrowding of land; to avoid undue concentration of population; to lessen congestion in the streets; to secure safety from fire, panic, and dangers; to facilitate the efficient and adequate provision of transportation, water, sewerage, schools, parks and other public requirements; to control development of flood prone areas and regulate stormwater runoff/discharge; to regulate signs; and to establish proceedings for the subdivision of land; and to promote the health, safety, morals, or general welfare of the community. She stated that the UDO was written with the purpose of protecting the citizens of Laurinburg. Mrs. Lewis held up a map to show it to the Council. She stated that, generally speaking, Laurinburg is about 12.5 square miles and the area represented on the map she showed the Council is a little less than half of a square mile. She stated that the area shown, which is less than half of a square mile, represents less than 5% of Laurinburg's geographical area. She stated that this area contains 22% of the apartment housing in Laurinburg. Mrs. Lewis stated that she considers this overcrowding. She stated that the UDO stated that it will prevent overcrowding of land and avoid undue concentration of population. She stated that they are just asking the Council to stick to the ordinance as it is written. Mrs. Lewis stated that she doesn't understand why it keeps coming to this place again and again. She stated that there are about 30 acres by the hospital if Laurinburg needs housing. She stated that she is not stating that Laurinburg is not in need of housing. Mr. Lewis stated that there are students from St. Andrews college that live in Pembroke because they can't get a place in Laurinburg. She stated that maybe something closer to the hospital or St. Andrews may be a more appropriate place for the development. She stated

that this would reduce the congestion in this area. She stated that if all the places that had been approved had gone through, that this small area would have almost half of the temporary housing in Laurinburg. Mrs. Lewis referenced a study that she brought to the meeting regarding the status of women in North Carolina in poverty and opportunity. She stated that the study showed that North Carolina had a D+ grade on the poverty and opportunity composite index according to the Institute of Women's Policy Research. Mrs. Lewis stated that the study was done in 2022 and had recommendations, but not one of those recommendations were low-income housing. She stated that they need to have a good wage, so they can afford any housing. She asked the Council to keep the zoning as it is. Mayor Willis advised the Council that they could ask any of the sworn individuals questions that they may have. The City Attorney stated that the proponents are going to have the opportunity to ask questions of those individuals once they finish their presentations.

The following had been sworn in by the City Clerk: Angela McNeill from Tarboro Street in Laurinburg, NC. Mrs. McNeill stated that she has lived at her home on Tarboro Street her entire life. She stated that the last time she came before the Council was to fight against an 84-unit building, and she is thankful that that one disappeared. She stated that the emergence of this request makes her wonder if they are going to have to keep fighting. Mrs. McNeill stated that when she came to fight the other request, they were asked about where there were vacancies located in the community. She stated that she took it upon herself to interview the Deputy Director of the Laurinburg Housing Authority over the summer. She stated that the information is probably not as accurate as Mr. Bowman's information. She stated that she is a math teacher, and she understands that a story can be told using statistics such as 50% full is also 50% empty. Mrs. McNeill stated that the person at the Housing Authority told her the number of vacancies that there were at the moment, and that there was a large number of them. She stated that she then drove down Western Boulevard. She stated that when you go down Western Boulevard past the power plant, you will notice a very tall structure that is a low-income housing unit. Mrs. McNeill stated that in addition to that low-income housing unit, there is a long stretch of low-income housing units that are followed by two brick homes which are also low-income housing. She stated that there are also low-income housing units behind them, such as Willow Wood Apartments. She stated that they are surrounded by low-income housing except for the parcel being proposed before the Council tonight. Mrs. McNeill stated that she is not opposed to someone bringing their family to a higher level, but she agrees with Mr. McCormick. She stated that the idea of more low-income housing and the idea of her over 70-year-old mother, who likes to sit on the porch often, having to run with COPD in the event of an emergency is wearing on her nerves. She stated she would continue coming to the meetings involving this type of use in the area, but she implored the

Council not to approve the request. Mrs. McNeill stated that she encourages growth and is proud of the advancements being made in the community. She stated that there are so many wonderful things coming, and she wanted them to keep coming. She stated that she is a retired teacher and plans to stay in Laurinburg for her entire life. She stated that they wanted Buckeye to advance its building but at some other location.

The following had been sworn in by the City Clerk: Jerome Leggette from Whiteville Street in Laurinburg, NC. Mr. Leggette stated that every morning at about 7:00 a.m., he polices the area off of Midland Way and Cary Street. He stated that you see trash every day, and you see people crossing properties. He stated that he had one encounter with someone walking across his property. He stated that he keeps changing his mind about whether he should move or if he should stay in his home. He stated that if you don't see a bunch of trash, it means people haven't gotten their checks and can't afford to buy anything. Mr. Leggette stated that he used to work with a lot of contractors on projects which include Starbucks, Planet Fitness, Roses, and Save-A-Lot. He stated that he also did post-site clean-ups on Popeye's and Highway 55. He stated that he enjoys building and he enjoys seeing development. He stated that when you see strange people coming into the neighborhood, you don't know who they are or what their intentions are. Mr. Leggette stated that he had someone crossing his property and he asked the person what he was doing and if he saw the "No Trespassing" sign. He stated that some of his neighbors called and told him that the person crossing his property said that they were coming back the same way and asked what Mr. Leggette was going to do about it. Mr. Leggette stated that the neighborhood used to be like a family cul-de-sac. Mr. Leggette commended RLJ and Buckeye for building housing. He stated that he just couldn't approve this proposed development and his homestead would feel better without it.

The following had been sworn in by the City Clerk: Billy Campbell of West Boulevard in Laurinburg, NC. Mr. Campbell stated that the driveway for the proposed development would be about 50 feet from the side of his home. He stated that he did a study and noticed a pattern in low-income housing in Laurinburg. He stated that low-income housing in Laurinburg is concentrated in black neighborhoods. Mr. Campbell stated that when you put people in low-income housing that you are promoting poverty. He stated that those people would stay poor all of their lives, and they would not have anything to leave to their heirs. He stated that every low-income housing development has crime. Mr. Campbell stated that the City has a camera on Asheville Street and asked, "if it was a good area, why would a camera be needed?". He stated that you hear shooting and cars speeding throughout the night. Mr. Campbell asked, "as a black citizen of the City of Laurinburg that works and pays my

taxes, why are we being punished?". He stated that all the individuals in attendance speaking in opposition to the proposed development would be punished. He stated that once you put low-income housing in a neighborhood, the neighborhood is now cursed. He stated that the first thing that will take place is that property values will decrease. Mr. Campbell stated that Mr. McCormick has a nice house but would not be able to sell it and get his money because no one wants to buy a home or live next to a low-income area. He stated that homeowners are being punished in two different ways, because the City tax rate will stay the same and the homeowner's wealth will be taken away. He stated that the developers of the proposed project would gain wealth. Mr. Campbell asked the Council not to penalize the taxpayers any more than they have already been penalized. He stated that they would not be able to sell their property. He stated that the entry road to the development is about 60-70 feet from his house, so he would have to listen to traffic all day and all night. Mr. Campbell stated that there would also be foot traffic going straight to West Boulevard. He stated that foot traffic would go to the 4-lane traffic on US Highway 401. Mr. Campbell stated that he made a drawing of his house and the proposed entrance to the development beside his house. He stated that you would have 4 intersections within 100 yards of each other. He stated that these intersections will be dangerous because the views of the drivers will be obstructed by homes. Mr. Campbell stated that if travelers hear gunshots around the retail areas, they will warn others not to come to Laurinburg, NC. He stated that he is not against housing, but he is in the particular area being proposed. He stated that putting low-income housing in the area is destroying black neighborhoods. Mr. Campbell stated that his neighbor, Howard, was building a nice home in the area. He stated that his and his neighbor's homes would be worthless once the low-income development is in the area. He stated that you are also putting people in the neighborhood that are not going to pay any taxes. Mr. Campbell asked the Council to listen to its constituents. He stated that Mayor Willis made a comment about the Council being a good steward with the money and resources of taxpayers. He stated that building more low-income developments would result in police officers being occupied in the developments, leaving other taxpayers ignored. Mr. Campbell passed around the drawing he made of the entrance to the development and its approximate location to his home. He voiced his concerns about a private road with traffic at all times of the night being beside his home. He stated that his concerns were safety issues and crimes. Mr. Campbell stated that with his 35 years in law enforcement, he can say that with all the low-income developments in the City of Laurinburg, the City is not in control. He stated that with every public housing development you have in Laurinburg, you have a small town within a city. He stated that a certain amount of crime is going to control the public housing. Mr. Campbell stated that he wants to die here in Laurinburg, but he

also wants to live in peace and wants a quality of life in Laurinburg. A conversation ensued about the proximity of the road to the development and Mr. Campbell's home, which was shown on the map he provided.

The following had been sworn in by the City Clerk: Dorothy Campbell of West Boulevard in Laurinburg, NC. Mrs. Campbell explained to the Council the events of Cabrini Green. She stated that Cabrini Green was a low-income housing structure that was built in Chicago. She stated that the life of this housing structure was about 4 years. She stated that they found that, in the long run, it produced crime and drugs. She stated that it fell into poor conditions due to the lack of upkeep of the structure. Mrs. Campbell voiced her concerns about the road at the development being one-way in, and one-way out. She stated that the fact that the entrance is only one-way in, and one-way out could impede the response time of law enforcement and medical personnel. Mrs. Campbell addressed a prior statement regarding the need for this type of development being at a location that is close to amenities. She stated that there is public transportation that can be used to go to the amenities. She stated that safety, crime, and security are all a large concern to her. Mrs. Campbell stated that there is a location near Walgreen's that is close to amenities that could possibly be used for this type of development. She asked the Council to think about it and give the request a lot of consideration.

The City Attorney stated that he wanted to give Mr. Bowman the opportunity to say anything in rebuttal that he would like to. He also stated that if Mr. Bowman's council wanted to participate; they should have the opportunity to question and vis versa. The City Attorney stated that anyone that spoke in opposition to the special use permit, this is their opportunity to ask Mr. Bowman any questions.

Mr. Bowman addressed the group and stated that he appreciated their comments, and he understood their concerns. He stated the comment that they get the most is, "why is this in my backyard?". He stated that people that have come before the Council prior to him have referred to the particular tax credit program they are applying for. He stated that he wanted to emphasize that it is not public housing, it is not section-8 housing, and they are not the projects that were developed in the mid-century as part of urban renewal. Mr. Bowman stated that things like Cabrini Green and Pruitt-Igoe (which happened in St Louis) put a black eye on public housing. He stated that Pruitt-Igoe was a massive urban renewal where entire neighborhoods were demolished, and giant high-rises were built in their place. He stated that husbands were not allowed to live with their wives and the project was a tremendous failure. He stated that those things happened in the past and that

is not what Buckeye is proposing. Mr. Bowman stated that this is a different program, and it is an income-qualified apartment complex. He stated that applicants must provide proof of income. He stated that there is not any engineering they can do to change someone's mind about the proposed use. He stated they have put in buffers plus what is required by zoning. He stated that there were comments made about this being a rezoning request. He stated that they are not asking to change the zoning at all, they are just asking for approval of this use, which is allowed by the current zoning. Mr. Bowman stated that this is why people are looking at this site. He stated that locations further outside of town would not score well or be competitive enough to be approved for the tax credit funding. He stated that in multiple jurisdictions, they face this. He stated that this site is highly competitive because of the criteria it meets. He stated that with the natural use of what they are proposing, not a lot of property is available to them. He stated that not everyone wants to sell to an affordable-housing developer and the people that are willing to sell are not always offering it at a price that they can afford. He stated that this is a challenge that they face. Mr. Bowman stated that he doesn't live here and can't speak about the effectiveness of Laurinburg's police force. He stated that he didn't know about the crime that they were hearing about, so he couldn't comment on that. He stated that the property would be under the City's jurisdiction. He stated that if there are disruptive tenants, tenants that aren't keeping their place up to the required standards, or if the tenant is causing problems, they will be removed following the required processes. Mr. Bowman addressed the comments made regarding the traffic and multiple intersections. He stated that they have not done a traffic impact study of the surrounding road. He stated they will do a full engineering analysis and continue to look at it. He stated that the road to the development was designed for all emergency vehicles, large vehicles, and just cars that need to get in and out. He stated that they have not studied any potential traffic that could be affected by other businesses. He stated that the site meets the standards in the City of Laurinburg's ordinances and the standard of the way the site is supposed to be done. Mr. Bowman stated that this is not some targeted attack on any community, and he is sorry if citizens feel that way. He stated that they have a process to look and see where awards have been given. He stated that Laurinburg has had a lot of applications but has not been awarded. He stated that they feel that this year there may be a chance that Laurinburg will get awarded, but there aren't any guarantees. He stated that they are a private development and are not affiliated with any housing authority, so he can't speak about the vacancy question discussed earlier. He stated that they could only advise on what they were told by their consultant. Mr. Bowman stated that the recurring theme is the use and suitability of the use of the parcel. He stated that they try hard to develop the best buildings they can and make them fit the site. He stated that

they spent time studying the location, trying to come up with a proposal for the site that was appropriate for the site. He stated that they still have some flexibility that would allow them to possibly shift the building and get them further away from the road. He stated that they could look at a scenario that would put a little more space between it and the adjacent properties. He stated that they have some flexibility with the layout. He said they could also explore the entrance and exit road to the development. He stated that they don't have access to the land to make a possible tie into the south, but they could explore speaking with the property owners.

A conversation ensued about the amount of power a private developer has at a development versus a housing authority-type entity. Mr. Bowman stated that they would have more power over the development. He stated that they will have maintenance people onsite and there are annual inspections that come through. He stated that if Buckeye fails to meet the standards when NC Housing comes through, they will lose the tax credits. Mr. Bowman stated that if the developer loses the tax credits, they are no longer able to apply and do this anymore in any state. He stated that they get blacklisted. He stated that it is in their best interest to maintain the development as well as they can. Mr. Bowman stated that in the last meeting, they heard a lot of concern about renters not caring about the units. He stated that Buckeye holds tenants to a standard. He stated that in instances where he has walked around at other developments with maintenance personnel, tenants have been reported to the office for not maintaining interior standards in their units. He stated that in any city you could find rental properties that are immaculate and owner-occupied properties that are in disrepair. A conversation ensued about whether Buckeye assessed the entire City of Laurinburg. Mr. Bowen stated that they look at the scoring criteria and identify locations that fit those criteria. He stated that there is literally a radius that they must be within. He stated that they start the process to see what is available, if the zoning is in place, and if the seller is willing to talk to them. He stated that it is an entire process. He stated that they don't just jump on the first location that pops up. He stated that there was an analysis done. A conversation ensued about who would be able to apply to live in the development and income verification for applicants.

Mr. Steve Sceranka, the Director of Real Estate, and Todd Brockman of Brockman Law were sworn in by the City Clerk. Mr. Brockman stated that he specializes in public housing and attends many of these meetings while hearing the same concerns. He stated that they appreciate the feedback but at the same time, there is a huge need for housing in Laurinburg. He stated that Laurinburg is competing with cities all over the state for the funding for this housing. He stated that Buckeye is not here to profit and every dollar that they make goes into the next project. He stated that someone that doesn't

have an income would not be in this development. He stated that this is what is referred to as workforce housing, so they see young teachers and police officers in these types of developments. He stated that they can't speak about what took place in Laurinburg prior. Mr. Brockman stated that he is sure there are probably apartments built in the 60s and 70s that are still here, and they are probably awful due to so many failed experiments throughout the years. He stated that the low-income housing tax credit process that came into law in 1986, has been continuously refined over that 40-year period. He stated that the ascetics of some of their public housing developments make it hard to believe they are low-income developments. He stated that Buckeye is fighting for the same thing the citizens are fighting for and that's great housing for people who need it in order to get out of rundown low-income housing. Mr. Brockman stated that maybe those rundown low-income housing developments can be dealt with through programs once those citizens can move into improved low-income housing. He stated that this could get Laurinburg out of the bad trend it is in with bad low-income housing. He stated that this proposed development is 48 units, so it will not get Laurinburg there, but it is a great start. He stated that, legally, the parcel is already zoned for the development. He stated that it is just required by Laurinburg's zoning classification for the Council to approve it. Mr. Brockman stated that you can look at all these factors when considering the special use permit request, but "not in my backyard" is not a factor that you can consider. Mr. Steve Sceranka, the Director of Real Estate for Buckeye, stated that the development will have amenities such as a walking trail and a place for children to play. He stated that there is a mandate by the finance companies for amenities that must be put in these projects for families or for seniors. He stated that the development is designed to be a community, and it will be impressive when you see it. He stated that quality materials would go into it, such as a mandated percentage of brick, cementitious siding, and energy efficient windows. Mr. Sceranka stated that the development is designed to be quality. He stated that this isn't a cheap market-rate builder that could come in and possibly purchase all 30 acres and put in 300 units of little houses. He stated that we don't know what the future may hold, it might be worse. He stated that this development is a perfect balance, and it is a good buffer at the loading dock area of Lowe's. He stated that he doesn't think that Plaza Road is suitable as a road and that you don't want through traffic. He stated that through traffic tends to lead to issues. Mr. Sceranka stated that when people know that it's a one way in and one way out private drive and parking lot, it will not lend itself to those who want to use it as a cut-through or quick exit somewhere. He stated that it is hard to convince someone without seeing it, but he thinks everyone would be impressed by the final product. He stated that they are not asking the Council to increase density for them or change the zoning for them. He stated that they had met all the requirements. Mr. Sceranka stated that once they go through the permitting process, they are more than flexible. He stated that it

may be that they are told that the development needs to be fenced off or requires live buffers such as trees. He stated that all this takes place during the permitting process and the site plan design. He said that what the Council sees tonight, besides the number of units that they have submitted to the finance company, is a flexible layout. He stated that they haven't gone that far because it hasn't been required yet. He stated that they just have to show that they are meeting the City's design requirements currently. He stated that, if they get the award, there are more criteria that they must meet in the City's building code. He stated that he thinks that overall, everyone will be very happy. Mr. Sceranka stated that they own 185 units, and they manage about 1200 units. He stated that all of them are not perfect, but he thinks that the majority of them do not look like they would be low-income housing tax credit properties. He stated that the development is workforce housing, and it is like a market-rate apartment building. A conversation ensued about whether the development would have section 8 apartments if there were applicants. Mr. Sceranka stated that if someone has a voucher, they can't deny it, but they do not allow you to over voucher a complex. He stated that it would not work because they are going up to a 60% annual median income, rather than setting all the units at a 20% annual median income. He reiterated that they could not deny someone that comes in with a voucher because that would be discrimination. Mr. Brockman stated that there are two different types of vouchers with one being project-based, usually given by HUD, which means it goes along with the project. He stated the other is a type of individual voucher that can be given by a housing authority, which could be used in the development.

The City Attorney asked if any of the opponents, which spoke against the request for the special use permit, wanted to ask any questions from the applicants.

Mr. Billy Campbell said that he is a retired police officer with 35 years of service and a Vietnam War veteran. He stated that in Vietnam, a location with a one-way in and one-way out is known as an "ambush lane". Mr. Campbell stated that he doesn't want to see an officer get killed in a one-way in, one-way out situation. He stated that when he worked on Kinston Street and in McDuffie Village, it was always on his mind that someone might ambush him in his car due to the areas being one-way in and one-way out. He stated that people knew that he was only able to come back out the same way he went in. Mr. Sceranka agreed with Mr. Campbell, stating that they did not want to see anyone get killed.

The City Attorney inquired if Buckeye had done a market survey or any type of analysis of the property values in the area. He then asked if Buckeye had

a certified appraiser that could serve as an expert in this case. Mr. Sceranka stated that the appraisal hasn't been completed. The City Attorney advised that he was referring to the requirements of the UDO rather than an appraisal. The City Attorney advised that they have a letter that sets forth a lot of these different provisions. He referenced section 4.48.5.2, which states that "The special use will not be injurious to the use and enjoyment of other property in the immediate vicinity for the purposes already permitted, nor diminish or impair property values within the neighborhood". He stated that he would consider the neighborhood to be Carolina Park. The City Attorney asked the applicants if they had an opinion as to the valuation of the properties in Carolina Park. Mr. Bowman stated that he doesn't think that they have performed any type of analysis. The City Attorney advised the applicants that the UDO requires the applicant to have the burden of producing competent material and substantial evidence tending to establish the facts that are set forth in the UDO. Mr. Brockman stated that he has never heard of anyone requiring a study that specific on any level. Mr. Brockman stated that Mr. Bowman did provide information that was collected from the North Carolina Housing Finance Agency based upon their projects statewide and there was no impact on property values from these types of developments. The City Attorney asked if Mr. Bowman was being tenured as an expert in this case. Mr. Brockman stated that no one was being tenured as an expert in the case. The City Attorney stated that one of the issues tonight is that he hasn't heard any information from an expert. He stated that he had heard a lot of information about values from both the applicants and the residents of Carolina Park, neither of which are experts. He stated that under the UDO or NC statutory law, neither are qualified experts to opine about the effect of property values. Mr. Brockman wanted to know if the City Attorney was stating that he wanted to require them to appraise every project in the neighborhood. The City Attorney stated that isn't what he is saying. The City Attorney used the example of some solar projects that have come, and they had a certified appraiser that came to offer an opinion on the impact of that project in a special use permit on adjoining landowners. He stated that the certified appraiser has a market study and looks at the impact. The City Attorney stated that he knows there is probably adequate information out there. He stated that this is just an observation about the adequacy of the evidence here. He stated that one of the attachments provided by Buckeye states that "Unfortunately, very little research exists on the housing credit's property values impact on North Carolina". He stated that it then goes on to say something about Zillow or findings from Zillow. The City Attorney stated that the Council would have to weigh whether the testimony given is competent and if it is substantial as it pertains to that particular issue in the UDO. Mr. Brockman stated that there is nothing that anyone can point to that will say that property values will decrease due to the development. The City Attorney

stated that information would be what an expert would testify to. Mr. Brockman stated that it would, but that was beyond the scope of what they are doing here. The City Attorney stated that the purpose of the quasi-judicial hearing under the UDO is to make these determinations a fact in a setting with the Council. Mr. Brockman stated that the main available information is what was provided from the state of North Carolina. The City Attorney clarified that his role is to look at all of the statutory and case law authority and see what is required to make a prima facie case for the use of a special use permit under these circumstances. The City Attorney stated that the UDO once put the burden on the opponents to provide evidence that it was not sufficient. He stated that 8 to 10 years ago they changed the UDO so that the burden is now on the applicant. He stated that he isn't making an observation that there hasn't been any evidence presented about the devaluation of properties, but we don't have an expert's testimony. He stated that, by statute, non-expert testimony about the valuation of properties or the effect of valuation of properties is incompetent evidence. The City Attorney stated that the Council must follow the burden of proof. Mayor Willis asked if anyone had any more questions for the applicants. There weren't any additional questions for the applicants. Mayor Willis closed the public hearing.

Mayor Willis asked what the pleasure of the Council is.

Councilmember Adams motioned to deny the request for a Special Use Permit for the development of a 48-unit apartment complex on Plaza Road, based on the lack of competent evidence being presented by the applicant. Councilmember Rogers moved to second and the vote was unanimous.

The City Attorney stated that the reasons for the actions of the Council tonight will be set forth in the proposed order that he will discuss at the completion of the hearing. Councilmember Adams stated that upon review of the order, she had made notes on areas of concern to include the part about endangering public safety and diminishing property values. She stated that Councilmember Rogers had a couple parts she was concerned about as well. Councilmember Rogers stated that this is a rock and a hard place situation because housing is a high need in Laurinburg. She stated that the Council encourages citizens to come before them with any concerns they may have when things come across the Council's desk. She stated that with such an outpour of legitimate reasons, she stated that she doesn't think they can move forward with allowing it given the vicinity it is to other residences. She stated that there are things that come across the desk that may be uncomfortable for neighbors, but to have a road this close to someone's house definitely goes against some things in the UDO. She stated that was her grounds in deciding to second the motion to deny the request. Councilmember Rogers stated she just wanted to be clear

that they welcome housing, and they welcome affordable housing. She stated that the City Council also has constituents in the City of Laurinburg that they have to accommodate in the process as well. The City Attorney stated that this order would be reduced to writing and considered by the Council at the next meeting. He stated that, assuming the Council agrees with the language in the proposed order, if the Council approves the order, a copy will be mailed to the parties. He stated that if anyone wants a copy of the order, they should see the City Clerk, so he can have a copy mailed to them.

6. CITY MANAGER REPORTS

a. Discussion of Recycling Contamination Fee

Mayor Willis stated that members of the Council have received some feedback about the most recent action making changes to the recycling program. Councilmember Adams stated that she has had lots of phone calls, and she is glad that the Council is revisiting the changes made to the recycling program. She stated that she has had questions and misunderstandings about the new policy. She said that one person spoke with her about what would happen if they got the \$350 fine, and they were unable to pay it that month. She stated that the person was afraid that their utilities would be cut off. She stated that she assured them that would not happen. Councilmember Adams stated that everyone agrees that something must be done to end the \$300,000+ financial loss that the City is currently facing with the recycling program. She stated that they wanted everyone to have the opportunity to do curbside recycling. She stated that she feels that if citizen wants to recycle and goes to public works to sign a contract agreeing to the terms of the recycling program, she would hope that the fee schedule could be adjusted for the citizen to get a warning initially if there is an issue. Councilmember Adams stated that she doesn't think the Council intended to be punitive towards the citizens, but rather educational. She stated that she understood it was a pilot for a year. She stated that she thinks the Council should look at the fee schedule and that the penalty for the number of offenses. A conversation ensued about the changes that were made to include going to public works to sign the contract and how the amount of the fee was determined. A conversation ensued about citizens' utilities that could not be turned off if the fines were not paid when received. Mayor Willis stated that the Council did not follow suit with the recommendation that came from the recycling committee. A conversation ensued about sending additional information to the citizens, reducing the fee, and the penalty for each offense. The consensus among the Council was that the first offense would be a warning, the second offense would be a \$150 fine with the removal of the cart

(being returned once the fine is paid), and the third offense would be permanent removal of the recycling cart for the residents.

Councilmember Adams motioned to approve to remove the \$350 recycling contamination fee and update the policy that the first offense would be a warning, the second offense would be a \$150 recycling contamination fee with the removal of the cart (being returned once the fine is paid), and the third offense would be permanent removal of the recycling cart for the residents. Councilmember Evans moved to second the motion, and the vote was unanimous.

- b. Consider Ordinance No. O-2024-10 to amend the Fiscal Year 2023-2024 Annual Budget Appropriations Ordinance (No. O-2023-08) in the Governing Body and Building Maintenance Departments.

The City Manager stated that this item is a budget item for two small departments, which include the Governing Body and the Building Maintenance Departments. He stated that he thinks that the "dues" line item was accidentally deleted from the Governing Body with the passage of last year's budget. He stated this item is to address that and take fund balances to cover the dues and subscriptions. He stated that the automated lighting system had to be changed due to the inability to get parts for it. He stated that the estimate of that came in over budget. He stated that this item is to clean this up prior to the end of the fiscal year to cover those expenses.

Councilmember Adams motion to approve Ordinance No. O-2024-10 amending the FY 2023-2024 Budget Appropriations Ordinance (Ordinance No. O-2023-08) in the Governing Body and Building Maintenance Departments. Councilmember Rogers moved to second, and the vote was as follows:

Ayes: Adams, Evans, Rainer, Rogers

Nays: None

(Copy of Ordinance No. O-2024-10 on file in the clerk's office)

- c. Consider Ordinance No. O-2024-11 to establish the Special Revenue Fund for the Rural Transformation Grant Funds.

The City Manager stated that we received word a few months back that we were fortunate enough to receive a Rural Transformation Grant of \$650,000 to start the improvements and efforts in the City's building at 127 South Main. He stated that an asbestos assessment had been completed, and it was

found that there was less asbestos than originally thought. He stated that funds will now be used for asbestos abatement and minor improvements to the building. The City Manager stated that this item is to establish a special revenue fund, which is required by the grant, to start spending some of the \$650,000 on the 127 South Main Street building. He stated that we have also submitted for a sub grant through the Main Street Program, for up to \$850,000, in order to potentially have additional funds to go to the 127 Main Street project.

Councilmember Rainer motion to approve Ordinance No. O-2024-11 to establish the Special Revenue Fund for the Rural Transformation Grant Fund. Councilmember Evans moved to second, and the vote was as follows:

Ayes: Adams, Evans, Rainer, Rogers

Nays: None

(Copy of Ordinance No. O-2024-11 on file in the clerk's office)

- d. Consider Ordinance No. O-2024-12 to transfer funds from the Fire Department Operations Budget to the North Fire Station Capital Project fund.

The City Manager stated that in the current Fire Department budget, there are funds that are to be used for furniture and equipment for the new fire station that is nearing completion. He stated that when ordering the furniture, they found that it would not be received by June 30, 2024. He stated that services must be rendered, and goods have to be received by the end of the fiscal year. He stated that they are asking to transfer the funds from the original Fire Department Operations Budget to the North Fire Station Capital Project fund. He stated this would allow the goods to be received after June 30, 2024, and still be purchased using those funds. The City Manager stated that they set up the capital projects for funds that overlap a 12-month fiscal year. He stated that if the funds were left in the Fire Department Operations Budget, the cost of the furniture would have to be paid for with funds for the next fiscal year. He explained that if the funds are moved to the North Fire Station Capital Project fund, the cost of the furniture would be taken from the current budget as planned.

A conversation ensued about a plaque being placed at the new fire station in honor of Councilmember Donald Rainer. The City Manager stated that there will be a plaque honoring Councilmember Donald Rainer once the fire station is closer to completion.

Councilmember Rainer motion to approve Ordinance No. O-2024-12 to transfer funds from the Fire Department Operations Budget to the North Fire

Station Capital Project fund. Councilmember Adams moved to second, and the vote was as follows:

Ayes: Adams, Evans, Rainer, Rogers

Nays: None

(Copy of Ordinance No. O-2024-12 on file in the clerk's office)

- e. Consider Ordinance No. O-2024-13 to amend the Fiscal Year 2023-2024 Annual Budget Appropriations Ordinance (No. O-2023-08) in order to transfer funds from the General Fund Balance to the Brownfields Grant Special Revenue Fund.

The City Manager stated that this item is some clean up required after the audit due to the Brownfields Grant. He stated that the Brownfields Grant is a reimbursement grant, so we have to estimate what amount will be spent in the last quarter, and we get reimbursement after the funds are spent. He stated that this ordinance is to transfer those funds from the General Fund Budget to the Brownfields Grant Special Revenue Fund. The City Manager explained that Brownfields Grant funds have been used to assess the 127 South Main Street building and various other sites for potential contamination. He stated that he thinks that there was \$500,000 that had been used throughout the community.

Councilmember Adams motion to approve Ordinance No. O-2024-13 to amend the Fiscal Year 2023-2024 Annual Budget Appropriations Ordinance (O-2023-08) in order to transfer funds from the General Fund Balance to the Brownfields Grant Special Revenue Fund. Councilmember Rogers moved to second, and the vote was as follows:

Ayes: Adams, Evans, Rainer, Rogers

Nays: None

(Copy of Ordinance No. O-2024-13 on file in the clerk's office)

- f. Consider Ordinance No. O-2024-14 to establish the Capital Project Ordinance for the Firefighter Training Facility.

The City Manager stated that last year we received support from Representative Pierce and Senator Britt with them putting the \$300,000 in the state budget for the firefighter training facility. He stated that the facility was going to go on Hall Street behind public works and the wastewater treatment plant. He stated that this would also be the location of the police department's new firing range. The City Manager stated that the ordinance in front of the

Council tonight is to establish the Capital Project Ordinance for the facility so that construction can begin on the project using the \$300,000.

Councilmember Adams motion to approve Ordinance No. O-2024-14 to establish the Capital Project Ordinance for the Firefighter Training Facility. Councilmember Rainer moved to second, and the vote was as follows:

Ayes: Adams, Evans, Rainer, Rogers

Nays: None

(Copy of Ordinance No. O-2024-14 on file in the clerk's office)

A conversation ensued about the Council possibly visiting the legislative representatives of the City of Laurinburg. The City Manager stated that he had spoken with Representative Pierce, and they had already thrown around some ideas. The consensus among the Council members and the City Manager is that they should look at the legislators' calendar and try to plan something.

- g. Consider Ordinance No. O-2024-15 to amend the Water & Sewer Capital Project Ordinance to receive and expend the funds for the Lead Service Line Inventory grant/loan project.

The City Manager stated that this item is the result of more good news from Representative Pierce and Senator Britt. He stated that the City was awarded \$500,000 with \$300,000 being grant funding and \$200,000 being low interest loans for the Lead Service Line Inventory. He stated that the purpose was to put together an inventory of any lead copper in the water system. He stated that our engineers feel like there aren't any. He stated that this is on the private side between the meter and the home. He stated that it is a mandate that the government has required, and research will be done to include when houses were constructed. The City Manager stated that it is government mandated, but the government has given the City funds to assist with the project. He stated that this item is to set up the Capital Project Ordinance to start working with the engineers to make sure we partner with someone to get the inventory done. He stated that the first part, which is the preliminary inventory, is due in October. He stated that they would then dive into it further.

Councilmember Rogers motion to approve Ordinance No. O-2024-15 to amend the Water & Sewer Capital Project Ordinance to receive and expend the funds for the Lead Service Line Inventory grant/loan project. Councilmember Adams moved to second, and the vote was as follows:

Ayes: Rogers, Rainer, Evans, Adams

Nays: None

(Copy of Ordinance No. O-2024-15 on file in the clerk's office)

- h. Consider adding Juneteenth (June 19th) to the City of Laurinburg holiday schedule.

The City Manager stated that the topic was mentioned, during the last City Council meeting, of adding Juneteenth to the City of Laurinburg holiday schedule. He stated that Juneteenth is observed June 19th. He stated that the topic was discussed internally to include the cost of adding the holiday. He stated that there was not a budgetary change for the City and employees such as public safety and utilities workers would still be working. He stated that if the City Council wanted to add the holiday, it would just need to be added to the City of Laurinburg holiday schedule. A conversation ensued about the current floating holiday and if it would still be available. The consensus among the Council was to keep the floating holiday as well.

Councilmember Evans motion to approve adding Juneteenth (June 19th) to the City of Laurinburg holiday schedule. Councilmember Adams moved to second, and the vote was unanimous.

7. COMMENTS FROM MAYOR AND/OR COUNCILMEMBERS

The City Manager stated that he had two more things that he wanted to address. He proposed that the City Council have a tie-up of the budget meeting at 4:30 p.m. prior to the regular City Council meeting scheduled for Tuesday, May 21, 2024. He stated that they would hope to have the Council a solid budget to look at by that time, but he is required to have a balanced budget by June 1, 2024, for the Council for that budget to be adopted. The City Manager stated that they have had a lot of good responses to insurance, so they are trying to finalize that item. He stated he felt that they should be able to finalize that in the next month. He proposed an hour-long meeting prior to the City Council meeting in the month of May. A conversation ensued about any possible issues that might come up during that meeting. The City Manager stated he didn't foresee any possible issues. He stated that health insurance was the final piece. The consensus of the Council was to have a special meeting on Tuesday, May 21, 2024, at 4:30 p.m. to discuss the budget.

The City Manager stated that he wanted to clear up some information that may not have been 100% accurate stemming from a meeting where the County Commissioners had been discussing the .25% local sales tax. He stated that

Article 46 of the Articles of Sales Tax Distribution of North Carolina was presented as it would be beneficial to the City of Laurinburg and other towns in our

community. He stated that the general statute states that the proceeds of the Article 46 tax, if levied, are retained solely by the County. The City Manager stated that if the County pushed for this .25% tax, it would have to go to referendum. He stated that he isn't aware of any way that the City would benefit from this additional tax. He stated that the Finance Director reached out to Kara Millonzi at the UNC School of Government regarding the tax. He stated that Mrs. Millonzi stated that the county can't pass on a portion of the proceeds to the city if the tax is levied. The City Manager stated that he just wanted to advise the Council of their findings in case they had heard the misstated information.

A conversation ensued about whether the City was still assisting the Johnson Community Center in the City's annual budget. The City Manager stated that the minutes were pulled from when the Council voted to assist the Johnson Community Center, and it was found that the Council voted to assist the center for up to a maximum of \$50,000 a year for up to 2 years. He stated that the action was taken in October 2021, so the two years would have ended in 2023. A conversation ensued about whether the I.E. Johnson Community Center would be considered in future budgets. The City Manager stated that it was at the digression of the Council. It was determined that the Council could talk about future assistance to I.E. Johnson Community Center at the upcoming budget meeting on May 21, 2024.

A conversation ensued about opioid assistance that is given to the County. Councilmember Adams asked if any opioid assistance was given to the City. The City Manager stated that the County has programs such as DSS that will allow impact both the City and the County. He stated that the amount that would have been received by the City was so small, they felt it was best to just let it flow through the County.

A conversation ensued about Councilmember Adams applying for the North Carolina League of Municipalities Board of Directors. She stated that she was selected to be on the Slate of Candidates with the official voting to be completed by next week. She thanked everyone for their assistance and letters of support. Mayor Willis congratulated Councilmember Adams and stated that everyone was proud of her accomplishments.

Mayor Willis wanted to remind everyone that the mural artist responsible for the mural at McDuffie Square, Max Dowdle, was back in town doing another mural on the old Firestone building. Mayor Willis stated that he wanted to brag on the team

for being so efficient in moving forward with the McDuffie Square mural resulting in it being the 1st mural in the series of 100 murals. He stated that Mr. Dowdle received a grant to do 1 mural in every county in the state. Mayor Willis stated that Mr. Dowdle has had other people show interest in murals.

8. CLOSED SESSION (If Needed)

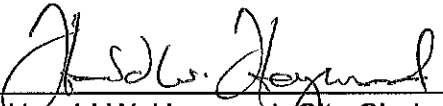
No closed session needed.

9. ADJOURNMENT

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

The meeting was adjourned at 8:34 p.m.


James T. Willis, Mayor


Harold W. Haywood, City Clerk