

**CITY OF LAURINBURG
CITY COUNCIL MEETING
DECEMBER 13, 2022
CITY HALL AND POLICE DEPARTMENT
303 WEST CHURCH ST.**

6:00 p.m.

Minutes

The City Council of the City of Laurinburg held its regular meeting on Tuesday, December 13, 2022, 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, Barbara Rogers, and Andrew G. Williamson, Jr.

Also present were Charles D. Nichols III, City Manager, and William P. Floyd, Jr., City Attorney. Absent was Jennifer A. Tippet, City Clerk.

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

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Councilmember Adams moved to approve the agenda with second by Councilmember Rainer and the vote was unanimous.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

No comments from the public.

CONSENT AGENDA

Mayor Willis read aloud the Consent Agenda:

- a) Consider minutes of November 15, 2022, regular meeting
- b) Consider setting public hearing on January 17, 2023, at 6:00 p.m. to consider request for special use permit to allow microblading at 126 S. Main Street
- c) Consider authorizing the Mayor to execute Termination of Easement to Riggins Enterprises, Inc. for a utility easement

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

Ayes: Williamson, Rainer, Evans, Adams, Rogers

Nays: None

CITY MANAGER REPORTS

UPDATE ON SOUTHEAST CRESCENT REGIONAL COMMISSION

City Manager Nichols recognized David Richardson, the Executive Director with the Lumber River Council of Governments (LRCOG), who was present to give City Council an update on the Southeast Crescent Regional Commission (SCRC). Mr. Richardson stated that a lot of things with the SCRC is still up in the air, as the organization is just now getting started and structure is getting developed. He went on to give a brief history of regional commissions in the U.S. and that they started back in the 1960's, with the purpose of working with economically distressed areas of the country to improve their economic condition. He stated over time there has been a big push to establish regional commissions in parts of the State of North Carolina. He mentioned that back in the early 1980's, early 1990's, there was discussion about developing a Southeast Crescent Commission to cover the counties along the eastern seaboard, down through Georgia and Mississippi. The Commission helps to flow additional federal dollars into those areas to help increase economic development projects and processes.

Mr. Richardson explained that in 2008, the SCRC was authorized by the federal government. The commissions are setup as partnerships between the state and federal government. There are seven (7) states involved with the SCRC (Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia). He referenced a handout that included the budget request of the SCRC submitted to Congress this year. He emphasized that while the SCRC was authorized in 2008, it took until December 2021 for a federal co-chair to be appointed, therefore, the Commission has not been able to operate due to not having a state and federal co-chair appointed. He went on to explain who the co-chairs were and information about their terms. He stated the LRCOG was able to meet with the federal co-chair to share ideas on how to move forward with the SCRC structure.

Mr. Richardson explained the mission of the Commission is to provide sustainable communities and strengthen the economic growth within those distressed counties. The commissions provide grants to help build certain parts of infrastructure and certain kinds of work such as transportation, public infrastructure, health care, and business development. He stated that more funding will be available to persistent poverty counties, which includes all five of the counties in the Lumbee River region, to include Scotland County. Legislation for the SCRC directed 50% of the funding to be spent within those most distressed counties. The letter of support the City recently sent for the SCRC will hopefully help in the efforts to provide funding parity to the SCRC compared to the other commissions. The commission is hoping to make its first award of grants to projects in the spring of 2023. Member governments will be made aware of grant availability and how to apply.

Mr. Richardson stated that if anyone would like to provide feedback to the Commission as it continues to develop and organize, they can go to the website, www.scrc.gov, and complete the survey found there. He thinks there may be about 14.5 million dollars available for grant funding in the spring of 2023 cycle. He asked Council to be thinking about any potential projects the City may have for which this grant funding can be sought.

No action was taken.

ESSENTIAL SINGLE FAMILY REHABILITATION LOAN PROGRAM

City Manager Nichols recognized Adrian Lowery who presented information concerning potential funding and to request that he be considered for contracting with the City to administer the Essential Single Family Rehabilitation Loan Program. The City of Laurinburg is eligible to apply for \$162,000.00 through the NC Housing Finance Agency program from the 2023 cycle of the Essential Single-Family Rehabilitation Loan Pool. Mr. Lowery stated that he has been involved with this program since the year 2000 and has worked with the Lumber River Council of Governments (LRCOG) and Scotland County to bring in over \$2 million to rehabilitate over 50 homes for low-income citizens in Scotland County. He stated that approximately 40% of those homes were in the city limits of Laurinburg.

Mr. Lowery explained that recent changes to the program now allow multiple entities to apply for funding, as long as expertise is available to operate or rehab staff to cover it. One caveat to the program is that at least some of the homes to be rehabilitated must be outside the city limits, such as in Wagram or Laurel Hill, etc. The minimum number of units to be rehabilitated is three (3) with the \$162,000.00. If all units have been successfully completed, more funding can be applied for from the pool for additional projects. Each individual project is capped at \$40,000.00 for rehabilitation purposes only of dilapidated systems, such as the roofing system, HVAC, plumbing, or electrical. The purpose of the program is not meant for cosmetic improvements only.

Mr. Lowery stated citizens participating in the program would have to sign a deed of trust for a loan to be forgiven at a rate of \$8,000.00 per year as long as the citizen owns the home over a 5-year period. The participant must be an owner occupant; be at least 62 years of age; or someone in the home that is disabled; or a child in the home exposed to lead hazards; or must be a veteran. Mr. Lowery has experience administering this program in Scotland, Robeson, Hoke and Bladen counties. There are numerous homes in Scotland County that are eligible for this funding.

Upon question by Councilmember Rainer, Mr. Lowery explained that the grant funds are for rehabilitation only and not for making additions to a home.

Councilmember Adams asked about the relationship between the City and County and if we already got 40% of the homes the County applied for funding in the past that were rehabilitated, then why would the City participate. Mr. Lowery stated that due to recent changes that allow both entities to apply for funding, it gives the potential to double the dollars and double the work that can be done, as long as all work the City does is not inside the City only, but some of the work outside the City also, with the minimum number of units of three (3).

Councilmember Rogers asked if we do as many units as we can with the \$162,000.00. Mr. Lowery stated the minimum number of rehabs is three (3), with the minimum funding per unit of \$5,000.00, maximum \$40,000.00. He stated he has not found any homes where they have spent less than \$30,000.00 or more on.

Councilmember Evans asked how clients access the program. Mr. Lowery stated he will use the radio station, the local newspaper, social media to make people aware of the program, but what has worked well in the past has been word of mouth.

Councilmember Rainer wanted clarification that the minimum amount of funding that has to be spent on each project is \$5,000.00. Mr. Lowery stated that is correct. She also wanted clarification on the criteria for eligible applicants to be at least 62 years old or disabled. He restated also that if a child in the home is exposed to a lead paint hazard or if the applicant is a veteran, then those applicants are eligible to apply also. All applicants must still meet the 80% median income limit for the household.

Councilmember Adams asked to know when the applications are opening. Mr. Lowery stated the City must apply by December 16, 2022, and then the NC Housing Finance Agency takes between three (3) to five (5) months to make final decisions on the awarded grants. Once the agency makes the award, it takes about another ninety (90) days to complete post-approval documentation before spending the funds on the projects begins.

Councilmember Evans and Mr. Lowery continued discussion about examples of eligible projects for this funding to be used on. Councilmember Rogers asked if legal aide was used to assist with recruiting eligible applicants. Mr. Lowery stated he has not ever used legal aide, but has used other avenues, such as churches, ministerial groups, and will reach out to municipalities to find those potential eligible applicants.

Mr. Nichols explained that since there are only three (3) days to submit the application, Council would need to approve application for the grant at this time.

Motion was made by Councilmember Rogers, seconded by Councilmember Evans to approve the application submission to the FY 2023 Essential Single-Family Rehabilitation Loan Pool program and authorize the Mayor to execute the Contract for Consultant Services between the City of Laurinburg and Adrian E. Lowery. The motion carried unanimously.

CAPITAL PROJECT ORDINANCE FOR PUMP STATION RENOVATIONS

The City Manager explained that the City was approved for State American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding in the amount of \$7,360,000.00 for additional Pump Station Renovations. The City has completed five or six in the past few years, but the City has many pump stations that were built in the mid-90's to accommodate the southern annexation of Laurinburg that are now reaching end of useful life. The budget amendment is needed to amend the capital project for the Pump Station Renovations Phase II to account for the increase in funding and construction expenditures of \$7,360,000.00 that the City will be receiving from the State.

Motion was made by Councilmember Adams and second by Councilmember Rainer to approve Ordinance No. O-2022-37 to amend the Fiscal Year 2022-2023 Annual Appropriations Ordinance (O-2022-21) by allocating \$7,360,000.00 in revenues and expenditures for the Capital Project Ordinance for Pump Station Renovations-Phase II Project. The vote was as follows:

Ayes: Williamson, Rainer, Evans, Adams, Rogers

Nays: None

(copy of Ordinance No. O-2022-37 on file in clerk's office)

RESOLUTION TO ACCEPT STATE AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT GRANT FUNDING

The City Manager explained that since the City was approved for State ARPA-Earmark funding in the amount \$7,360,000.00 for Pump Station Renovations, this resolution is also needed to officially accept the ARPA grant funding for this project.

Motion was made by Councilmember Evans and second by Councilmember Rogers to approve Resolution No. R-2022-35 to Accept State ARPA Grant Funding for the Pump Station Renovations project in the amount of \$7,360,000.00. The vote was as follows:

Ayes: Williamson, Rainer, Evans, Adams, Rogers

Nays: None

(copy of Resolution No. R-2022-35 on file in clerk's office)

SPECIAL REVENUE FUND ORDINANCE FOR BROWNFIELDS GRANT

The City Manager explained that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency selected the City of Laurinburg to receive funding in the amount of \$500,000.00 to inventory, characterize, assess, and conduct cleanup planning and community involvement related activities. At least 25 brownfields sites lie within the one-mile radius of the target area, most of which are primarily retail spaces, but which also include 11 active and former auto shops and 5 active or former industrial sites. Out of these brownfields, Laurinburg is focusing on three priority brownfield sites (McKay Street storefronts, Central Hotel, and Covington Concrete) within the Laurinburg After Five (LAF) Area based on the likelihood of achieving their vision of spurring economic growth, improving quality of life, and boosting community relationships, as well as addressing environmental injustices and health issues.

The City Manager stated that the City is currently conducting a Request for Qualifications process to select a Qualified Environmental Professional for which a recommendation should be brought back to Council at next month's meeting for a firm to begin the work on this project. This Special Revenue Fund is needed to properly account for the receipt and expenditure of grant funds for this project.

Councilmember Williamson asked when the properties to be improved are being identified if the engineering firm assists with that process. The City Manager explained that properties already identified in the grant targets McKay Street, the old Covington Ready Mix Plant, and the old Central Hotel. There are other properties as well that will be looked at, such as the 127 S. Main St. project, but the selected engineering firm will guide the City through the process and prioritize projects. The grants funds are not for actual clean-up at any sites, but just for engineering plans.

Motion was made by Councilmember Williamson and second by Councilmember Adams to approve Ordinance No. O-2022-38 Special Revenue Fund for the Brownfields Grant in the amount of \$500,000.00. The vote was as follows:

Ayes: Williamson, Rainer, Evans, Adams, Rogers

Nays: None

(copy of Ordinance No. O-2022-38 on file in clerk's office)

RESOLUTION OF AWARD FOR DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM IMPROVEMENTS-PHASE II PROJECT

The City Manager explained that sealed bids were received and opened at a public bid opening on November 22, 2022, at 2:00 p.m. for the Distribution System Improvements-Phase II Project. He reminded Council of the scope of work for the Phase I project and the continuation of work needed for this phase. The City's consulting engineers have reviewed the bids and recommended the contract be tentatively awarded to the lowest, responsive, responsible bidder, Metcon, Inc., in the amount of \$5,796,083.02, contingent upon the approval of the North Carolina Division of Water Infrastructure.

Motion was made by Councilmember Rainer and second by Councilmember Williamson to approve Resolution No. R-2022-36 to tentatively award the construction contract for the Distribution System Improvements-Phase II project to Metcon, Inc. in the amount of \$5,796,083.02. The vote was as follows:

Ayes: Williamson, Rainer, Evans, Adams, Rogers

Nays: None

(copy of Resolution No. R-2022-36 on file in clerk's office)

2023 COUNCIL MEETING SCHEDULE

The City Manager presented the proposed 2023 Council meeting schedule. Council meetings are normally scheduled for the first Tuesday after the 15th of each month; however, in order to avoid the holidays, the November and December meetings are moved up a week to not conflict with holidays. The schedule also reflects the recently approved starting time of 6:00 p.m. for all these regular monthly meetings.

Motion was made by Councilmember Adams and second by Councilmember Williamson to approve the 2023 City Council Regular Monthly Meeting Schedule as presented. The motion was approved unanimously.

FISCAL YEAR 2023-2024 BUDGET SCHEDULE

The City Manager presented the Fiscal Year 2023-2024 budget calendar that was developed to provide a framework of the goals and key deadlines associated with the successful development of the annual operating budget for the 2023-2024 fiscal year. This is a

recommended calendar for Council's consideration. The City Manager stated that he would provide potential dates for a Budget Retreat and/or Citizen Input Session to Council in January.

Motion was made by Councilmember Adams and second by Councilmember Rainer to approve the Fiscal Year 2023-2024 Budget Schedule as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

MAYOR APPOINTMENT TO SOUTHEAST REGIONAL AIRPORT COMMISSION

Mayor Willis announced the reappointment of Mary Jo Adams to the Southeast Regional Airport Commission and thanked her for her service and continued willingness to serve on this commission. Councilmember Adams thanked the Mayor for the appointment.

COMMENTS FROM MAYOR AND/OR COUNCILMEMBERS

There were no comments from the Mayor or Councilmembers.

CLOSED SESSION

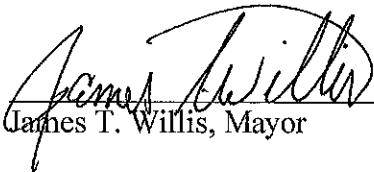
At 6:45 p.m., Councilmember Williamson moved to go into closed session pursuant to N.C.G.S. 143-318.11(a)(3) to consult with attorney. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Adams and carried unanimously.

Councilmember Evans left the meeting at 6:46 p.m. due to sickness.

At 7:10 p.m., Councilmember Williamson moved to adjourn the closed session and resume the regular meeting. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Rainer and carried unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion was made by Councilmember Rainer, seconded by Councilmember Williamson, and unanimously carried to adjourn the meeting. The meeting adjourned at 7:11 p.m.


James T. Willis, Mayor

Jennifer A. Tippet, City Clerk

