

**CITY OF LAURINBURG  
SPECIAL MEETING/  
TOWN HALL MEETING  
SEPTEMBER 27, 2018  
A. B. GIBSON BUILDING  
322 S. MAIN ST.  
LAURINBURG, NC  
6:30 P.M.**

**Minutes**

The City Council of the City of Laurinburg held a special meeting/Town Hall Meeting on September 27, 2018 at 6:00 p.m. in the board room of the A. B. Gibson Building located at 322 South Main St., Laurinburg, NC with the Honorable Matthew Block, MD, Mayor, presiding. The following Councilmembers were present: Mary Jo Adams, Mary Evans, James J. Garby, Jr. and Curtis B. Leak. Councilmember Andrew G. Williamson, Jr. was absent due to death in the family.

Also present were Charles D. Nichols III, City Manager; Jennifer A. Tippett, City Clerk; and Betty Galloway, Human Resources/Risk Management Director.

Mayor Block called the meeting to order at 6:33 p.m.

Councilmember Leak gave the invocation and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mayor Block welcomed everyone to the first Town Hall Meeting in Laurinburg. He introduced Council, the City Manager, the City Clerk and the Human Resources/Risk Management Director.

Mayor Block explained that the idea for the Town Hall Meeting came from the Citizen Input Session as a way for Council to get out into the community more. He requested civility from everyone. Before opening up for questions or comments, he requested that speakers stand, state their names, and give everyone a chance to be heard before speaking a second time.

Councilmember Evans thanked Council for approving the Town Hall Meeting.

Mayor Block explained that Hurricane Florence would probably generate much discussion. He added that much of the recovery efforts were a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) function and was handled through Scotland County; however, the City Manager had been involved in the discussions at the Emergency Operations Center (EOC).

Councilmember Adams thanked Councilmember Evans for putting together the Town Hall Meeting. She added that Councilmember Williamson was not present due to the death of his mother-in-law.

Mayor Block explained that a list of items for follow-up would be prepared. He then opened the floor up for comments or questions:

***Unidentified female. Concern: mosquitoes***

The City Manager explained that the City had experienced over 25 inches of rain from Hurricane Florence. He added that although the soil is sandy and usually drains well, there is still a lot of standing water due to the terrain. He further added that larvae forms and grow into mosquitoes. The City has been utilizing larvicide instead of spraying chemicals. He further explained that the State has given the City a waiver from permitting in order to spray chemicals in the City. The City is also giving out a limited number of larvicide tablets to City residents.

Upon questions by Mayor Block, the City Manager explained that Scotland County is considering aerial spraying or contracted services for spraying. The County is giving out larvicide tablets at the Health Department. He added that several citizens had picked up the larvicide tablets from Public Works.

***Mrs. Rosemary Rainer. Concern: Mosquitoes***

The City Manager explained that the larvicide works in standing water only.

***Mr. Tim Ivey, West Church Street. Concern: Flooding on Church Street***

Mr. Ivey explained that he is aware that Church Street is a state-maintained road. He added that it usually takes seven (7) to eight (8) months to get the State to do anything with the storm drainage. He further added that he cleaned out the storm grate but the water was so deep he could not keep the grate clean during the hurricane. His home experienced flooding from Hurricane Florence.

Following a brief discussion, Mayor Block explained that he had asked Mr. Ivey to write a letter to North Carolina Department of Transportation describing the situation with the storm drainage in front of his residence on Church Street and copy the City Manager or himself. He also requested that this item be placed on the list for follow-up.

***Mr. Justin Davis. Discussed relief efforts in the community.***

***Ms. Laurie Limmerman. Concern: Shelters and the need for stability for children.***

Discussion ensued concerning the operation of shelters for those displaced by the hurricane.

Councilmember Garby explained that the City could not make a private property owner offer his property for a shelter.

The City Manager explained that since FEMA had been involved at the Emergency Operations Center, he had not been involved in discussions concerning shelters and housing as these meetings had involved FEMA, Scotland County and the Department of Social Services.

Councilmember Leak explained that when Hurricane Matthew hit two (2) years ago, several people from Lumberton moved to Laurinburg into Laurinburg Housing Authority (LHA) units since housing is a regional issue. He added that people should check with LHA to check the

database to see what is available; however, some Scotland County residents may have to move out of Scotland County. He further added that there are flyers out that provide a toll free number to call for shelter.

Mr. Sandy Callan, WLNC Radio, stated that the number to call is 211.

Mayor Block explained that he called the Executive Director of LHA to work with the City on housing. He added that LHA is trying to place people from Maxton and other localities.

Councilmember Adams explained that she called the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) in Greensboro, was referred to the Atlanta HUD office, and finally referred to LHA. She added that she spoke with the LHA Director today and was told that the 10 units that had been available were filled. She further added that LHA is working with other individuals who have been displaced to find them shelter.

***Ms. Brenda Richmond. Use of Washington Park and North Laurinburg Schools for shelters.***

Mayor Block explained that Washington Park School is privately owned. He added that North Laurinburg School was going to be utilized for the Scotland Early College since St. Andrews University was damaged.

***Ms. Michelle Ellerbe. Questioned shelter requirements and asked how many citizens of Laurinburg and Scotland County will be displaced?***

Councilmember Adams explained that the Scotland County Manager said in a meeting today that 150 homes in Scotland County were completely destroyed. At the meeting, shelters were also discussed in that most shelters are faith-based or non-profit. They must have shower facilities; therefore the old schools would need to be renovated. She further added that the American Red Cross partners with churches or non-profits to bring portable showers to a facility.

Upon question by Ms. Ellerbe, Mayor Block suggested she contact the Scotland County Building Inspector for shelter requirements.

Councilmember Evans suggested that the Scotland County Emergency Management Services (EMS) Director would be a contact concerning shelter requirements.

Councilmember Adams suggested that the American Red Cross would be a contact concerning shelter requirements.

Discussion ensued concerning other available buildings in Laurinburg and Scotland County such as Willow Place, Century Care, and the old Morgan Center. Mayor Block explained that there was a mold problem at Willow Place, and it would take months to get Willow Place and Century Care useable. He added that the Morgan Center was being renovated for Scotland County.

Councilmember Evans stated that the City needs a place for the homeless.

***Mr. Justin Davis. Larger cities have shelters. The City needs to clean manholes.***

Mayor Block explained that leaders should not forget this incident to try to make it a smoother process should it happen again.

***Ms. Joyce Davis. Recreation and beautification on north side of town.***

Mayor Block explained that he believed north side recreation and beautification should be on the list being compiled. He then asked the attendees if a recreation center is built in Laurinburg if they would rather it built in the center of town or at the Morgan Complex.

Attendees raised their hands and no official count was taken.

***Ms. Annie Bethea. Thanked the Street Department for working on the storm drainage.***

Ms. Bethea explained that her house sat in water for six (6) days, and the City Manager sent crews out to dig the ditch deeper. She added that crews were back on her street today and they are trying to fix the drainage. She added that she has some of the larvicide. She concluded by stating that if citizens have issues, the City needs to be notified so it can take necessary action.

Mayor Block asked the attendees if they were happy with the overall communication during and after the hurricane.

A few attendees indicated they were not happy with the communication.

***Ms. Shirley Campbell*** responded that she was not happy with communication because when she called about her brother being trapped by floodwaters she was told that her brother should jump out the window. She added that she called Sheriff Kersey and he rescued her brother.

***Mr. Don Rainer*** discussed the storm drainage issues at his and other's residences on Isabelle Street. He called the City three (3) weeks prior to and the week of the hurricane for assistance. He challenged City Council to come to Isabelle Street.

Mayor Block suggested that Isabelle Street be added to the follow-up list.

***Mr. Curtis Pegues. Flooding on Isabelle Street.***

Mr. Pegues stated that he agreed with Mr. Rainer that the residents of Isabelle Street have been fighting the flooding issue for a long time. He explained that he observed that there is insufficient drainage on Isabelle Street due to their being only one (1) drain on Isabelle Street and everything in the area drains to Isabelle Street. He requested that the City engineer present a solution and help the residents.

***Ms. Esther Graham. Concern about her mother.***

Ms. Graham explained that she lives elsewhere and is concerned for her 82-year old mother who lives at 907 Isabelle Street. Her home flooded and everything in her home was destroyed. She has not air conditioning and is not able to live in the home.

Mayor Block explained that the City cannot fix private property, but that the costs would be reimbursable through FEMA.

Pastor Michael Edds suggested that she contact the Southern Baptist Men's Association for assistance because it has 30 workers in town to work on property such as Ms. Graham's mother.

Discussion ensued concerning debris pick up off the street. The City Manager explained that debris such as drywall must go into the County's Construction & Demolition (C&D) Landfill. He added that the County had been assisting the City with yard debris and putting it in an emergency debris site. The County will be reimbursed by FEMA for the tipping fees. He added that he would find out if there has been a determination by the County if it will waive the C&D tipping fees.

***Pastor Michael Edds. City workers did a great job and concern about Market Furniture Building.***

Pastor Edds stated that the City workers did a great job cleaning up and getting electricity back on quickly. He expressed concern about the destruction at the Market Furniture Building. He explained that he did not believe that the owner had been required to follow codes and that an irreplaceable building downtown was gone. He also expressed concern about the other buildings downtown purchased by the same individual that have not been repaired.

The City Manager explained that building codes change over time. He added that the remnants of the Market Furniture Building had been declared an unsafe building by the City. The owner started taking the remaining wall down earlier in the day and to clean up the area around the building.

Further discussion ensued concerning the vacant buildings downtown.

Upon question by Councilmember Evans, the City Manager explained that the owner of the Market Furniture Building is responsible for demolition and clean-up of his property. He added that City staff was monitoring the demolition and clean-up.

***Ms. Joyce Davis*** requested that Councilmember Evans explain the referendums on the November ballot.

***Mr. Wade Hatcher. Lack of communication during the emergency.***

Mr. Hatcher expressed concern that the only source of information due to lack of electricity for three (3) days was WLNC Radio; however, it was not on the air all of the time. He added that he and his family had to be evacuated and were told so by a police officer at 2:20 a.m. at his front

door. He further added that a 24-hour emergency dedicated radio broadcast is necessary to let citizens know what is going on during an emergency.

Mr. Sandy Callan explained that WLNC Radio had electrical problems also and were off the air. He added that several years ago Scotland County supplied a generator to the station; however, the station now has a small gas-operated generator. He added that the station also did not have enough personnel to man the station 24-hours a day.

Mayor Block requested that “partnership for communication” be added to the list being compiled.

The City Clerk explained that she had a battery-operated radio that also had a hand crank and was able to even listen to the National Oceanographic Administration weather warnings throughout the hurricane.

***Mrs. Rosemary Rainer. Mindful that this is the start of hurricane season.***

Discussion ensued concerning flooding issues in the City and that the City was in the process of developing a priority list of areas including the costs to repair the issues. He added that the City would investigate whether some of the storm drainage projects could be reimbursed by FEMA>

***Ms. Laurie Limmerman*** suggested a community day to bring the community together.

***Mrs. Jennifer Block. Inquired about hotels for providing place for citizens to stay.***

Mayor Block explained that he was told that all of the hotels in Laurinburg were full.

Upon question by Mayor Block, the City Manager explained that the City could not pay for hotels for citizens displaced. He added that individuals could be reimbursed by FEMA.

***Mr. Chris English***, Executive Director of the Laurinburg/Scotland County Area Chamber of Commerce, explained that the United Way has funds available for displaced families.

Upon question from Mayor Block, the City Manager explained that Council gave direction to staff to bring an amended Storm Water Policy back to Council. He added that staff is developing the priority list and projected costs to be presented during Fiscal Year 2019-2020 budget discussions.

A brief discussion ensued concerning the Town Hall Meeting and that it just happened to have been scheduled months ago and then Hurricane Florence hit the area.

An unidentified female asked if the County has meetings such as this Town Hall Meeting.

Mayor Block explained that the County had been having hurricane informational meetings, but it does not have town hall meetings. He added that its monthly regular meetings are held on the

first Monday of each month at 7:00 p.m. in the board room of the A.B. Gibson Center or at the Emergency Operations Center.

Councilmember Adams explained that FEMA would be setting up a Disaster Assistance Center in the next couple of weeks at Scotland Place. She added that FEMA teams would be going door to door to survey damage and talk with people. She added that the FEMA employees would have FEMA on their shirts and badges.

Councilmember Garby advised citizens to check credentials for anyone that comes to their homes.

An unidentified female explained that she lives on Bronco Drive and a FEMA team had been to her home.

An unidentified male explained that the City needs to come out into the neighborhoods and talk to the citizens before problems occur. He added that it should not take a hurricane to bring everyone together.

Mayor Block explained that the City liked to solve problems and citizens should come to Council meetings.

The City Manager reminded everyone that if an application had been submitted to FEMA prior to Tuesday, September 25, 2018, when the County was declared as a disaster area by FEMA, the application would have been declined. He added that citizens should go to [disasterassistance.gov](http://disasterassistance.gov) or call 800-621-FEMA.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

Motion was made by Councilmember Leak, seconded by Councilmember Adams, and unanimously carried to adjourn.

The meeting adjourned at 8:05 p.m.

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Matthew Block, MD, Mayor

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Jennifer A. Tippet, City Clerk