

**CITY OF LAURINBURG  
COUNCIL MINI RETREAT  
JANUARY 6, 2006  
MUNICIPAL BUILDING  
6:00 p.m.**

**Minutes**

The City Council of the City of Laurinburg held a special meeting Friday, January 6, 2006 at 6:00 p.m. in the council room of the Municipal Building with the Honorable Ann B. Slaughter, Mayor, presiding. The following Councilmembers were present: Rembert DeBerry, Lisa D. Griswold, Curtis B. Leak, Thomas W. Parker, III, and Herbert M. Rainer, Jr.

Also present were: Craig Honeycutt, City Manager, Dolores A. Hammond, City Clerk, Jennifer Tippett, Deputy City Clerk, and the following Management Team members: Robert Malloy, Harold Smith, Cindy Carpenter, Bill Riemer, and Robert Ellis.

Following dinner, Mayor Slaughter called the meeting to order at 6:20 p.m. Councilmember DeBerry gave the invocation.

The City Manager stated that the purpose of the mini-retreat was to begin thinking about items to include in the Ten-Year Plan and to help staff begin with the 2006-2007 budget. He added that a lot of good information for the Ten-Year Plan had already been obtained from the October council workshop and the two citizen input meetings in November. In addition, the Management Team has developed a list of suggestions to consider for the Ten-Year Plan as well as for the 2006-2007 budget. He reviewed what Council discussed at the October workshop, which included jobs, unemployment, industry, update on housing plan, and other items. He explained that two things from the workshop that staff felt was important to Council were looking at code enforcement and beautification. He stated that Bill Riemer would present some information concerning code enforcement and Harold Smith would present information concerning lot cuttings.

Bill Riemer, Director of Administration and Development, stated that it takes approximately one (1) year to condemn a building, and it can be expensive if there is no cooperation from the owner. In the last ten years, Bill Peele, City Building Inspector, has inspected 700 houses and has demolished or repaired 268 houses. He explained that the average expense to demolish a building is \$8,000.00. This includes landfill expenses, public works, attorney, asbestos inspection, and personnel expenses.

Mr. Riemer stated that junk vehicles are also a code enforcement issue. In the last eight (8) to nine (9) years, 1,400 junk vehicles have been removed. He explained that this process takes approximately five (5) to six (6) weeks to complete. He added that in the last year not as many junk vehicles have been removed due to the departure of one of the zoning officers. The law now prevents the Police Department from providing anyone other than a law enforcement officer the owner information from the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) records. He stated that the current ordinance requires that the City contact the vehicle's owner. He further added that he has spoken with the City Attorney and it has been suggested that the ordinance be changed so that the vehicle's owner need not be notified since the vehicle is posted. He then stated that when the ordinance change is drafted, it would be brought before Council for approval.

Upon question by Councilmember DeBerry, Mr. Riemer stated that in most cases, the City does not recoup any of the money expended for demolition. The City places a lien on the property for the demolition costs.

Mr. Riemer stated that staff will continue code enforcement at the same rate with the existing personnel, but if Council desires more code enforcement, additional staff will be necessary. He reminded Council that in 2008, a staff person would have to be hired for storm water enforcement. He stated that once the storm water enforcement program is in effect, that person might have time to do additional code enforcement.

A discussion ensued concerning junk vehicles, ownership of the vehicle, and the posting of the vehicles. Upon

question by Councilmember Rainer, Mr. Riemer stated that Council could change the junk vehicle ordinance so that notifying the vehicle's owner is not required, or go through a third party vendor to obtain owner information. He added that a third party vendor would cost between \$1,500.00 and \$2,000.00 per year.

Harold Smith, Public Works Director, stated that in addition to the junk car and housing ordinances, that Public Works enforces the lot-cutting ordinance. He stated that 210 parcels have been condemned for Code violation, and the City had to clean up 64 of those with the owner being charged.

The City Manager stated that staff is doing all it can with regard to beautification, nuisance abatement, junk cars and housing. He then stated that if Council would like more enforcement of these ordinances, additional staff may need to be added. He further stated that staff could consider it in the Ten-Year Plan process.

Councilmember Griswold stated that she thought that, in general, staff is doing an excellent job with respect to dilapidated houses and junk cars.

The City Manager stated that one of the items from the citizen input sessions and from Council was Community Development Block Grants and project areas. He stated that he and Bill Riemer had talked with The Wooten Company about determining if the City has any areas that would qualify for a grant. He then stated that the next funding cycle is December 2006. He explained that with Council's approval that staff will budget for a consulting fee in the 06-07 budget so that the City will have a better application to submit in the next funding cycle.

Mr. Riemer clarified that the monies budgeted would be to conduct a survey in the City to find out if there are any areas that qualify for an application.

He stated that one of the issues discussed at Council's workshop in October was the scattered site program that is administered by the County. He added that Adrian Lowery from the Lumber River Council of Governments would be at the January meeting to provide an update on the scattered site program being conducted by the County. Mr. Lowery will provide an update on the number of houses inside the City that are involved in the project and what the City could do to help.

The City Manager stated that information was mailed to the County and the Chamber of Commerce on items from the citizen input sessions that were their responsibility.

Councilmember Griswold stated that she and Councilmember Parker are on the Laurinburg Downtown Revitalization Commission and that a Farmers Market is being planned in the downtown area.

The City Manager stated that at Council's workshop it was asked that the Management Team submit ideas for the Ten-Year Plan. The following items were discussed

1. The need for additional office space. He stated that the Barrett Building and the Police Department are at capacity.
2. The City needs to get more heavily involved in communication - wireless and fiber optic. The City has a wonderful opportunity because of the relationship with Lumber River Electric and Schoollink to look at other revenue sources.
3. The City needs to look at long-term annexation plans. There are several areas that abut the City that might be eligible for annexation.
4. Greenways and bike routes are recreation, but the City needs to look at developing them also. Council has discussed having better recreational activities and upgrading and/or expanding current facilities.
5. All council members having city computers and moving to paperless agendas.
6. Looking at possible revenue sources such as cable television. If the City is going to keep a low tax rate, it needs to be more entrepreneurial.

The City Manager stated that if there are items that Council feels need to be added to the Ten-Year Plan, then the items need to be prioritized and staff can provide more information at the Annual Retreat.

Councilmember Rainer stated that he would like to see plans for paving unpaved streets in the upcoming budget.

A discussion ensued concerning the storm drainage improvements on Deluca Street. Harold Smith stated that the smallest phase of that project was estimated at one-quarter million dollars. He added that staff was going to do a small part of what the consulting engineer had recommended but that that work had not been done yet.

Further discussion ensued concerning unpaved streets and the potential for discovering storm drainage problems.

The City Manager then asked Council what its priorities were from the citizen input list and the management team list. He added that a consultant for a possible CDBG project had been previously discussed, and paving unpaved streets had been discussed as priorities.

Councilmember Parker stated that, to some degree, the City lacks certain amenities that promote quality of life. The City should also consider providing entrepreneurial funds to offer low interest loans or other incentives.

The City Manager explained that Buxton, Inc., a retail recruitment consultant, would match a City with retailers who would be a good fit in the community and then recruit retailers for the community. The minimum cost for the consultant is approximately \$45,000.00. He added that the City and County could work on this project jointly. He further added that the Chamber and Laurinburg Downtown Revitalization Commission could also work on this if Council wishes to pursue it.

Upon question by Councilmember Griswold, the City Manager stated that he would get more information on the company and provide it to Council at the January 12 meeting.

Councilmember Parker stated that the City needed to be involved with the projected growth at Fort Bragg.

The City Manager stated that he would be attending the meetings of a visioning group that is tied in with Fort Bragg.

The City Manager then stated that paving streets, community development block grants, and entrepreneurial issues are some of Council's top priorities.

The City Manager asked if Council would like staff to include in the upcoming budget an additional code enforcement officer.

It was a consensus among Councilmembers that an additional code enforcement officer was not needed at this time.

A discussion ensued concerning cable television and the possibility of the City providing cable television. The City Manager discussed the consultant's recommendation three (3) years ago that while the City could be successful with providing cable television, because of some court cases pending, it was better for the City to wait and see how the court cases were decided. Following discussion, it was consensus of Council for staff to investigate the feasibility of the City providing cable television service.

Councilmember Griswold stated that she would like to add developing greenways, bike routes, better recreational opportunities and upgrading parks inside the City to the priority list.

Councilmember Parker stated that better recreational opportunities are not a City function as currently set up. He then stated that this would be a Scotland County Parks and Recreation concern.

The City Manager stated that the thought process is that the parks need to be improved and maintained a little better. He explained that the Management Team saw this as a priority in looking at the overall health of the community.

A discussion ensued concerning the City parks. The discussion consisted of how the City could help Scotland County maintain its parks and in developing greenways and bike trails.

The City Manager stated that there are opportunities for grant money in developing greenways and bike trails.

Following discussion, it was consensus that the City Manager include areas to consider for greenways and bike trails in the Ten-Year Plan.

A suggestion from Councilmember Parker regarding greenways was to consider an area from Scotland Place to St. Andrews Presbyterian College. Councilmember Rainer suggested an area from Main Street to Caledonia Road.

Councilmember Griswold stated that with the discussion of the increase in applying for more grant funding the grant writing position, which was eliminated a few years ago, may need to be reconsidered.

The City Manager stated that the Ten-Year Plan would include facility issues for the City. He added that once the old hospital is demolished and the new Richmond Community College facility is built, the City might have some opportunity to solve some facility issues.

Councilmember Leak discussed juvenile crime and that most municipalities seem to have a major concern for this problem.

Upon question by Councilmember Leak, Robert Malloy, Chief of Police, stated that the City has two (2) juvenile officers and that juvenile crime is not a major issue for the police department at this time.

Councilmember Parker stated that he would like a study of the downtown municipal tax district. He added that the municipal tax is regressive rather than progressive. A discussion ensued about improving the downtown area and looking at maintaining the municipal parking lots better.

It was a consensus to include the municipal parking lot issue in the Ten-Year Plan.

The City Manager stated that if there were no other comments regarding the Ten-Year Plan that the Management Team would take the input, formulate the plan, and put figures to the items discussed.

The City Manager stated that there were several other issues on the agenda to discuss. The first issue is Paul Brooks' request for assistance in extending Progress Place to Lauchwood Drive. He explained that Mr. Brooks has informed staff that he has re-designed his plans for development and that the road extension is unnecessary now.

The City Manager explained that Bethlehem Missionary Baptist Church has requested that the City donate or sell a 20-acre tract of land located on Stewartsville Road to the Church to build a new sanctuary. He explained that this is a portion of a tract of land owned by the City. A discussion ensued concerning this request.

The City Manager was directed to send a letter to the Church notifying that the City cannot donate land and to inform it of the procedures involved with the City selling real estate. He was also directed to find out exactly what portion of the tract in which the Church is interested.

The City Manager stated that Council had discussed possible residency requirements for certain employees in the organization during Council's July 2005 meeting. He then stated that information had been provided to Council from the Assistant City Attorney during that meeting and that Council had decided to discuss this item during its mini-retreat. The City Manager also informed Council that the Human Resources Officer and the City Clerk had checked with other municipalities concerning residency requirements. He stated that there was about a 50-50 split among other municipalities with those having residency requirements usually limiting them to department heads and managers. He also stated that there would need to be compelling reasons to require an employee to live inside a municipality.

Following discussion, it was consensus among Council not to impose residency requirements for employees.

The City Manager stated that the Management Team had been discussing the possibility of conducting a small annexation. Following discussion, it was consensus of Council to include the possibility of an annexation in the Ten-

Year Plan.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

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

The meeting was adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

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Ann B. Slaughter, Mayor

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Dolores A. Hammond, CMC, City Clerk

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