

**CITY OF LAURINBURG  
COUNCIL MEETING  
JULY 17, 2007  
MUNICIPAL BUILDING  
7:00 P.M.**

**Minutes**

The City Council of the City of Laurinburg held its regular monthly meeting July 17, 2007 at 7:00 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, Curtis B. Leak, Thomas W. Parker, III, and Herbert M. Rainer, Jr.

Also present were Craig F. Honeycutt, City Manager, Dolores A. Hammond, City Clerk, Charles L. Hicks, Jr., Assistant City Attorney and Amanda B. Faulk, recently appointed but unsworn Councilmember.

Mayor Slaughter called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Councilmember Parker gave the invocation.

**INSTALLATION OF NEW COUNCILMEMBER**

Mayor Slaughter administered the Oath of Office to Councilmember Faulk and welcomed her to the Laurinburg City Council.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Motion was made by Councilmember Leak, seconded by Councilmember Rainer, and unanimously carried to approve the proposed minutes from the regular meeting held May 22, 2007; recessed meeting held June 4, 2007; regular meeting held June 19, 2007; recessed meeting held June 27, 2007; and recessed meeting held July 6, 2007.

**ORDINANCE TO AMEND CODE OF ORDINANCES OF THE CITY OF LAURINBURG TO INCLUDE A SECTION ENTITLED "DOMESTICATED ANIMALS AT VACANT RESIDENCES OR STRUCTURES"**

The City Manager explained that at the City Council meeting in June, Nancy Williams presented to the City Council a concern that she had with animals being left at vacant property and not being properly cared for. City Council instructed Staff to come up with a proposed amendment to our Animal Control Ordinance to deal with the issue.

The proposed ordinance is staff's recommended amendment to the City's Animal Control Ordinance. He explained that the Assistant City Attorney had reviewed the proposed ordinance.

Councilmember Leak stated that one of his concerns is if a residence catches on fire and is unlivable, what action could be taken to remove animals earlier than after fourteen (14) days.

The City Manager explained that the thought process was that if a fire were to occur at a residence, the fourteen (14) day period allows the property owner time within which to make arrangements for their animals. He further explained that the property owner would be responsible for tending to their animals even though the property owner is not residing in the dwelling at that time. He further explained that the animals would have to be in a pen and not running loose.

Councilmember Rainer also questioned the proposed fourteen (14) day waiting period and inquired if there are any provisions for animals to be immediately removed from the residence.

Elaine Modlin, Animal Control Officer, informed Council that if there is an animal at a location where a fire has occurred, there is communication between the police and fire departments and the Animal Control Officer concerning the fact that there is an animal at the location.

Councilmember Parker moved for the adoption of Ordinance No. O-2007-15 which amends Chapter 4, Article I, In General of the Code of Ordinances of the City of Laurinburg to include a section entitled "Domesticated animals at vacant residences or structures. Councilmember DeBerry seconded the motion, and it was approved by the following vote:

Ayes: Parker, DeBerry, Leak, Faulk, Rainer

Nays: None

(Ordinance No. O-2007-15 is on file in the City Clerk's Office)

### **RESOLUTION SUPPORTING COUNCIL'S OPPOSITION AGAINST HOUSE BILL 1587-THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT FAIR COMPETITION ACT**

The City Manager explained that the proposed Resolution R-2007-17 states the City's opposition to the Local Government Fair Competition Act, which would greatly limit the City's ability to offer wireless broadband and to extend the City's fiber optic program.

He concluded by stating that if approved by City Council, the resolution will be sent to the North Carolina League of Municipalities and directly to our local delegation.

Councilmember Parker moved for the adoption of Resolution No. R-2007-17 which supports Council's opposition against House Bill 1587-The Local Government Fair Competition Act. Councilmember Rainer seconded the motion, and it was approved by the following vote:

Ayes: Parker, Rainer, Faulk, Leak, DeBerry

Nays: None

(Resolution No. R-2007-17 is on file in the City Clerk's Office)

### **UPDATE ON CHIEF OF POLICE HIRING**

The City Manager informed the Board that, while applications for Police Chief are being accepted, the City is not actively pursuing them. He explained that there is still an officer under suspension due to a pending State Bureau of Investigation (SBI) investigation. He stated that he had contacted the SBI, the District Attorney, and several other persons in order to get a time frame on when the investigation will be complete. He then stated that he had not been able to get a time frame on when it would be complete; therefore, Interim Chief John Evans will continue in the role until there is some closure to the investigation of the officer. He then explained that as soon as the investigation is complete, a permanent police chief will be announced.

Upon question by Councilmember Rainer, the City Manager explained that the officer has not yet been indicted.

The City Manager further stated that the Chief of Police position had been offered to Tommy Wright but that the offer had been rescinded due to the investigation by the SBI. Mr. Wright was thereafter placed on administrative leave.

Upon question by Councilmember Leak, the City Manager explained that the City is under no obligation to re-offer the position to Mr. Wright.

The City Manager stated that Interim Chief Evans is doing an excellent job.

### **CLOSED SESSION**

At 7:16 p.m. motion was made by Councilmember DeBerry to go into closed session, pursuant to North Carolina General Statute 143-318.11(a)(6), for the purpose of considering the qualifications, competence, performance, character, fitness, conditions of appointment, or conditions of initial employment of an individual public officer or employee or prospective public officer or employee and review minutes and/or general account of previous closed

sessions. Councilmember Leak seconded the motion and it unanimously carried.

At 8:31 p.m., upon returning to the council room, motion was made by Councilmember DeBerry, seconded by Councilmember Leak, and unanimously carried to resume the open meeting.

The City Manager introduced Ms. Janice Morrison as Interim Tax Collector.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD**

Mayor Slaughter explained the rules and regulations of the public comment period.

Ms. Loretta Rene McNeil expressed her concern about the termination of the City's tax collector.

Mr. Walter Rogers appeared before Council and welcomed Ms. Faulk to the Governing Body. He then stated that he was a 56 year resident of Scotland County and was appearing before Council on behalf of the State Black Caucus as well as that of the 8<sup>th</sup> Congressional District. He reminded Council that he had appeared at a meeting a couple of months ago and expressed concern about minorities, the low-wealth employees of the City, and the City's consideration of its pay and classification plan. He stated he was thankful that Council had decided to table the pay and classification plan for at least a year. He then stated that after a year's research on the plan he hoped that those employees at the lower level pay will be given an opportunity to close the gap between the higher paid employees and the lower paid employees.

He also expressed concern about problems within the City but did not elaborate on the problems. He stated that he felt sure that Council knows what the problems are.

Mr. Rogers then expressed his concern about the termination of the City's tax collector. He stated that he felt the City was fortunate to have a person with a Masters in Public Administration as well as a double major in Political Science and Pre-law and a minor in Business Administration to be employed by the City. He explained that he feels that there is a problem in the City when someone with degrees and credentials such as the former tax collector is terminated.

He then informed Council that he has a home, as well as rental property, in the County and that several of the houses have been broken into. He stated that he has learned that the Police Department only checks houses in the mornings and would like Council to talk with the Chief so that the Police Department might better investigate the break-in of houses.

Mr. Charles McEachin expressed concern about employment with the City of Laurinburg. He stated he feels that there is a buddy-buddy system in the City with respect to employment and that friends employ friends for jobs before anyone else has the opportunity to apply.

Jessie Brunson, Pastor of Galilee Methodist Church, stated that he has attended a few meetings of Council and would like to suggest to Council that Pastors throughout the community be given an opportunity to give the invocation at Council meetings. He explained that he knows there are members of Council who are qualified to give the invocation, but because Council's position is political, it would be nice to have spiritual leaders give the invocation. Rev. Brunson stated that with issues in the County and the City everyone needs God's help.

Ms. Tammy Little, former City Tax Collector, stated that she would like the Mayor and Council to know that it had been a pleasure serving as Tax Collector for two years. She gave a brief history on her decision to accept that position with the City with a condition of her employment having been that she was required to move to the County.

She then stated that she wanted the citizens to know that she was abruptly handed a termination notice on July 12, 2007. She also stated that she would like Council to know that she feels that the proper procedures were not followed.

Ms. Little then thanked Council for appointing her as tax collector. She also thanked the citizens for their support.

**ADJOURNMENT**

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

The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

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Ann B. Slaughter, Mayor

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Dolores A. Hammond, City Clerk