

**CITY OF LAURINBURG  
CITY COUNCIL  
ANNUAL PLANNING RETREAT  
OCTOBER 20, 2007  
CITY COUNCIL ROOM-MUNICIPAL BUILDING  
8:00 a.m.**

**Minutes**

The City Council of the City of Laurinburg reconvened its October 16, 2007 meeting on October 20, 2007 at 8:25 a.m. in the council room of the Municipal Building with the Honorable Ann B. Slaughter, Mayor, presiding. The following Councilmembers were present: Rembert DeBerry, Amanda B. Faulk, Curtis B. Leak, Thomas W. Parker, and Herbert M. Rainer, Jr.

Also present were: Craig F. Honeycutt, City Manager; Jennifer A. Tippet, Deputy City Clerk; Bill Riemer, Director of Administration and Development; Cindy Carpenter, Finance Director; Johnny Evans, Chief of Police; Bob Bell, Human Resources/Risk Management Director; Robert Ellis, Treatment Plants Director; Stacey McQuage, Utilities Director; Harold Haywood, General Services Director; and Ronald Pierce, Electric Distribution Director.

Mr. Dick McMahon was present as a facilitator.

Mr. McMahon explained that his role was to assist in communication, intervene when clarification is necessary, and to make certain that Council stays on track.

**ROLES AND EXPECTATIONS OF MANAGEMENT TEAM**

A discussion ensued concerning Roles and Expectations for the Management Team. The City Manager explained that Roles and Expectations for the Management Team had never really been clear and are not in writing. There have been assumed expectations, but one of the purposes of this meeting was to better clarify Council's expectations of the Management Team and to put those Roles and Expectations in writing.

A discussion ensued concerning development of Roles and Expectations for the City Attorney. The City Manager explained that the City Attorney was correct in the required wording for motions for Conditional Use Permits because State law requires that motions contain exact wording.

Following further discussion concerning the required wording for motions, the City Manager stated that staff could propose options for wording of motions for Council and include the options in the agenda packet.

Discussion then went back to Management Team Roles and Expectations. Upon question by Councilmember Rainer, Mr. McMahon explained that Roles and Expectations needed to be developed for the general group, not for each individual manager.

Mr. Ellis explained that his responsibilities are to provide Council with information that pertains to his departments, water and wastewater treatment which begins with keeping the City Manager informed on what is going on. If the City Manager thinks the information needs to be shared with Council, then he will contact Council. He further explained that he is responsible for maintaining water quality both for consumption and discharge; responsible for lift stations in the collection system; responsible for staying in compliance with all permits; and responsible for being informed of any regulations that may affect the City. Mr. Ellis explained that he shares information with other members of the Management Team so that, when it comes to budget time, there is not a lot of internal disagreement about his budget requests.

Councilmember Rainer stated that the City Manager is a conduit from the Management Team to Council. He added that he would like to know what the City Manager expects of his Management Team.

Councilmember Faulk stated that she felt that what the City Manager expected of the Management Team is essentially their job descriptions. She then listed several items that she considered applicable to the Role of the Management Team:

1. To provide information pertaining to each specific department to the City Manager who in turn informs the Council of issues within the departments
2. To work well together with other members of the team
3. To see that all City activities and services meet high standards
4. To be fair in regard to policy and procedure
5. To keep open communications with other jurisdictions
6. To have a healthy relationship within each department
7. To present Council with unbiased reports

Following discussion, Mr. McMahon explained that sometimes when the Management Team makes reports to the Council, members of the Management Team feel they have done their best to meet Council's expectations, yet they feel sometimes they haven't met Council's expectations.

Mr. Riemer stated that he agreed with Mr. Ellis in defining his role. He then explained that in the past, it seemed Council generally accepted Management Team's recommendations, but as time has passed, it appears that Council takes Management Team information and suggestions on fewer occasions. He concluded by stating that he is trying to find out more about what Council needs and how the Management Team can do a better job.

Discussion ensued concerning the budget workshop process. The City Manager explained that a lot of big issues are included in the Five Year and Ten Year Plans and even in the budget but that Council and the Management Team may spend only a few minutes discussing those big issues. He suggested that perhaps instead of taking a "big picture" approach, Council and the Management Team need to focus solely on one big issue at a time. He suggested that if there is an issue with a particular department such as Fire Department, then Council could meet with the Fire Department to fully discuss the department's needs and issues.

A discussion ensued concerning communication between Council and the Management Team. The City Manager explained that he did not have a problem with Council talking to anyone on City staff unless it is a direct personnel issue and then it should through the proper grievance procedures.

Further discussion ensued concerning communication, agenda preparation and the possibility of an agenda workshop. It was consensus of Council that the City Manager will include a draft agenda in the weekly updates two (2) weeks prior to the Council meeting.

The City Manager requested that Council let him know if he is not meeting any of Council's Roles and Expectations of him. He explained that he reviews the Roles and Expectations monthly to ensure that he is meeting the expectations. He added that the Management Team will work on Roles and Expectations for the Management Team and present them to Council.

## **PAY AND CLASSIFICATION PLAN**

A lengthy discussion ensued concerning the Pay and Classification Study, merit pay and longevity pay. The City Manager explained that the Pay and Classification was included as part of the proposed 2007-2008 budget but Council did not want to fund it because there were additional questions. The Cost of Living Adjustment per the Social Security Administration is 2.3%. Following further discussion, the City Manager explained that the Management Team would conduct a comprehensive review of the merit pay system and the employee evaluation process, including the possibility of changing the percentages for merit by the end of December.

## **FIRE CHIEF**

A discussion ensued concerning the City Manager appointing Harold Smith as Fire Chief, taking the "Interim" off the

title and fire department costs and assistance from the County. Following discussion, it was consensus of Council for the City Manager to appoint Harold Smith as Fire Chief, taking "Interim" off the title.

Councilmember Leak expressed concern about the expenses of the Fire Department and the need for a new fire station in the future.

A discussion ensued concerning the need for a new fire truck. The City Manager explained that the last fire truck the City bought was in 1996. He further explained that once a truck is 20 years old or has 40,000 miles on it, it needs to be replaced.

A discussion ensued concerning the support received from the County. The City Manager explained that the County pays the City for fire services and in 2011 the County is slated to provide a new fire truck.

Councilmember Parker discussed the possibility of working with the County on moving up the County's purchase date for a new fire truck.

## **REVENUE**

The City Manager stated that he wanted to make Council aware of how flat the City's revenue is. The only growth is in sales tax revenue. Last year sales tax revenue increased 3%. He then explained that staff has started reviewing information from Buxton Company. In five years, Buxton is projecting a population increase of only 500.

Councilmember Rainer expressed concern that with the projected flat revenue of the City, maintaining costs and increasing efficiency were important.

## **WIRELESS INTERNET**

The City Manager explained that previously Council had requested information concerning the costs and revenue thus far from the fiber optic and wireless internet projects. Installation, equipment and City labor costs totaled \$466,488.00, and revenue thus far is \$581,890.00. The City has spent \$41,075.00 on wireless internet service. The City Manager explained that when the fiber optic was first run in the City, there were a lot of upfront costs just as there are with the wireless internet project. The investment for fiber optic has paid off, and in about 3-5 years the City should see a payback on wireless internet.

A discussion ensued concerning signal quality and penetration issues that had been experienced with wireless internet. The City Manager explained that the City is putting nodes on the fiber optic in order to provide wireless. When the fiber is extended out to the schools in the County, the City will have more fiber to install more nodes which will give the City better coverage for wireless. Better coverage provides more opportunities for customers.

Upon question by Councilmember Leak, the City Manager explained that Schoollink had some issues recently in paying the City. He and staff talked with the Schoollink President and the issue should be resolved in the next few weeks. In addition, the City owes Schoollink \$20,000.00 and is holding that payment until Schoollink pays the City in full.

Further discussion ensued concerning the wireless service and the quality of service received by the City's current customers. Mr. Riemer stated that the service is dependable, is not quite as fast as AT&T's service, but is definitely faster than dial-up service.

## **POLICE CAPTAIN**

Chief John Evans explained that he had previously requested to add a Captain position to the Police Department. The expense for the position is \$77,916.90 per year, including salary and benefits. Due to budget constraints, he would like to promote one of his Lieutenants to Captain with a dual role. The Captain would be responsible for his current job duties and would also serve as second in command in the absence of the Chief. The Captain would also supervise the

Lieutenants. Chief Evans proposed a 5% increase in salary (\$3,486.39) for this individual.

Upon question by Councilmember Rainer, Chief Evans stated that he would like to promote Detective Kimothy Monroe to the Captain position.

Following a brief discussion, it was consensus of Council to approve the position of Captain and for Chief Evans to make an appointment.

## **REPLACE WELL**

Mr. Robert Ellis discussed the need for a new well. He explained that a site had not been selected, but it would be towards the Johns Station area. The cost for drilling a new well would be at least \$150,000.00. The major concern regarding the City's wells is the age of the wells and the need to be proactive and replace them. An additional concern is the number of wells being drilled in the Laurinburg area for irrigation purposes because all of the area wells draw off the same aquifer.

A discussion ensued about replenishment of the aquifer. Mr. Ellis explained that with the sandy soils in the area, when it rains the aquifer replenishes relatively easily. Further discussion ensued concerning the drought conditions.

It was consensus of Council to include a new well in the proposed budget.

## **MARKET FURNITURE BUILDING**

The City Manager explained that he had sent a letter to Philip McRae stating that the City would not be accepting Market Furniture unless funding was found to make improvements. He explained that he wanted to ensure that he had represented Council's position on this matter.

Councilmember Rainer stated that the City Manager had very accurately stated Council's position.

Councilmember Faulk expressed concern about the potential public safety issues created by the Market Furniture Building and other dilapidated buildings in the downtown area.

Mr. Bill Riemer explained that if a building is secured and the windows are boarded, the building meets the requirements of the City's Minimum Housing Standards. With the nuisance and health issues created by pigeons, the Health Department could be notified. The City's Code does not deal with esthetic issues, just with safety.

A discussion ensued concerning the McDuffie building on Main Street. Councilmember Faulk expressed concern about a broken window that needs to be repaired. She also explained that former Manager Joe Huffman had discussed the possibility of a land exchange for this property. Laurinburg Downtown Revitalization Corporation's vision for this property was to tear the building down and make a walkway in order to make parking behind the former Firestone Building more accessible.

Further discussion ensued concerning the condition of the McDuffie building. There was no action taken on this matter.

## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

A discussion ensued concerning economic development. The City Manager explained that there were two (2) issues that needed to be resolved: first, the level of funding the City will provide to the County for economic development (possibly through Scotland Development Corporation), and second, whether to pay the Chamber of Commerce \$17,000.00 on January 1, 2008. A joint meeting between the Council, the Executive Board of the Chamber and the County Commissioners will be held on November 8, 2007 at 5:00 p.m.

Following a lengthy discussion, it was consensus of Council that more information regarding the future role of the

Chamber is needed before any decision can be made regarding the \$17,000.00 due the Chamber on January 1, 2008.

There was no decision made concerning the agreement with Scotland County regarding Scotland Development Corporation.

Following a short break for lunch, Councilmember Rainer requested to add several items to the agenda.

## **URBAN PROGRESS ZONE**

The City Manager explained that Councilmember Rainer had requested information concerning Urban Redevelopment Zones. The Urban Progress Zone is a new program offered by the State to provide economic incentives to stimulate new investment and job creation in economically distressed urban areas.

Mr. Riemer discussed the Urban Progress Zone benefits. In discussions with Department of Commerce personnel, staff was advised that the City could apply for designation as an urban Progress Zone; however since Scotland County is designated as a Tier 1 County, there would be no benefit in the City applying unless the County is going to lose Tier 1 status.

Councilmember Rainer explained that what he envisioned was some type of designation for the downtown area that would have enforceable requirements for cleanliness and appearance.

Mr. Riemer explained that there is a Special Tax District for the downtown area and the money generated from that tax is used for the downtown area. He stated that he was not aware of any law that allows the City to require more than minimum code that would address aesthetics. Most of the laws that deal with nuisances or abandoned buildings deal with the ability to protect health and safety of our citizens.

A discussion ensued concerning ordinances for a specific area of the City such as the downtown area. Mr. Riemer stated that the Central Business District has a different Fire Code than the rest of the City, but it is based on health and safety, not aesthetics.

A discussion then ensued concerning Code Enforcement and the amendment to the Nuisance Ordinance. Mr. Riemer stated that the amended Nuisance Ordinance was being enforced on a complaint basis.

## **LONG-TERM GOALS**

The City Manager discussed infrastructure needs for water and sewer. The City has aging water and sewer lines. The North Carolina Rural Center was allocated money from the General Assembly for grants, and staff will start prioritizing water and sewer needs. The City did receive several Notices of Violations (NOVs). The violations were due to the age of the sewer lines. The system is aging and needs to be replaced.

Councilmember Rainer expressed concern about a raw sewage smell at the corner of Tucker and South Main Street.

Mr. McQuage stated he would look into that matter.

Mr. Ellis explained that the City had received several NOVs for overflows that were caused by blockages in the system. As of December 1, 2007 all reportable spills will carry a civil penalty that will be based on the duration of the spill and any environmental damage. The fines will be determined by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) so it is important that all repairs are made to the system. Areas that need to be replaced have been identified. The City needs to be proactive in obtaining funds to improve the sewer system.

The City Manager explained that the City had applied for a grant from the Clean Water Trust to look at taking over the WestPoint Stevens water and sewer plants. The City was awarded \$42,000.00 and the City's matching portion is \$2,100.00. A budget amendment will be needed. The grant money will be spent determining feasibility of upgrading or changing the wastewater plant from strictly commercial service to more residential service and of changing the

water plant from raw to potable water. The permit issued to WestPoint Stevens allows intake off the Lumber River of 7,000,000 gallons and also a discharge of 7,000,000 gallons.

The City Manager explained that Springs Industries had sent a letter to the State Utilities Commission regarding abandonment of the system. The process should take approximately seven (7) months. Staff was not able to find grant money to install a force main system. Scotland County is investigating the installation of septic tanks for the residents; however, the lots are small and may not perk.

Mr. Ellis stated that he and Mr. McQuage had met with Willis Engineering on a comprehensive plan to eliminate lift stations and the possibility of overflows.

The City Manager stated that probably after the first of the year, staff needs to meet with Council to discuss water and sewer needs in more detail.

## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND THE SHELL BUILDING**

The City Manager provided an update on construction of the shell building at Laurinburg-Maxton Airport. The City will be bidding out the sewer line relocation project.

## **SERVICE CONSOLIDATION**

The City Manager explained that consolidation of the GIS system with Scotland County was going well. Also, consolidation of the 911 system and joint communications is ongoing.

A discussion ensued concerning law enforcement consolidation. Councilmember Parker expressed concern about certain areas where the County Sheriff's Department has to travel through the City to respond to calls.

The City Manager stated that staff can work with the Sheriff regarding the open areas to provide better law enforcement service.

Chief Evans discussed the need for the Police Department to have the ability to communicate with other organizations such as Emergency Services (EMS) and the Fire Department. Currently the Police Department communication system is VHF and EMS and the Fire Department are UHF systems.

## **FACILITY NEEDS**

The City Manager discussed facility needs and reported that, once the Richmond Community College (RCC) facility is constructed, the City may have an opportunity to obtain one of the RCC facilities to help alleviate space concerns. The City Manager provided an update on grant status for construction of the RCC facility.

## **SETTING PRIORITIES AND DIRECTION FOR STAFF**

The City Manager discussed the priority list and direction for staff that he had compiled during the meeting.

1. Work on Roles and Expectations of the Management Team.
2. Work on including motion wording in agenda summaries.
3. Relook at the entire merit process, look at possibility of changing merit percentages and the process of evaluation.
4. Get draft agenda out a week earlier.
5. Not consider a permanent Fire Chief. Council has no issue with taking the City Manager taking "Interim" off of Harold Smith's designation as Fire Chief.
6. Initiate a dialogue with the Sheriff on areas where the Police Department and Sheriff's Department can work together.

A discussion ensued concerning the possibility of reducing services if necessary because of budget concerns. The City Manager explained that any reduction of services is a Council decision.

A discussion ensued concerning paving dirt roads. The City Manager stated that staff would look at trying to make paving of dirt roads a priority in the 2008-2009 budget year.

## **LIGHTING**

Councilmember Rainer expressed concern about the lack of lighting on Main Street from North Main Street to Holly Square Shopping Center. Improving the lighting could deter crime.

The City Manager stated that staff would look at options for improving lighting along Main Street from North Main to Holly Square Shopping Center.

## **LAURINBURG-MAXTON AIRPORT COMMISSION**

A discussion ensued concerning the Laurinburg-Maxton Airport Commission (LMA) board. The City Manager explained that he would begin attending LMA board meetings.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

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

The meeting was adjourned at 2:20 p.m.

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Matthew Block, Mayor

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Jennifer A. Tippett, Deputy City Clerk