

**CITY OF LAURINBURG
CITY/COUNTY JOINT MEETING
OCTOBER 3, 2007
SCOTLAND COUNTY GOVERNMENT OFFICES
507 WEST COVINGTON ST.
LAURINBURG, NC
5:30 P.M.**

Minutes

The City Council of the City of Laurinburg and the Scotland County Commissioners held a joint meeting on October 3, 2007. The meeting was held at the Scotland County Government Offices at 507 West Covington St., Laurinburg, North Carolina beginning at 5:30 p.m. with the Honorable Ann B. Slaughter, Mayor, presiding. The following Councilmembers were present: Amanda B. Faulk, Curtis B. Leak, and Thomas W. Parker, III. Absent were: Rembert DeBerry and Herbert M. Rainer, Jr.

Also present were: Craig F. Honeycutt, City Manager and Dolores A. Hammond, City Clerk,

The following Scotland County Commissioners were present: Chairman J. D. Willis, Vice- Chairman Betty B. Gholston, and Commissioners Joyce McDow, Guy McCook, John Alford, and Leon Butler. Commissioner Clarence McPhatter was absent.

Also present were: Kevin Patterson, Interim County Manager/Finance Officer and Ann Kurtzman, Assistant to the County Manager/County Clerk.

Mayor Slaughter called the meeting to order at 5:40 p.m.

Chairman J. D. Willis, Scotland County Commissioners, stated that the purpose of this meeting is to ask the City if they would like to enter into a partnership agreement with the County on the hiring of an economic developer.

Mr. Willis then introduced Mr. Harry Yeatman, Chairman-Elect Laurinburg/Scotland County Area Chamber of Commerce, Inc. (Chamber).

Mr. Yeatman explained that he would like to talk about the past, present, and the future of the Chamber. Mr. Yeatman explained that the Chamber is an organization of volunteers devoted to the community and willing to give time and talent in those endeavors. He stated that the Chamber has partnered with Scotland County and the City of Laurinburg for at least 20 years in the pursuit of economic development, mainly industrial recruitment.

He then explained that over the last 18 months that the Chamber has undertaken the process to redefine economic development in the community. He stated that in order to be successful, the Chamber felt that a broader definition of economic development needed to be adopted and that the Chamber needed to rise to the challenge of broadening its efforts. He added that a broader definition was necessary in response to the fact that industrial expansion in the United States is at best stagnant and at worst continuing a two decade long decline. He reported that Mike McIntyre, Congressman from the Lumberton, North Carolina, has stated that employers with less than ten employees create approximately 80% of the jobs in the United States today.

He then reported that the Chamber broadened the representation on its Economic Development committee and has enlisted support and effort of several new faces with new ideas and energy. He stated that the Chamber held a community forum to develop a community-wide plan as to how to better pool the community's resources. He then stated that the Laurinburg City Council and the Scotland County Board of Commissioners approved the plan and the following items were determined to be the focus of that plan:

- Completion of I-74

- Building a spec building
- Completion of the Recreation Complex
- Creating new Economic and Community Developer positions
- Increasing visibility of Downtown Laurinburg
- Improving Community Appearance
- Improving marketing and promotion of Laurinburg and Scotland County
- Increase accountability of the industrial recruitment effort; and
- Working with BRAC to bring military growth to Scotland County

He continued by stating that other long-term goals include workforce development, improving infrastructures at the airport, the completion of the Richmond Community College (RCC) Campus and increasing resources applied to Economic Development.

Mr. Yeatman then stated that there has been progress. The spec building will be completed in the fall; the recreation complex is nearing completion; and work has begun with a public relations firm to better brand the community and market Scotland County to the world. A job fair will be held on October 5, 2007 and the RCC campus will soon be a reality.

He explained that on Wednesday, September 25, 2007, the Scotland County Board of Commissioners made a decision to begin the process of hiring an industrial recruiter who would report to the County Manager. He stated that although this is not what the Chamber desires to see happen, the Chamber would support any efforts to improve the economic position of the community. He then stated the Chamber understands that the purpose of today's meeting is for the County to ask the Laurinburg City Council to partner with the County in the hiring of an industrial recruiter. Mr. Yeatman stated that the Chamber fully supports both of the Boards in their efforts to improve the community.

Mr. Yeatman stated that any decision made by the City and the County with respect to economic development will have a tremendous impact on the Chamber and its efforts in the future. He asked, with Scotland County assuming the role of industrial developer, what role would the Chamber play in the community? He then stated that the Chamber firmly believes that it needs to continue the efforts in community development, insuring that, as new industry looks at Scotland County it will be able to support the recruitment efforts with amenities that are attractive to potential industries and provide a good quality of life for our citizens. In addition, the Chamber wants to insure that business leaders locate their families in our community. Furthermore, it is important, as well, that there is continued support to existing industries and small businesses.

Following Mr. Yeatman's comments, he stated that the Chamber would like to submit the following concerns for consideration:

- Will the Chamber receive funding for the remainder of the fiscal year?
- Will the County and City fund the Chamber in the future in support of its community development efforts (as part of which a large community of volunteers carry on activities which are vital to future growth)? Without funding the Chamber cannot move forward with searching for a new leader, and there is a concern that the large volunteer support will diminish
- Who will be interim recruiter/developer after January 1?
- What do the two governing bodies want the Chamber to do? At this point the Chamber is stymied until there is some direction and funding commitments
- The Chamber suggests appointing a planning body, which encompasses all the key stakeholders to work together as soon as possible to answer questions for the good of the community and individual organizations

He concluded by stating that, as the Boards discuss and deliberate these very important plans for the future, that the Boards strongly consider what together both Boards and the Chamber have accomplished in the past and can achieve in the future.

DISCUSSION ON A SHARED ECONOMIC/INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT POSITION WITH THE CITY OF LAURINBURG AND SCOTLAND COUNTY

Chairman Willis stated that for some years the Scotland County Board of Commissioners have talked about hiring an Economic Developer who reports to the County Manager. He explained that it almost happened about four years ago but that the Commissioners elected to continue with the Chamber. He then explained that one of the main reasons for this step is that the Board of Commissioners realizes, as does the Chamber, that it is time for a change. He then stated that the surrounding counties have Economic Developers who do not report to the Chamber. He added that during the County budget process \$45,000.00 was included with the intention of considering the hiring of an Economic Developer. He then stated that, with the retirement of Jim Frank Henderson, President of the Chamber, the door was opened for the County to hire an Economic Developer. He then stated that the Commissioners have agreed to hire an Economic Developer and the Board is interested in partnering with the County in this endeavor. He further stated that if the City agreed to the partnership the proposed developer would recruit not only industry but retail businesses as well. He then stated that the main purpose is to bring jobs and increase the tax base for Scotland County.

He explained that there had been some discussion as to who the Economic Developer would report to if the County hired a developer and at this time reporting would be to the County Manager. He then stated that if the City decided to partner with the County that the idea would be to form a board that would consist of two city positions and three county positions with the City Manager and County Manager serving as ex-officio members and that the Economic Developer would report to that board. He informed everyone that he had been contacted by the Chamber and been asked that the Chamber be allowed to be a part of the board if a partnership is formed. He stated that he was quite sure that would be all right and that the Chamber President or Chairman would be an ex-officio member as well.

Chairman Willis re-iterated that the purpose of this meeting is to find out if the City would like to enter into a partnership with the County in hiring an Economic Developer. He then stated that if the City agrees, a small board would be formed to consider the mechanics of the City/County Board. He explained that another meeting would need to be scheduled after this action was completed to tie in the Chamber.

He then explained that rather than creating another vehicle there is a vehicle in place to consider the employment of an Economic Developer and that is Scotland Development Corporation which has 501 (3) (c) status. He further explained that the by-laws for the Corporation would need to be amended in order to move forward with the formation of the partnership between the City and County in recruiting and hiring an Economic Developer.

Councilmember Tom Parker stated that he had had a conversation with Chairman Willis and that he personally likes the idea of talking about a partnership. He then stated that Laurinburg Downtown Revitalization Corporation (LDRC); Tourism Development Authority (TDA); and the Chamber should be included to see if a cooperative agreement could be reached so that the synergies that exist can be taken advantage of. He further stated that with the retirement of Jim Frank Henderson it is a good opportunity to hire the right person to lead the charge. He continued by stating that where the person would be headquartered could be worked out. He then stated that he is in favor of working out a cooperative agreement that is good for the City, County, and the citizens and that protects the synergies that exist.

Mayor Slaughter stated that the downtown area needs to be protected because the City has a large investment in improvements downtown.

Councilmember Leak stated that he had read media statements and also attended a luncheon where the position of Economic Developer and the direction of the Chamber had been discussed. He then stated that he was disappointed that everyone did not have an opportunity to discuss the situation. Councilmember Leak expressed his concerns about the direction and funding of the Chamber since the retirement of President Jim Frank Henderson.

He then explained, however, that this is an opportunity to have a vision and have someone help develop that vision. This is a time to see if something different will work for the community.

He concluded by stating that he is willing to continue discussions in formulating a plan to form a partnership with the County for the recruitment and hiring of an Economic Developer.

Following discussion, Councilmember Parker stated that he was proposing that LDRC and the TDA be a part of the proposed Board as ex-officio officers, non voting members.

Chairman Willis stated that when the County began discussing the hiring of an Economic Developer it was proposed that it be kept simple. He explained that, by "keeping it simple" means hiring a professional economic developer like other surrounding counties and letting that person do his job. He further explained that the proposed person would not answer to a 10-15 member board, just to the County Manager. Chairman Willis then stated that as far as the Chamber and the Community what he heard at a previous meeting was that the Chamber needed two positions-a Chamber Executive and an Economic Developer.

Councilmember Faulk stated that she agrees with Councilmembers Parker and Leak that the City needs to protect its interest because everyone is ultimately working toward the same goal. She then stated that when retail, the non-industrial recruitment part is added, it gives the City more of a vested interest. She added that the entities that give the community its quality of life, our retail establishments and service businesses, should be given promotion and attention that industry is given in recruitment. She concluded that everyone needs to work together in order to maintain the City's All America City status as a great place to live, work, and play.

Chairman Willis stated that a small committee should be formed to work out the details and the mechanics and that the City would be part of it and make certain that its interests are protected.

Councilmember Faulk stated that her understanding of Chairman Willis' comments is that this partnership would also include retail as well as industrial recruitment.

Councilmember Parker moved that the City explore the partnership with the County of Scotland in order to protect the City's interest, to be a team partner with the County in developing an industrial base and retail base, and to improve the quality of life, and that input be received from differing segments of the community to arrive at a plan. Councilmember Faulk seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.

Chairman Willis stated that a task force be formed to include the County Manager and City Manager to develop a plan for both governing boards to consider. The County Manager and the City Manager will jointly lead the task force.

The City Manager asked for a time frame and there was a consensus that a draft be presented to both Boards at a joint meeting on Wednesday, October 17, 2007.

Councilmember Parker stated that he is willing to serve on the task force.

ADJOURNMENT

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

The meeting was adjourned at 6:11 p.m.

Matthew Block, Mayor

Dolores A. Hammond, City Clerk