

**CITY OF LAURINBURG  
COUNCIL MEETING  
JANUARY 27, 2009  
MUNICIPAL BUILDING  
303 WEST CHURCH ST.  
LAURINBURG, NC  
7:00 P.M.**

**Minutes**

The City Council of the City of Laurinburg held its regular monthly meeting of January 20, 2009 on January 27, 2009, at 7:00 p.m. in the council room of the Municipal Building with the Honorable Matthew Block, Mayor, presiding. The following Councilmembers were present: Rembert DeBerry, Amanda B. Faulk, 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, and Charles L. Hicks, Jr., Assistant City Attorney.

The originally scheduled meeting on January 20, 2009, was rescheduled due to the scheduled Presidential Inaugural ceremonies on January 20, 2009.

Mayor Block called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Councilmember Faulk gave the invocation. Mayor Block requested a moment of silence for Street Department employee Danny Norton who passed away last week.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Motion was made by Councilmember Leak, seconded by Councilmember DeBerry, and unanimously carried to approve the minutes from the retreat held November 21, 2008; the special meeting held December 10, 2008 with the Town of Maxton and the Laurinburg/Maxton Airport Commission; and the regular meeting held December 16, 2008.

**DELEGATIONS**

***Scotland County Economic Development Director Greg Icard***

Mayor Block explained that Mr. Icard was not available for the rescheduled Council meeting and will attend later.

***Gryphon Group***

The Assistant City Attorney explained that the Gryphon Group has requested certain last minute changes to the originally proposed lease agreement between the City, the Town of Maxton and the Gryphon Group. He stated that he is still reviewing the requested changes and cannot make a recommendation to Council at this time.

Mayor Block explained that it might be necessary to have a special meeting in order to discuss the proposed lease agreement once the changes are finalized.

The City Manager stated that the lease needs to be signed by Tuesday, February 3, 2009.

The Assistant City Attorney stated that in lieu of calling a special meeting, Council could recess this meeting to the date decided upon to consider approval of the finalized lease agreement.

John Hoover, Director of Special Projects of the Gryphon Group, appeared before Council and briefly explained what the Gryphon Group does.

Following discussion, it was consensus of Council that, instead of adjourning the current meeting at its conclusion, the meeting should be recessed until Thursday, January 29, 2009 at 6:00 p.m. in the council room of the Municipal Building.

***ElectriCities – Mr. Ken Raber, Senior Vice President, North Carolina Eastern Municipal Power Agency (NCEMPA)***

Mayor Block explained that Mr. Ken Raber, Senior Vice President of the North Carolina Eastern Municipal Power Agency, was present to discuss the recent electric rate increases of 14% in August 2008 and the 4% increase that will be implemented by NCEMPA February 1, 2009. He reminded everyone that that at its July meeting Council had chosen to increase the City's retail electric rates no more than 13% for any level of service to be implemented August 1, 2008.

Mr. Ken Raber presented a PowerPoint presentation explaining the reasons for the increasing cost of electricity. He also explained the City's relationship with ElectriCities and the purpose of ElectriCities.

***Electric Rate Increase - Ms. Hattie Ray***

Mayor Block explained that Ms. Hattie Ray would like the opportunity to speak to City Council about the issue of the City's electricity billing.

Ms. Ray appeared before Council and expressed concern that the five (5) day extension to pay utility bills granted by Council was not enough to help people. She also expressed concern about the City's policy of only one (1) extension per year for paying utility bills.

Following a lengthy discussion, the City Manager explained that Diane Chavis, Customer Services Supervisor, and Brian Morrison, Electrical Services Technician, were present to answer questions and also to provide information. He also explained that the WARM Program is administered through Church and Community Services. He added not much money has been donated to the WARM Program.

Upon question, Ms. Diane Chavis explained the method for determining the equal payment amount for customers desiring to go on the equal payment plan.

Upon question, Ms. Chavis stated that approximately 150-180 customers are cut off each month for non-payment including some that are water only customers.

Upon question by Mayor Block, Mr. Brian Morrison stated that in the last week he had conducted eight (8) energy audits.

A discussion ensued concerning energy audits.

***SOLID WASTE ADVISORY COMMITTEE FINAL REPORT – Mr. James Thomas***

Mayor Block explained that the City Council appointed a Solid Waste Committee in July to review the City's Sanitation services and to make recommendations on levels of service, costs, etc. He added that the Committee had conducted its work in September and October 2008. He further added that Mr. James Thomas, Vice Chairperson of the Committee was present to present the final report of the Committee.

Mr. Thomas explained that the Solid Waste Committee found that the current level of service provided by the Sanitation Department was good. He offered the following suggestions from the Committee:

- Provide more information to citizens on the regulations concerning pickup of trash, leaves and limbs.
- Purchase larger recycling containers.
- Initiate a go green movement

- Look into grants for utilizing land at the Public Works facility for composting

Mr. Thomas thanked Harold Haywood, General Services Director, and Mayor Block for their participation on the committee.

Motion was made by Councilmember Faulk, seconded by Councilmember Leak, and unanimously carried to accept the report from the Solid Waste Committee and to disband the Committee.

### **CONSIDER REQUEST FOR A CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF 40 TAX CREDIT UNITS OF MULTIFAMILY HOUSING AT THE CORNER OF X-WAY ROAD AND TURNPIKE ROAD – LAURINBURG HOUSING AUTHORITY**

The City Manager explained that the Laurinburg Housing Authority's non-profit affiliate Laurinburg Housing Authority Opportunity, Inc. is requesting a conditional use permit for the construction of 40 Tax Credit Units of multifamily housing at the corner of X-Way and Turnpike Road. He added that a public hearing would need to be held on the request on Tuesday, February 17, 2009 at 7:00 pm in Council Room. He concluded by stating that the Planning Board reviewed the project on January 13, 2009 and unanimously recommended its approval.

Motion was made by Councilmember DeBerry, seconded by Councilmember Rainer, and unanimously carried to set a public hearing on the request to be held Tuesday, February 17, 2009 at 7:00 p.m. in the upstairs council room of the Municipal Building located at 303 West Church St., Laurinburg, North Carolina.

A discussion ensued concerning traffic at the intersection of Turnpike Road and X-Way Road. The City Manager stated that he will contact Kevin Hedrick with the NC Department of Transportation to conduct a traffic count at this intersection.

### **DISCUSSION ON FIREWORKS DISPLAY FOR JULY 4, 2009**

The City Manager explained that at the December City Council meeting, Council asked for a breakdown of exactly what the City would be receiving as part of the proposed July 4 show as well as an explanation of why the cost of the fireworks show had increased. He further explained that the original proposal from Melrose Pyrotechnics was basically "last year's" show for approximately 20 minutes at \$13,000.00 (increase of \$2,000.00) and that they had made a second proposal for a show approximately 18 minutes long at \$11,000.00 (last year's price). He added that the price difference is for the timeframe (2 minutes additional) and the additional number of shells that would be shot as part of the show.

Councilmembers Parker and Rainer expressed their opinion that, in the current economic situation, they could not support the City's expenditure of funds for the fireworks display.

Following discussion, motion was made by Councilmember Parker and seconded by Councilmember Rainer for the City not to sponsor a fireworks display on July 4 this year. The motion failed with the vote as follows:

Ayes: Parker, Rainer

Nays: DeBerry, Leak, Faulk.

Following further discussion, motion was made by Councilmember DeBerry and seconded by Councilmember Faulk that, contingent upon Scotland County paying one-half (1/2) of the cost, the City Manager be authorized to execute the proposed \$11,000.00 contract with Melrose Pyrotechnics for a fireworks display on July 4. The motion passed with the vote as follows:

Ayes: DeBerry, Leak, Faulk;

Nays: Parker, Rainer

The City Manager stated that he would obtain verification from the County Manager that Scotland County would pay

one-half (1/2) of the cost of the fireworks display.

### **CONSIDER LIFTING HIRING FREEZE FOR THREE DEPARMENTS OF THE CITY OF LAURINBURG**

The City Manager explained that the City's Public Works Department has three (3) positions that staff would like to ask Council to unfreeze so that they can be filled.

The City Manager explained that due to the retirement of an employee, Harold Haywood, General Services Director, would like to fill the vacant position of Equipment Mechanic II in the garage to help cut down on overtime. He added that the department is responsible for over 500 pieces of equipment with only 6 employees.

The City Manager explained that in the Street Department, Stacey McQuage, Public Utilities Director, is requesting that he be allowed to fill a Street Maintenance position. This position is an entry level position with duties of leaf collection, street and asphalt repair, and grass cutting.

The City Manager explained that, due to an employee resignation in the Electrical Department, Ronald Pierce, Electrical Services Director, has an opening for a Ground Technician that he would like to fill as well.

Motion was made by Councilmember Faulk and seconded by Councilmember Leak to lift hiring freeze so that the three (3) positions could be filled.

There then ensued much discussion concerning the cost of overtime versus the cost of filling the positions, and it was the consensus of Council that Staff obtain and provide overtime cost comparison to Council at the time that this meeting is resumed on January 29, 2009.

Councilmember Faulk withdrew her motion without objection.

### **ORDINANCE DIRECTING THE HOUSING INSPECTOR TO DEMOLISH PROPERTY LOCATED AT 414 MORRIS STREET**

The City Manager explained that the dwelling at 414 Morris Street has been deemed unsafe by the City's Housing Inspector Bill Peele. The roof is dilapidated causing substantial damage to the interior of the house. The house has received several complaints from residents in the area about the unsafe condition of the house and property.

If approved, the asbestos will be removed and the dwelling will be demolished (projected cost to City \$6,000.00 - \$7,000.00 due to the building being a block building – debris measured by weight at landfill).

Following a brief discussion, Councilmember Parker moved for the adoption of Ordinance No. O-2009-01 which directs the housing inspector to demolish property located at 414 Morris Street. Councilmember Leak seconded the motion, and it was approved by the following vote:

Ayes: Parker, Rainer, Faulk, Leak, DeBerry

Nays: None

(Ordinance No. O-2009-01 is on file in Clerk's Office).

### **RESOLUTION DECLARING CERTAIN ITEMS AS SURPLUS PROPERTY**

The City Manager explained that the City has additional surplus computer equipment that needs to be disposed of. Council will need to adopt a resolution declaring the items as surplus property.

Councilmember Parker moved for the adoption of Resolution No. R-2009-01 which declares certain items as surplus property for the City of Laurinburg. Councilmember Faulk seconded the motion, and it was approved by the following vote:

Ayes: Parker, Rainer, Faulk, Leak, DeBerry

Nays: None

(Resolution No. R-2009-01 is on file in Clerk's Office).

### **CITY OF LAURINBURG ELECTRIC RATE INCREASE**

The City Manager explained that at the North Carolina Eastern Municipal Power Agency (NCEMPA) meeting in December, the NCEMPA Board of Commissioners recommended a 4% electric rate increase to be implemented February 1, 2009. He added that following consultation with our Electrical Engineer, Fowler and Associates, staff would like to recommend that City retail rates be increased by 4.633 percent across the board for all service levels to be implemented February 1, 2009. He further added that he continues to work with the Electrical Engineer to keep rates across the board as low as possible and determine the exact rate increase necessary for each level of service. The City Manager explained that if agreeable with Council, the motion should be as follows: All City retail rate schedules will be adjusted fairly and equitably to make up the increased costs to the City of the wholesale rate increase from NCEMPA. Each retail rate will be reviewed and adjusted only to avoid undue burden on all consumer types and to maintain financial stability of the City's electrical operation.

Following discussion, it was consensus of Council to take no action on this matter until Thursday when the rate figures will be prepared.

### **TRAINING FACILITY- SCOTLAND COUNTY FIREFIGHTERS ASSOCIATION**

The City Manager explained that at the December City Council meeting, Council reviewed the request from the Scotland County Firefighters Association that they be allowed to donate and build a fire tower/firehouse behind the North Fire Station. He added that during this presentation, discussion took place about looking at other possible City locations (South Fire Station/Public Works) to see if other sites might be more feasible. He further added that City Council requested the City Manager to review and bring back information for the January meeting for further discussion. He thanked David Laviner, President of the Scotland County Firefighters Association, and Harold Smith, Fire Chief, for their assistance in studying the three locations and developing a list of pros and cons for each site.

Councilmember DeBerry explained that he is a member of Bright Hopewell Baptist Church and that the Church does not have a problem with the training facility being located at the North Fire Station.

Councilmember Leak expressed concern about the need for a new fire station on the south side of the City and the aesthetics of locating the proposed training facility at the North Fire Station in a black historical district.

Councilmember Faulk expressed concern about the safety and aesthetics of locating the training facility at the North Fire Station so close to the downtown area.

Following discussion, motion was made by Councilmember Parker to approve construction of the training facility at the North Fire Station.

A lengthy discussion ensued. It was consensus of Councilmembers to visit the site. The City Manager will arrange the visit.

Councilmember Parker's motion to approve construction died for lack of a second.

### **CITIZEN PUBLIC INPUT SESSION FOLLOW-UP MEETING**

The City Manager explained that the City of Laurinburg will hold an additional public input meeting on February 12, 2009 at 7:00 pm in the council room as follow-up to the November 6, 2008 meeting where citizens made suggestions about certain issues affecting the City. He added that letters were sent in early January to those in attendance who left their contact info with Staff to specifically invite those persons back for the follow-up meeting. He further added that, if additional information is needed before the meeting, please let the City Manager know.

**MAYORAL UPDATE**

Mayor Block explained that since it had been a long meeting, he would provide his Mayoral Update at a later date.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

Loretta Rena McNeil appeared before Council and requested a proclamation to honor the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) on February 12, 2009. She added that the Scotland County Chapter had been in existence since 1934.

The City Manager requested that Ms. McNeil provide information for the proclamation to the City Clerk.

**RECESS**

Motion was made by Councilmember DeBerry, seconded by Councilmember Parker, and unanimously carried to recess the meeting to Thursday, January 29, 2009 at 6:00 p.m. in the council room of the Municipal Building.

The meeting recessed at 9:28 p.m.

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Matthew Block, Mayor

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Dolores A. Hammond, City Clerk