

**CITY OF LAURINBURG
SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING
CITIZEN INPUT SESSION
MARCH 18, 2010
A.B. GIBSON CENTER
322 S. MAIN STREET
LAURINBURG, NC
7:00 P.M.**

Minutes

The City Council of the City of Laurinburg held a special meeting March 18, 2010 at 7:00 p.m. at the A.B. Gibson Center located at 322 S. Main St., Laurinburg, NC with the Honorable Matthew Block, Mayor, presiding. The following Councilmembers were present: Amanda F. Doerffel, Curtis B. Leak, Kenton Spencer and Herbert M. Rainer, Jr.

Also present were Edward F. Burchins, City Manager, and Dolores A. Hammond, City Clerk. Management Team members present were: Bill Riemer, Director of Administration and Development; Cindy Carpenter, Finance Director; Johnny Evans, Chief of Police; Bob Bell, Human Resources/Risk Management Director; Stacey McQuage, Utilities Director, Ronald Pierce, Electric Distribution Director and Marcus Smith, IT Director. Jenny Tippett, Deputy City Clerk was also present.

Mayor Block welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 7:12 p.m. He recognized members from the Scotland County Board of Commissioners and the Scotland County Board of Education who were present.

Mayor Block stated that the purpose of this meeting is to answer any questions that citizens may have and to hear from the citizens what they would like to see the City of Laurinburg more involved in and in what direction they would like to see the City take in the future.

Mayor Block introduced Councilmembers Leak, Rainer, Doerffel, and Spencer. He also introduced Management Team members and the City Clerk.

Mayor Block stated that this year there will be a different approach to our Citizen Input Session than in the past. The City Manager will first discuss what the City has been working on this current budget year and what the City will focus on in the future.

He then made a few remarks and subsequently turned the meeting over to the City Manager.

The City Manager discussed and reviewed the recent accomplishments of the City. He then explained that the budget process will soon begin and that City Council is not looking at raising taxes or electric rates. He explained that the City had a very clean audit report.

He then informed everyone that the City is concentrating on the concept of an Industrial Park, bringing more businesses into the area, working with developers in finding out what would help them to bring more projects inside the city limits, encouraging the location of younger active retirees, recreation, and infrastructure just to name a few.

Mayor Block explained that the City and Scotland County have agreed to allocate \$10,000.00 for the purpose of hiring an architectural firm to study and submit drawings for a proposed Community Center. This process will consist of public input sessions, a steering committee then being formed to compile the information from the input sessions, and the consideration by the architects of several sites. Following the gathering of information, the architects will then submit drawings and the proposed best location for the proposed Community Center. Then the determining factor will be how to pay for the proposed center.

Following the presentation from the City Manager, Mayor Block opened the floor for comments and questions.

Mr. Eddie Carmichael expressed his concern over Scotland County's proposed landfill and the City's position on this proposed project.

Mayor Block and several Councilmembers stated that at this time the City has not had an opportunity to discuss the proposed landfill project. Mayor Block stated that it was certainly an issue to look into.

Ms. Rena McNeil stated that she is concerned, especially with the elderly than are on fixed incomes, about increases in the City's electric rates and the City taxes.

The City Manager stated that at this time there is not a proposed increase from the City's electric supplier.

Mr. Charles Brown stated that he was very much in favor of a proposed Industrial Park.

Mr. Joseph Creech questioned the City Manager about the water system at the WestPoint Pepperell Plant and inquired if Pinehurst was going to purchase the facility.

The City Manager stated that the decision on that particular issue is with the Scotland County Board of Commissioners. He explained that the City was working on a water study to evaluate combining the County's water system and the City's water system. He then explained that in that study there should be a projection on what our future water needs will be. He stated that if the study projects that in 25-50 years there needs to be another water supply, the City would likely be working with a group of cities and counties within the region to purchase the WestPoint Pepperell site and turn it into some type of regional water facility.

Mr. Creech questioned the matter of junk cars located at residences in the City Limits.

Mr. Bill Peele, City Zoning Officer, stated that anyone can call in and report what they feel is a junk car and that his office will then check it out and take the proper action.

Mr. Elliott Brown's question was in reference to the proposed Industrial Park and proposed solar farms.

The City Manager stated that the idea is to have a type of Industrial Park that works toward green energy or alternative energy and is built such that it exceeds environmental standards. He noted that there are a number of large companies that now work with alternative energy.

He stated that the solar farm would sell its electrical production to Progress Energy.

Councilmember Leak stated that the Economic Development Committee, of which he is a member, is also working towards recruiting more green companies to the area.

Mr. Daniel Dockery stated that he is very excited about the proposed state of the art recreation facility and how close is it to becoming a reality.

Mayor Block stated that plans are moving forward but that as anything else it takes time to plan and create a project. He then stated that in discussions the proposed facility would address the need of a Community Center/Recreation Center. He explained that the City and the Scotland County Commissioners have set aside a combined amount of \$10,000.00 to hire an architectural firm to conduct preliminary work on getting the process going.

Mr. Jeff Cox, St. Andrews Presbyterian College student, expressed his concern about education in Scotland County.

Mayor Block explained that the City may have some input but does not control the education process of our county schools.

Councilmember Spencer voiced his opinion about educational issues stating that there should be a partnership between the School Board, Scotland County, and the citizens to come up with innovative ways that will promote a better

learning environment for the community.

A concern was expressed that store owners in the community did not employ citizens that live in the community.

Councilmember Rainer expressed his opinion regarding the School System and the master plan of the Scotland County Recreation Complex. His concern is that there are not enough teachers in the school system that represent the minorities of the area.

Mayor Block stated that a Laurinburg Youth Council is being formed and that this will be an opportunity for interested youths to discuss issues and recommend ideas for youth in Laurinburg and Scotland County.

Mr. Mike Vinson stated that regarding the Community/Recreation Center that has been mentioned, he would like to see consideration given to use of some of the community's existing buildings. He also questioned the possibility of the City and County consolidating services.

Councilmember Leak explained that there were a number of services that the City and County share such as a fueling facility, an economic development partnership as well as our existing GIS (Geographic Information System).

Mayor Block stated that he has also been approached about the consolidation of law enforcement. He explained that at this time other municipalities in the county do not seem interested in a combined law enforcement department.

The City Manager stated that he and the County Manager have been discussing a one-stop location in order to pay taxes, water/sewer bills, electric bills, and obtain any permits that both entities have to issue.

Councilmember Rainer discussed the possibility of using the school system's gyms in partnership with the proposed Community/Recreation Center.

A statement was made that the Scotland County School tax and the Scotland County taxes are too high to entice businesses into the area.

Mayor Block commented that the only control the City has on taxation is the City of Laurinburg taxation rate. He stated that research illustrates that property taxes do not deter industries from locating in any particular community. He further explained that if a citizen has an issue with the School tax and County tax, the best way to address those issues are with the School Board and the Scotland County Board of Commissioners.

Ms. Jennifer Bruner stated that she would like Council to remember one thing when hiring outside consultants to review the needs of the community. She explained that when a study is commissioned, completed and shows that large amounts of money need to be spent in order to accommodate the request, by the time the money is allocated, the report is now older and the needs assessment will have changed. She emphasized making sure that constituents are involved in all processes before the "perfect plan" is presented so that they can be part of the "plan" from the onset.

Mayor Block stated that, in order to receive funding, with the availability of stimulus money part of that process is that plans are put together by professionals with expertise to the particular projects.

Mr. Charles McEachin stated that there needs to be significant improvements to the Leith Creek area from North Main St. to East Laurinburg. He also stated that the "Welcome to Laurinburg" signs need work especially the ones on the North side of town.

Mr. Sam Thompson spoke about a group called "Active Laurinburg" which he is responsible for assembling. He explained this group has a site where residents or potential residents can view Laurinburg and get information on the City in order to make an informed decision about moving and staying in the community. He concluded by stating that he would like to see more activities and quality of life issues in Laurinburg.

Mayor Block complimented Mr. Thompson on taking the initiative to form such a community spirited group.

Dr. Bill Morgan stated that he would like City Council and the County Commissioners to seriously consider the cost of taxation in which both Laurinburg residents and County residents pay for public safety (police, sheriff, and fire) and garbage. He explained that he is suggesting that both entities consider policing districts, different approaches to fire protection, and garbage. He then stated that he would like to see garbage fees assessed based on the number of people in the household.

Mayor Block thanked everyone for attending the Citizen Input Session.

ADJOURNMENT

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

The meeting adjourned at 6:15 p.m.

Matthew Block, Mayor

Dolores A. Hammond, City Clerk