

**CITY OF LAURINBURG  
SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING  
MARCH 8, 2010  
MUNICIPAL BUILDING  
305 WEST CHURCH STREET  
5:00 P.M.**

**Minutes**

The City Council of the City of Laurinburg held a meeting March 8, 2010 at 5:05 p.m. in the council room of the Municipal Building with the Honorable Matthew Block, Mayor, presiding. The following Councilmembers were present: Curtis B. Leak, Herbert M. Rainer, Jr., Kenton Spencer and Thomas W. Parker, III. Councilmember Amanda F. Doerffel was absent.

Also present were Edward F. Burchins, City Manager, Dolores A. Hammond, City Clerk and Management Team Members: Cindy Carpenter, Finance Director; Johnny Evans, Chief of Police; Robert Ellis, Treatment Plants Director; Stacey McQuage, Utilities Director; Harold Haywood, General Services Director; Ronald Pierce, Electric Distribution Director, Bob Bell, Human Resource Officer, Marcus Smith, IT Director, and Bill Riemer, Director of Administration and Development.

Mayor Block gave the invocation.

The City Manager explained the concept of the meeting which was to introduce the strategic plan for the City of Laurinburg. He explained that this plan is designed to have Council take a look and determine where they want the City to be in the future and how Council wants the City to look.

He stated that if Council agrees with the strategic plan that he and the City Management Team would develop the proposed budget around that plan. He explained that this plan also gives direction on City projects and programs along with how the City should act as an organization and work together as a team.

He stated that the financial overview of the City still needs to improve. The 2008-2009 financial audit indicated that there was improvement made, and the City maintained it's A minus rating which is very good.

He stated that the financial overview of the City still needs to improve. The 2008-2009 financial audit indicated that there was improvement made, and the City maintained it's A minus rating which is very good. The City Manager informed Council that he had met with the Local Government Commission (LGC) and discussed the City's financial status. He then stated that the LGC is taking a look at all municipalities' and counties' finances.

He explained that there is no debt in the City of Laurinburg's General Fund or the Electric Fund. There is debt in the Water/Sewer Fund which will be settled in 2015.

He stated that there are not any proposed electric rate increases from ElectriCities. He added that there are a number of municipalities considering leaving ElectriCities.

The City Manager stated that during Council's retreat he was instructed to draft a mission and vision statement for the City. He stated that his proposed mission statement reads as follows:

The City of Laurinburg will provide proactive leadership. An organization that effectively and efficiency provides customer friendly services, facilities, and programs. To create a quality of life that provides numerous opportunities to the citizens, and our youth so Laurinburg can establish economic and residential growth that will provide above average wages and benefits for the citizens in Laurinburg and Scotland County.

He stated that if anyone would like to suggest changes to please let him know.

The vision statement is drafted to read:

Laurinburg, the county seat of Scotland County, will become a vibrant and progressive community which will develop the highest quality of life by insuring safe, tranquil, clean and healthy neighborhoods and economic centers and supporting well planned quality and sustainable growth; valuing and protecting our cultural historical, and educational resources; developing and maintaining quality, cost effective community facilities; infrastructure and services that ensure that our City is cohesive and well connected. Proactively creating and maintaining economic and job development opportunities for all our citizens.

He then stated that the core values for the City are to promote the health, safety, and general well-being of our employees, excellence in customer service, fiscal responsibility, communication, involvement and participation of the citizenry in what we do; collaboration and cooperation; regionalism (we want to be leaders in our region and beyond); a more active role in economic development and job creation; utilize existing community amenities; support creative approaches to residential development and growth; and develop programs that promote effective habits and leadership for our young citizens.

He continued by listing the organizational values which are:

Respect everyone and their opinions; display good manners when engaged in public discussion; deliver excellent service; be risk takers; be creative and innovative; be one City, one team; be personally responsible; do the right thing; and act with integrity and honesty.

Upon question by Councilmember Parker regarding workforce, the City Manager stated he sees vision and mission as being something being strived for not necessarily reached. He explained the vision and mission is something to always be looking towards.

He discussed revenue sources and the desire to increase revenue sources. He explained that one thing that the City has an opportunity to increase revenue on is the fiber optic system. He stated that it will be his recommendation that once all the opportunities are exhausted to collect monies owed to the City that the City consider another provider.

He explained that the Electric Department has had requests to extend fiber optic cable but that, at this time, potential customers would need to contact our provider and our provider may not be our provider much longer.

A discussion ensued about the City's current provider of internet service and the desire to consider another company.

The City Manager stated that in the 2010-2011 budget there will be performance measures put in place with respect to bringing revenues to support the fiber optic system.

Councilmember Leak requested the cost being paid to the City Attorney regarding the City's fiber optic system.

Upon question by Councilmember Parker, Mrs. Carpenter stated she would provide the cost paid to the City Attorney in this current year for the fiber optic system.

The City Manager explained that the ordinance adopted for privilege license fees for electronic gaming will be sent to those who have to renew their license. Privilege license renewals are mailed in May. Others who decide to open a new sweepstakes café prior to the renewals will be instructed that they will need to pay the privilege license fee and upon renewal will need to pay once again.

He then stated that another area in which to increase revenue is with pole attachment agreements which are agreements under which other companies pay a fee to attach lines to the City's power poles. At this time, the City is not charging a sufficient amount, and we will consider increasing those fees to somewhere in the range of \$25.00-\$50.00.

The City Manager stated that the City has hired a firm that negotiates attachment agreements with companies on a regular basis. He explained that this negotiation has not started as yet because the City needs to get an accurate count on the number of poles the City owns.

He stated that if these negotiations are successful the City would see an increase in revenues in the range of \$50,000.00-\$80,000.00 a year.

Upon question by Councilmember Leak, Ronald Pierce, Electrical Distribution Director, explained that the firm's fee is in the vicinity of \$10,000.00 with an additional cost of \$90,000.00 to resurvey and retag the poles to designate who owns a particular pole.

Mr. Pierce stated that the format is to consider an eight-year cycle in order to test all the poles. He informed Council that there is two years left on the previous cycle with approximately 200 poles to be tested.

A discussion ensued about revenue income regarding the pole attachment negotiations.

The City Manager stated that during these negotiations there are legal issues and technical issues that will need to be dealt with.

The City Manager stated that actions by the state government should constantly be monitored. The State Budget is out of balance, and local government needs to monitor matters closely as the State may decide to hold some of the local governmental monies.

Councilmember Leak reminded Council that the contribution to the Local Governmental Retirement system will increase in the upcoming budget year. The City Manager and the Finance Director acknowledged that are aware of the increase and that the same will be included in the upcoming budget when the final percentage is received from the State.

The City Manager stated that another strategy to be considered is to finance the City's capital needs instead of paying cash for them. He will present some of these during the budget workshop sessions.

He also stated that a review of the current user fees will be conducted by staff. He explained that this is due to Scotland County government increasing its tipping fees for solid waste collection.

Upon question by Councilmember Spencer, the City Manager stated that another option regarding tipping fees would be to transfer our waste to another landfill.

Following discussion, Councilmember Spencer stated that other alternatives need to be considered instead of passing the increase on to the City's citizens.

Councilmember Leak suggested that Councilmembers review minutes that focused on a previous proposal to locate a transfer station inside the City limits.

Council directed the City Manager to research other alternatives regarding solid waste transfer in order to find out if there are less expensive options.

The City Manager discussed the second round of stimulus money funding and advised that staff is preparing projects to take advantage of the stimulus money. He stated that he would come before Council with a list of potential projects. He then stated that this year staff focused on grants and loans and were very successful.

He discussed the Scotland County Economic Development Committee and its efforts to grow retail businesses. He explained that they are going to talk with owners and developers of the shopping centers to try and understand their issues and the pressures they are dealing with.

The City Manager stated that he is talking with Harris Teeter about the City installing a generator and that in the discussions staff has asked them to agree to stay through the life of the payback on the generator and to upgrade their store. This project is still in negotiations.

There have been discussions regarding developing affordable housing for young, active, middle income retirees.

He stated that staff needs to review subdivision regulations, one particular issue being the curb and gutter requirement and another being extension of water and sewer. He explained that Council should review the policy which states that the City will extend water and sewer lines into a subdivision.

The City Manager stated that the City wants to attract visitors as well as new residences and businesses, maintain a high quality of life and a very livable place. He explained that a strategy for doing so is to create a vibrant and economically diverse downtown.

He mentioned that micro enterprise loans had been discussed at a Council workshop. There may be things that could be done in all business areas. He suggested that the City investigate loan pools or programs to provide initial assistance for capital or to fund other expenses needed to open up small businesses. Potential businesses should have a business plan or approach to how they would use the funds that might be loaned to them. There are ways the City can work with banks and other lenders to set up these type funds for small businesses.

He stated that a Class A Industrial Park had been discussed this year. This would help the City to develop its customer base for electricity, water/sewer, fiber optic system and other revenue resources.

He explained that ElectriCities has agreed to pay for a site selection study to locate areas in the City for an Industrial Park.

The City Manager explained how an Industrial Park was developed in an area where he served previously as a City Manager.

He stated that another strategy Council discussed was to develop a cultural and community center that provides recreational and cultural programs for citizens. He informed Council that he and the Mayor appeared before the Scotland County Commissioners, and they have agreed to invest \$5,000.00 in next year's budget to match the City's funds to begin the symmetric design phase for that project. A discussion was also held regarding an amphitheatre or outdoor entertainment venue that could be an anchor for the downtown area. Other sites will be considered for this project.

The Beautification Committee and the Laurinburg Downtown Revitalization Corporation (LDRC) have talked about looking at all major business areas (retail areas, downtown) and considering developing streetscape improvements and the interchanges along I-74. It was pointed out that these areas can be beautified and brought up to certain standards (sidewalks, lighting, etc.) to improve the overall appearance. Areas will be identified throughout the City.

The City Manager stated that he has been working with a group known as the Phoenix Development Corporation to improve neighborhoods with the focus on the Newtown area. He informed Council that he and the Mayor had met with the group and talked about strategies for getting things moving. The strategy includes cleaning up the neighborhood (in conjunction with a community-wide cleaning effort) and utilizing the properties that the City owns with the hopes that it can be sold and new homes built or existing homes upgraded in that area.

Councilmember Leak suggested that the Laurinburg Housing Authority be included in the discussions about the Newtown area.

*Council recessed for a 10-minute break  
The meeting resumed at 6:30 p.m.*

The City Manager stated that there was discussion at Council's retreat about incubator space. He stated that other

municipalities have been very successful on starting small business incubator facilities. He explained that there is a demand for incubator space with people that are working on developing alternative energy, components and systems.

Councilmember Leak stated that there is a contact in Charlotte that has gotten the approval from the Department of Commerce to begin a project in Scotland County. Information regarding this will be brought to the Scotland County Board of Commissioners and the Laurinburg City Council.

A discussion ensued concerning incubator space. Councilmember Spencer suggested that the area of service and small business development be included in the incubator space proposal.

The City Manager stated that the City work with the Town of Maxton and the Airport Commission to develop the airport in such a way that it could be used for military, industrial and other development opportunities. He then stated that the airport has been suggested as a prime location for an intermodal area.

The City staff will try and develop shovel ready projects for the next round of stimulus money. Staff is also working on a centralized purchasing procedures and policies.

The City Manager and the Finance Director will begin developing a more comprehensive and more centralized approach towards purchasing. Staff is constantly looking at ways to reduce costs while still providing appropriate services. The idea of rewarding employees for effective cost-saving ideas has been considered.

The Finance Director has been researching ways to consolidate services with Scotland County in the Old Speller Building located off Atkinson St.

The City Manager stated that when Scotland County builds its Emergency Operations Center there is a chance that the City can take all of its computer hardware and locate it in that facility (along with Scotland County). There may be an opportunity to also hold Council meetings in the facility. This center will be equipped with all the latest technology.

The City Manager stated that it is time to wrap up the study for the merging of the water systems between the City and the County. He also stated that there will be discussions held with the Laurinburg-Maxton Airport Commission to find out if they have an interest in joining this partnership. This project should be completed in a couple of weeks, and Council should have a draft proposal no later than the April meeting.

The City is in the process of developing a pilot program of the automated meter reading systems with new equipment. The City Manager stated that if the pilot program works, it will impact the budget because originally meters were not going to be installed in the entire system. Until the pilot program is completed, staff will not be able to provide specific numbers with respect to anticipated costs.

The Manager stated that there is always discussion about keeping the community litter free. He explained that the City is looking at different and innovative approaches to make the City litter free. Staff is considering equipment needs that would be used to help keep all areas of the City clean (streets, sidewalks, mowing curb, gutter, etc.). A new maintenance program is being developed for the next budget year to have better streets and sidewalks. There have also been discussions regarding infrastructure, street lighting density in the City and the City's water system.

He stated that there will be estimates brought to City Council regarding street lighting along the new improved Lauchwood Dr. as well as the interchanges on Highway 74, 501, 401 Business, and 401 By-pass.

Councilmember Leak asked if Scotland Healthcare System will help in the cost of lighting along Lauchwood Drive.

The City Manager explained that the Fire District contracts with Scotland County will be discussed with Council tomorrow night. He stated that, because of the need for additional or replacement fire equipment in the City's fire department, these contracts need to be reviewed.

Councilmember Parker stated that with the second round of stimulus money there may be an opportunity to get some

help to clean up the downtown area.

Communication between the citizens and City employees has been another issue discussed. The City Manager stated that staff needs to develop a more proactive approach to communication with the public especially through the media.

He also explained that research is being conducted to hire a company to redesign the City's website.

The City Managers stated that at Council's retreat developing a Citizens Academy to gain knowledge on how the entire City operates was mentioned, but no action has been taken to form this Academy.

The City Manager stated that other ideas developed at Council's retreat were to have an annual appreciation event to show appreciation for advisory boards and committees and to have more content in the City's newsletter, especially from more departments in the City. Information could be included in the City's utility bills, and the Community Access Channel needs to be reviewed.

He stated that employees are the most valuable asset to the City. He stated that there should be encouragement of a diverse workforce throughout the entire organization; that involvement of employees in setting objectives should be encouraged; that a more effective and efficient way in providing services should be explored; that innovations and new ideas should be encouraged; that training in-house using webinars should be explored and used more; that providing a safe working environment was important; that establishing and maintaining standards for performance were also important; and that evaluations should be conducted even though there have not been any pay raises.

Councilmember Leak stated that in working with staff and employees, Council needs to consider some kind of monetary assistance or some type of reward to City employees. The City Manager stated he would bring some proposals back to Council.

The Electric Fund has a potential gain of \$266,000.00, the Water/Sewer Fund \$944,000.00, and the Solid Waste Fund \$46,000.00.

Councilmember Rainer discussed the revenue shortfall.

The Finance Director stated that the majority of that shortfall is utilities and what the City pays to purchase utilities. There are a number of factors in this projection. These are projections through the end of the year.

The City Manager stated that he will provide a chart to show electricity usage during the year.

Motion was made by Councilmember Parker, seconded by Councilmember Spencer, and unanimously carried to adjourn.

The meeting adjourned at 7:20 p.m

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Matthew Block, Mayor

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Dolores A. Hammond, City Clerk