

**CITY OF LAURINBURG
COUNCIL MEETING
SEPTEMBER 25, 2010
ROOM 130, DIANE F. HONEYCUTT CENTER
600 MCLEAN ST
LAURINBURG, NC
12:00 P.M.**

Minutes

Following lunch the City Council of the City of Laurinburg reconvened its regular meeting of September 21, 2010 which was recessed on that date until September 24, 2010, and reconvened and recessed on that date until September 25, 2010, at 12:50 p.m. with the Honorable Matthew Block, Mayor, presiding. The following Councilmembers were present: Curtis B. Leak, Thomas W. Parker III, Herbert M. Rainer, Jr., Kenton Spencer and Joy Ellison.

Others present were: Edward F. Burchins, City Manager, and Dolores A. Hammond, City Clerk.

LAURINBURG DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION CORPORATION

Mayor Block explained that during the retreat yesterday, Council agreed that the City should continue funding the Laurinburg Downtown Revitalization Corporation (LDRC). He entertained discussion on having a future meeting dedicated to the downtown area. He stated he would like someone from the Main Street Program to lead the discussion as part of a retreat.

Councilmember Leak stated that he would suggest that those who are owners of downtown property as well as renters and LDRC attend the retreat. He explained that his reasoning is to ask those property owners what they want and how they want to see downtown grow.

The City Manager explained that the Main Street Program consists of reviewing how things are marketed, retail mix, and other criteria to help downtown areas. It also tries to help downtown groups become independent of government. He stated that being dedicated as a Main Street Program allows the group to apply for grants. The grants range from \$100,000.00-\$300,000.00. The LDRC would manage the program.

Councilmember Parker stated that parking is a problem in the downtown area.

Mayor Block stated that a lot of cities are doing are expanding their business improvement district (special tax district). The City of Laurinburg could include all of South Main St. and Hwy. 401 Bypass as part of the district. Instead of a 24 cent tax, a 10 cent tax could be levied, and it would generate close to \$200,000.00 for the commercial district. A working budget could then be developed to hire a person to develop the area or to commit monies to major improvements.

Councilmember Parker stated that with the parking situation, the police department should create a better way to indicate how long a vehicle is parked in one space.

He then stated that one idea could be selling parking permits to merchants that park the entire day in a special location.

Following further discussion, Councilmember Spencer, seconded by Councilmember Rainer, moved to schedule a retreat with City Council, LDRC, downtown property owners and renters, the Chamber of Commerce, and all stakeholders in the downtown area. The motion passed by the following vote:

Ayes: Spencer, Ellison, Parker, Rainer, Leak

Nays: None

Councilmember Rainer stated that the downtown area parking situation has always been an issue. He stated that lighting could be enhanced.

Councilmember Parker reiterated the parking permit idea.

The City Manager stated that LDRC is working on a plan to improve the parking area behind the buildings on the northwest side of South Main St.

He stated that LDRC has Charles Hicks, Jr. of Gordon, Hicks, and Floyd drafting an easement to property owners where they would permit the City and LDRC to make improvements in that area. He explained that this had been done in the past, but the agreement was never renewed. He then stated that the idea is that store owners and employees would park in this area. He also stated that more lighting in that area would also be an asset.

He informed Council that a full time police officer has been assigned to the downtown area in order to have a safer downtown and monitor vehicles that have parked more than the allotted time.

The City Manager stated that the parking issue could be discussed at the retreat with all stakeholders.

The City Manager was instructed to talk with stakeholders and find out when a convenient time would be to have a retreat.

Councilmember Joy Ellison stated that she would like to discuss further what the City could do in economic development.

Councilmember Parker stated that the City is not in economic development.

Councilmember Ellison stated that economic development means different things to different people.

Councilmember Ellison stated that the City should promote itself and consider employing a public relations officer to focus on community development and then grants.

The City Manager explained that the Scotland County Tourism Development Authority (TDA) focus is to promote Laurinburg and Scotland County. A discussion ensued about promoting the City of Laurinburg.

Councilmember Spencer suggested that a City representative be on the TDA.

Consensus among Councilmembers was that the City Manager should review the possibility of hiring a public relations officer (public information officer) that could also serve as a grant writer.

The City Manager stated that there are a number of agencies involved in economic development.

Council directed the City Manager to determine how many different groups are involved and the possible duplication of promoting Laurinburg before employing a new staff person.

Mayor Block called for a short break at 2:00 p.m.

The meeting resumed at 2:12 p.m.

The City Manager explained that Legion Park has a wall that is missing an advertisement. He then explained that in places that he has worked previously that the City would advertise at football fields or baseball fields as well as in brochures throughout the city and also purchased items to give at events, etc. He stated that he would like to look into the cost of putting a sign at Legion Park for the City of Laurinburg. He also stated that he would find out if a sign could be put at the Park for the in-kind services the City provides.

EMPLOYEE PLANNING/SUCCESSION PLANNING

Councilmember Leak stated he would like to discuss succession planning because there are a number of staff members who can retire within the next couple of years.

He suggested that the City have a Management Trainee Program in order that current employees can be trained to succeed to a management position.

A discussion ensued about succession planning along with conversation regarding college graduates who may be interested in local government.

The City Manager stated that staff will develop an outline for management succession.

MICRO-ENTERPRISE/SELF HELP FUNDING PROGRAM

Councilmember Spencer explained the concept of micro-funding for small businesses and presented a PowerPoint presentation on social networking and the power of micro donors or micro finance.

He then explained a process that will allow investors (citizens, etc.) to put money into a particular business through a web portal to invest in a particular business. The business posts what the business may need to begin its business, rehab, or items needed. The web portal would then funnel its web partner, such as a bank, and the partner would allocate the appropriate monies to the business. The business then invests the monies into its needs and repays the money to be distributed to those who have invested.

A discussion then ensued on the proposed project.

Motion was made by Councilmember Rainer, seconded by Councilmember Parker and unanimously approved that Councilmember Spencer explore the possibility of starting a web portal for micro-financing and bring back a plan to Council at a later date.

OUTDOOR AMPHITHEATRE

Councilmember Spencer stated that he would like to see an outdoor amphitheatre in the downtown area. He explained that when talking about downtown, he is also talking about the north side of town all the way to North Main Street.

He stated his concept of an outdoor amphitheatre is not just about movies. He explained that this would be a place for fall festivals, a farmers market and where local businesses can advertise on a big screen.

Councilmember Spencer then explained that this project would use "green space" where families could sit on the lawn, purchase items from a concession stand, etc. (an attraction site for the downtown area).

He then suggested several sites in the downtown area.

A discussion then ensued on Councilmember Spencer's proposed project.

Councilmember Rainer stated that he is interested in considering a proposal for the outdoor venue in the City's next year's budget. It was consensus that Councilmember Spencer work on a proposal for consideration by Council for the 2011-2012 Budget.

Mayor Block suggested that when the summit is held with the downtown property owners, renters, etc. that Council should consider their input on a downtown amphitheatre.

ADJOURNMENT

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

The meeting adjourned at 3:25 p.m.

Matthew Block, Mayor Dolores A. Hammond, City Clerk