

**CITY OF LAURINBURG
CITY COUNCIL JOINT MEETING
JANUARY 12, 2012
MUNICIPAL BUILDING
303 WEST CHURCH ST.
LAURINBURG, NC
7:00 P.M.**

The City Council of the City of Laurinburg reconvened its January 9, 2012, which was reconvened on January 11, 2012, on January 12, 2012 at 6:00 p.m. as a joint meeting with the Scotland County Board of Commissioners in the council room of the Municipal Building with the Mayor Pro Tem Kenton T. Spencer, presiding. The following Councilmembers were present: Mary Jo Adams, Curtis B. Leak, Herbert M. Rainer Jr. and Andrew G. Williamson, Jr. Mayor Thomas W. Parker, III arrived at 6:07 p.m.

Also present were: Edward F. Burchins, City Manager; Jennifer A. Tippet, City Clerk; William P. Floyd, Jr., Assistant City Attorney; Cindy Carpenter, Finance Director; Robert Ellis, Water/Wastewater Superintendent; Stacey McQuage, Public Utilities Director; and Tim Pierce, GIS Administrator.

Scotland County Commissioners present were: Chairman Bob Davis, Vice Chair Joyce McDow and Commissioners John Alford, John Cooley, Guy McCook and Carol McCall. Commissioner Clarence McPhatter was not in attendance.

County Staff in attendance: Kevin Patterson, County Manager; Ann W. Kurtzman, Clerk to the Board; Edward Johnston, County Attorney; Mary Helen Norton, Tax Administrator; Charles Nichols, Finance Director; Greg Icard, Economic Development Director; Roylin Hammond, EMS Director; and Tanita Bullard, IT Manager.

Mayor Pro Tem Spencer reconvened the meeting at 6:04 p.m. Councilmember Spencer gave the invocation.

The City Manager and the County Manager reviewed the items on the agenda for consideration. The County Manager added that a Memorandum of Agreement regarding Building Inspections was needed and an update on co-location of 911 services.

Information Technology (IT) and GIS

The City Manager explained that the City has been operating without a full-time IT staff. He added that this service has been privatized through the year, and the City is working with NWN to maintain the infrastructure and switches. He further added that NWN also contracts with the County.

Further discussion ensued concerning IT services in the City and County. The City Manager explained that the City and County are connected through the same fiber and have the same phone systems. He stated that he and the County Manager have discussed

positive outcomes that could be realized from combining IT and the Geographic Information System (GIS) service. He added that he was seeking permission from Council to work together with the County Manager; Tim Pierce, GIS Administrator; Tanita Bullard, County IT Director; and NWN. He further added that the goal is to standardize hardware and software. He explained that another advantage would be leverage for better equipment prices.

Councilmember Leak expressed concern about consolidating GIS.

The City Manager explained that consolidating the GIS department was not being considered. He explained that the County has GIS needs for other resources that could tie onto our system. Not moving GIS. City employee, we would be providing technology service.

Mayor Parker suggested that IT and GIS consolidation be studied separately.

Following discussion, motion was made by Councilmember Williamson, seconded by Councilmember Adams, and unanimously carried to study consolidation of IT services to determine benefits for the City and for the County.

Upon question by Councilmember Spencer, the City Manager explained that results of the study could be presented in 60 days.

A discussion ensued concerning the makeup of the committee. The County Manager explained that the committee was comprised of himself, the City Manager, Tanita Bullard, Tim Pierce and Dee Hammond.

Motion was made by Commissioner McDow, seconded by Commissioner Alford, and unanimously carried to study consolidation of IT services to determine benefits for the County and the City.

Mayor Parker explained that he understood Councilmember Leak's concern regarding GIS; however, he suggested that consolidation of GIS also be studied.

A discussion ensued concerning the County's expanded use of GIS, particularly with regard to economic development and the need for appropriate space for the server.

Following discussion, motion was made by Councilmember Spencer and seconded by Councilmember Adams to study consolidation of GIS services to determine benefits for the City and the County. The motion carried by a vote of 4-1 with Councilmember Leak casting the dissenting vote.

Motion was made by Commissioner McCook, seconded by Commissioner McCall, and unanimously carried to study consolidation of GIS services to determine benefits for the County and the City.

Mayor Parker stated that he was glad to have dialogue with the County Commissioners to work for the benefit of the citizens.

Commission Chair Davis explained that the residents of the City are residents of the County, and anything that can be done to help the citizens of Scotland County and the City of Laurinburg should be the goal of the meeting.

Planning and Zoning and Code Enforcement

The County Manager stated that the County wanted to discuss consolidation of Planning and Zoning. He added that the City has a significantly more robust department. He also discussed the amount of rezoning requests, the City's Unified Development Ordinance and the County's Zoning Ordinance, and the possibilities regarding the Planning Boards of each entity. He further added that the County is on the NC Department of Transportation's list for a Traffic Planning Study this year. He concluded by stating that consolidation would ease confusion for developers as to what office, City or County, they need to contact.

Commissioner Alford stated that he has heard complaints from contractors and builders regarding the County's Planning and Zoning Department.

The City Manager explained that there was concern about Code Enforcement. He explained that because of the number of Code Enforcement issues in the City, he was concerned about the addition of Code Enforcement issues found in the County. He added that he thought it best to focus on Planning and Zoning and not Code Enforcement.

Upon question by Councilmember Spencer, the County Manager stated that one aspect to consider is to have Planning and Zoning in one (1) location.

Upon question by Councilmember Leak, the County Manager stated that the County has two (2) Building Inspectors and one (1) Fire Inspector.

A discussion ensued concerning the difference between Building Inspections and Code Enforcement.

A discussion ensued concerning the City and County Planning Boards, specifically maintaining two (2) separate boards or combining them. The County Manager explained that in order to combine the boards a Local Act would have to be passed by the General Assembly.

A discussion ensued concerning available space for consolidation of Planning and Zoning to include Building Inspections so that a developer/contractor would only need to visit one (1) place.

Upon question by Councilmember Spencer, the City Manager explained that a study could be completed in about six (6) months.

A discussion ensued concerning the Speller Building and the Sanford Building. The County Manager explained that the Speller Building would be used for Social Services and the Sanford Building would be transferred to the City.

Motion was made by Councilmember Spencer, seconded by Councilmember Williamson, and unanimously carried to study consolidation of Planning and Zoning and Code Enforcement.

Motion was made by Commissioner McCook, seconded by Commissioner McCall, and unanimously carried to study consolidation of Planning and Zoning and Code Enforcement.

Tax Collection

The County Manager explained that currently the City's Tax Collector position is vacant. He further explained that the City and County have in the past negotiated an agreement for the County to bill and collect City taxes, and that contract is currently being used by the County to collect taxes for Gibson, Wagram and East Laurinburg. He added that if the City is interested in consolidating tax collection, the agreement can be executed and the County would begin collecting City taxes in July. He further added that the previous studies showed that consolidation did not save the City or the County money, but would be a convenience for citizens by providing one (1) property tax collection site.

A lengthy discussion ensued concerning consolidation of tax collection and the desire to provide one (1) place for citizens to pay property taxes. The following items were discussed:

- Lack of physical space at the courthouse
- Incompatibility of software
- Ease of adding line on County tax bill for City taxes
- Online payment of County taxes not utilized much because of fees involved
- Typical for City tax collection rate to be higher than County tax collection rate

Councilmember Leak explained that the City Tax Collector is tasked with more than just tax collection.

Councilmember Adams explained that although tax collection consolidation had been discussed, as a new council member she did not understand all of the factors involved since the only time the matter had been discussed was earlier in the week.

Commissioner McCook explained that he felt as a small community, there are not many resources to waste, and the more resources that can be pooled, and more can be done for the citizens.

Councilmember Leak motioned to table discussion of tax consolidation. Mayor Parker explained that the motion died for lack of a second.

Further discussion ensued concerning studying consolidation of tax collection. The City Manager explained that this is a policy decision and that City staff would like the matter resolved.

The County Manager suggested that a briefing for new commissioners and council members could be scheduled to provide information on tax collection consolidation so that everyone would have a firm understanding of tax collection consolidation.

Motion was made by Councilmember Williamson, seconded by Councilmember Spencer, and unanimously carried to hold a work session within 30 days to review information on tax collection consolidation.

Commission Chair Davis stated that whatever the council decided, the County Commission would accept.

Commissioner McCook explained that he felt the public wanted consolidation of tax collection.

At 7:18 p.m. Mayor Parker called for a short break.

The meeting resumed at 7:31 p.m.

Water Systems Consolidation

The City Manager explained that there had been discussions about merging the City Water System with the County Water Districts. He suggested that the City and County look at the formation of a water authority which is allowed under GS 153A-278. He added that the Laurinburg-Maxton Airport also be included in the study, which study could take between one (1) and one and one-half (1.5) years.

A lengthy discussion ensued concerning the opportunities in consolidating the water systems located within Scotland County.

Commissioner Alford expressed concern that if an authority is formed, only elected officials should be responsible for setting the rate structure.

Motion was made by Councilmember Spencer, seconded by Councilmember Adams, and unanimously carried for the City Manager and County Manager to conduct a study to review all water assets in Scotland County to develop an operational water program under a single authority to include all scenarios and a timeline.

Commissioner McCook suggested that the Towns of Wagram and Gibson be included in the study.

Mr. Robert Ellis, Water/Wastewater Treatment Director, stated that the City provides water to the Town of Gibson via Scotland County's water lines.

Commission Chair Davis suggested that the study conducted on the WestPoint Stevens Plants is incorporated.

Commissioner Cooley suggested that Laurinburg-Maxton Airport also be included.

Motion was made by Commissioner Alford, seconded by Commissioner McDow, and unanimously carried to proceed with a study of the water systems.

Commissioner Alford suggested that Jim Perry of the Lumber River Council of Governments be a participant in the study because of his expertise and research completed on an area water project.

Councilmember Spencer suggested that progress reports on the water study be made to the governing bodies every six (6) months.

Highway 74 Lighting Project

The City Manager explained that the Tourism Development Authority (TDA) requested that the City and County support lighting two (2) of the exits off US Highway 74, exits 183 and 184. He added that the estimated cost is \$454,864.00, not including electric operating costs which are estimated to be \$8,000.00 to \$15,000.00 per year. He further added that the TDA has committed \$100,000.00; the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) has committed \$100,000.00; leaving a balance of \$254,864.00. He questioned if the County would be interested in participating in some way.

A discussion ensued concerning the economic impact of lighting the exits.

Upon question by Commissioner McCook, the City Manager explained that the City is in the process of upgrading lighting in some areas of the City.

Upon question by Commissioner McDow, the City Manager stated that a decision on the County's participation would need to be known before the end of February.

Further discussion ensued concerning the Highway 74 Lighting Project. Commission Chair Davis suggested that the Commissioners consider this item at its retreat.

Commissioner McCook requested that all details and maps concerning the project be available at the Commissioner's retreat.

A discussion ensued concerning the ability of the TDA to make a commitment greater than \$100,000.00.

Mayor Parker explained that he and Councilmember Spencer had discussed the possibility to the County committing to pay for the annual electricity costs.

Councilmember Leak explained that he felt the County should commit \$100,000.00 to this project and that he would like to see the City and County work together on this project.

There was no decision concerning this matter.

Memorandum of Agreement: Inspections

The County Manager explained that Building Inspections was consolidated a number of years ago. He added that a Memorandum of Agreement is a procedural issue whereby the City would authorize the County to conduct building inspections inside the City limit.

Motion was made by Councilmember Spencer, seconded by Councilmember Leak, and unanimously carried for the County to draft a Memorandum of Agreement for Building Inspections with the City for consideration by Council.

Update on Emergency Operations Center

The County Manager explained that the County had been told unofficially that it had been awarded a \$600,000.00 grant for the Emergency Operations Center. He added that \$1,000,000.00 is available for construction; however, in order to meet State and Federal construction guidelines, the estimated cost of construction is \$3,500,000.00. He further added that discussions with Richmond County regarding a joint center with identical buildings in both counties which would provide redundancy in the 911 call structure. He explained that the State 911 Board has grant funding available for consolidation of 911 centers.

Southeastern Economic Development Commissioner (SEDC) Appointment

Commissioner McDow explained that there was an opening for appointment to the Southeastern Economic Development Commission (SEDC) which was previously held by former Councilmember Rembert DeBerry. She further explained that the appointment is open to a minority elected official.

Public Forum

Commissioner McCall invited the City Council to a public input session on guns in parks on Thursday, January 19, 2012 at 5:30 p.m. at the Courthouse.

ADJOURNMENT

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

The meeting adjourned at 8:25 p.m.

Thomas W. Parker, III, Mayor

Jennifer A. Tippett, City Clerk