

**CITY OF LAURINBURG
CITIZEN INPUT SESSION
MARCH 1, 2012
A. B. GIBSON CENTER
322 SOUTH MAIN ST.
LAURINBURG, NC
6:30 P.M.**

Minutes

The City Council of the City of Laurinburg held a special meeting February 1, 2012 at 6:30 p.m. at the A.B. Gibson Center located at 322 S. Main St., Laurinburg, NC with the Honorable Kenton T. Spencer, Mayor Pro Tem presiding. Councilmember Mary Jo Adams was present. Mayor Thomas W. Parker, III arrived at 6:39 p.m. Councilmember Curtis B. Leak arrived at 6:48 p.m. The following Councilmembers were absent: Herbert M. Rainer, Jr. and Andrew G. Williamson, Jr.

Also present were Edward F. Burchins, City Manager, and Jennifer A. Tippet, City Clerk. Management Team members present were: Cindy Carpenter, Finance Director; Johnny Evans, Chief of Police; Bob Bell, Human Resources/Risk Management Director; Robert Ellis, Water and Wastewater Services Director; Stacey McQuage, Utilities Director; Ronald Pierce, Electric Distribution Director; Harold Haywood, General Services Director; Brandi C. Deese, Planning and Development Director, and Tim Pierce, GIS Administrator were also present.

Mayor Pro Tem Spencer called the meeting to order at 6:34 p.m. He thanked the citizens for attending and stressed the importance of considering values. He then introduced Councilmember Adams, the City Manager and Police Chief John Evans.

The City Manager introduced Cindy Carpenter, Finance Director; Harold Haywood, General Services Director; Robert Ellis, Water and Wastewater Services Director; Ronald Pierce, Electric Distribution Director; Brandi Deese, Planning and Development Director; Stacey McQuage, Utilities Director; Tim Pierce, GIS Administrator; Jenny Tippet, City Clerk; and Angela Taylor, Administrative Support Assistant.

The City Manager explained that the goal for the Citizen Input Session is to obtain feedback and input regarding City Services. He added that with the current economic situation, it is a very difficult time for local governments. He further added that the City has been successful in not increasing fees or taxes in order to continue providing essential services. He explained that the City had not been able to add a lot of new services over the last few years, but was staying with the basic level of services by utilizing technology in the most effective way possible. He then discussed the top 10 items from the 2011 Citizen Input Session as follows:

1. ***Free wi-fi services for all City residents.*** He explained that this was discussed during the FY 2011-2012 Budget and it was determined to be too expensive for the City to provide this service at no cost to residents. He added that the cost to conduct a study to determine steps necessary to provide wi-fi would have cost between \$50,000.00 and \$75,000.00.
2. ***City Recreation Center.*** He explained that a community group is involved in the process of developing a preliminary design for a City recreation Center and will bring a proposal to Council.
3. ***Install more street lights.*** He explained that a number of street light improvements were funded in the 2011-2012 budget. Street lighting was upgraded on McGirts Bridge Road, West Blvd. and at the Morgan Recreation Center. He added that street light improvements would be completed on South Main Street and at the bridge on West Blvd. across Highway 74.
4. ***Lighting Highway 74 Interchanges.*** He explained that progress is being made to light these interchanges.
5. ***Develop more incentives to attract more restaurants.*** He explained that Council looked at this request and decided it was not fair to existing restaurants to give incentives to new restaurants.
6. ***Code enforcement.*** He explained that code enforcement is a big issue and it is done on an on-going basis.
7. ***Street improvements.*** He explained that there is an annual street paving plan whereby two (2) to three (3) miles of City streets are paved.
8. ***Low cost electricity.*** He explained that the City has not increased electric rates in three (3) years.
9. ***Additional sidewalks.*** He explained that the City is investigating providing sidewalks on the north side of town.
10. ***Animal Control.*** He explained that Animal Control now falls under the Police Department as a more effective way to manage animal control with a full-time police officer.

The City Manager recognized Mr. Bob Bell as the facilitator.

Mr. Bell explained that the Citizen Input Session is designed to collect information from citizens that will be used by Council in developing the Fiscal Year 2012-2013 Budget from the City of Laurinburg. He added that each table would have two (2) lists, one for comments or suggestions regarding City services, and the other for comments or suggestions for services the City does not currently offer or for which the City has little

or no impact. He further explained the process and concluded by stating that the information gathered would be shared with City Council and with attendees.

Discussions at the tables occurred from 6:50 p.m. until 7:25 p.m.

The following items were presented from the tables:

After school programs

Bike lanes/sidewalks

Parks/green space & greenways-Leith Creek

Faith-based programs-rehabilitation/use community services

Enforce farm animal laws

Litter cleanup/enforcement

City, County officials need to be visible - schools, education programs. Meet public.

Building demolition of abandoned buildings

More community garden space

Political signage enforcement

Drains/flooding

Welcome to Laurinburg signs-open up to organizations

Continuous planning on improving lights

Pedestrian bridge at Wal-Mart/West Blvd. – Safety issue.

A. State road

B. seek possible grant

Increase police officers

A. in order to build community relations

B. decrease crime by prevention measures

C. lead by example by making policy accordingly

Downtown lighting needs improvement (safety)

(crime prevention)

Attract good movie theater

More eating establishments

Build on strengths we have and foster a positive attitude

Good job on animal control

Upgrade equipment (across departments) (“pay as you go” system)

Upgrade storm drainage system

Revisit solid waste ordinance enforcement (yard waste)

Increase staff for police

Increase number of cameras that can be moved to high crime areas for police

Increase lighting for downtown area (not safe at night)

Consolidation of water into one unit. i.e. buy WestPoint plant to sell water to other counties and further expansion growth for businesses

Trash (use inmates)

Increase Adopt-A-Street Program-more advertisement, get more community groups involved (i.e. churches, schools)

Tear down old buildings. Do a better job of condemning and tearing down buildings. Increase funding

Establish Historical Landmark Commission for City
Drains
Collaboration among Police Dept. & Sheriff's Dept.
New City Hall/Police Dept. with fitness center

Attendees then proceeded to vote for the four (4) items they considered the most important.

Mayor Parker thanked everyone for attending and participating. He explained that when Council works on the budget, it is the citizen's budget. He further explained that it is Council's job to balance the wishes of the citizens with the available funding. He concluded by stating that Council does its best to keep taxes down while also delivering the services the citizens desire.

ADJOURNMENT

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

The meeting adjourned at 7:44 p.m.

Thomas W. Parker, III, Mayor

Jennifer A. Tippet, City Clerk