

**CITY OF LAURINBURG
CITY COUNCIL MEETING
NOVEMBER 14, 2017
MUNICIPAL BUILDING
303 WEST CHURCH ST.
7:00 p.m.**

Minutes

The City Council of the City of Laurinburg held its regular meeting on Tuesday, November 14, 2017 in the Council Chambers of the Municipal Building at 7:00 p.m. with the Honorable Matthew Block, Mayor, presiding. The following Councilmembers were present: Mary Jo Adams, Dolores A. Hammond, Curtis B. Leak, Andrew G. Williamson, Jr. and J.D. Willis.

Also present were Charles D. Nichols III, City Manager; Jennifer A. Tippet, City Clerk; and William P. Floyd, Jr., City Attorney.

Mayor Block called the meeting to order at 6:57 p.m.

Councilmember Williamson gave the Invocation and then led the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion was made by Councilmember Leak, seconded by Councilmember Williamson, and unanimously carried to approve the agenda.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Mayor Block reviewed the public comment procedures.

Ms. Mary Evans, 401 Sugar Road, explained that she had several requests for Council to consider as follows:

- Immediately stop the new City Hall. Recent elections showed that citizens are against the City Hall.
- Consider combining law enforcement agencies. Priority should be to keep the City safe and to do everything possible to make all citizens safe.
- Repair infrastructure such as paving streets and building new power substation station.

Mr. Michael Edds, 1207 Blue Drive, stated that the destruction of the Barrett Building was an “affront to democracy” and that he wished Council had waited until after the election in order to see what the citizens wanted. He added that he hoped Council would seek to heal the City and to seek compromise. He further added that the City has good leaders who would seek the best for the citizens.

Mayor Block explained that Ms. Evans and Pastor Edds brought up an important subject on the minds of citizens and that he wanted to give Council the opportunity to address this matter.

Councilmember Hammond explained that she believed that Council should handle this matter at the next Council meeting. She added that she stood behind her decision about the City Hall and Police Station, and that she hoped it moved forward.

Mayor Block explained that he would like to hear Councilmember Leak's comments concerning Ms. Evans' comments, particularly since the district Councilmember Leak represents suffers from more poverty and said district voted overwhelmingly, almost three (3) out of four (4) people, against the new City Hall. He added that he wanted to provide Councilmember Leak the opportunity to justify representing that district that does not want the new City Hall.

Councilmember Willis explained that he believed the City Hall and Police Station project was a "done deal" once the Local Government Commission (LGC) approved the financing. He added that there was a lot of misunderstanding and misinformation on social media that played an important part in the election. He further added that after 27.5 years in political office, it was time for him to go home especially when he was no longer having fun. He explained that the City had already begun setting aside funds for the new electric substation as well as for Water/Sewer infrastructure improvements. He further explained that the condition of the Police Station was terrible, and that the City was financially in better shape to take on a project as large as the City Hall and Police Station project. He concluded his comments by stating that he stuck by his vote on the project.

Mayor Block stated, "So, these points have all been made back and forth over the last two (2) years, and after the arguments were presented back and forth, Mr. Leak, 70% of the voters in your district said no. And I just want to know, do you represent your district or not?"

Councilmember Adams explained that there were 4,683 registered voters in District 1 and that Ms. Evans received and won the election with 834 votes which is a small percentage of registered voters.

Councilmember Leak discussed his over 20 years of serving as a Councilmember and that he was a trailblazer during integration. He explained that for over 20 years, one of his priorities as a councilmember was to build a City Hall. He further explained that in the last two (2) to three (3) years, the City had gotten into good financial shape in order to consider building a new City Hall. He added that he was still 100% behind building the new City Hall. He further added that in 2019 he would be 70 years old and will not be seeking reelection to City Council. He also discussed the possibility of a recreation center in Laurinburg. He suggested that Council needed to meet with the Scotland County Commissioners to work on a partnership. He concluded by stating that he wanted to request that the City Manager and Police Chief work together to keep citizens safe at church on Sundays.

Mayor Block addressed Councilmember Leak and explained that he has a lot of respect for him. He added that the purpose for bringing up the City Hall and Police Station was that "before the election, it was a lot of he said, she said, who's for it, who's against it, and that now that the

results are in front of us and the results from your district, and you always make a point over the years that you represent ‘my people’ of District 1, you are Mr. District 1, your District 1 came out and three (3) out of four (4) people said they don’t want it. So, you know you are elected to represent your people, not to represent the long standing desires of Mr. Leak or this that and the other thing. And that this was an opportunity after the election to see if the strong statement by the citizens in your district which you are elected to represent, have overwhelmingly said they do not want it, whether or not you take that into consideration.”

Upon question by Councilmember Leak, Mayor Block explained that when he used the words “your people” he was referring to those living in District 1.

At the request of Councilmember Williamson, Mayor Block asked the audience to be quiet.

Discussion ensued between Councilmember Williamson and Mayor Block concerning Mayor Block’s attention to Councilmember Leak.

Mayor Block asked Councilmember Williamson if we wanted to comment on Ms. Evans’ comments.

Councilmember Williamson explained that councilmember represent the citizens, the voters; but that he also believed as part of basic democracy, an elected official is elected to use his or her best judgment. He added that Councilmember Leak said that in his best judgment there was a need for a new City Hall. He further added that he agreed that Laurinburg was a very divided community. He then congratulated Ms. Evans and Mr. Garby on a well-earned victory. He added that when Ms. Evans and Mr. Garby were sitting at the dais, he was willing to discuss any issue with them in good faith. He further added that just for the record, he has made it clear that he supports the City Hall and Police Station project; that he was re-elected and was not going to change his vote. He further explained that the City needs to heal and attacks on people need to stop. He added that it was time to welcome the new councilmembers in December and open minds to listen to everyone’s point of view, including current councilmembers’ views. He reiterated that he was not going to change his vote on the City Hall and Police Station.

CONSENT AGENDA

Mayor Block presented the Consent Agenda as follows:

- a) Consider minutes of August 22, 2017 regular meeting
- b) Consider setting public hearing to be held Tuesday, December 12, 2017 at 7:00 p.m. to Consider Amendments to the Unified Development Ordinance

Councilmember Hammond moved to approve the Consent Agenda. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Willis, and it was approved by the following vote:

Ayes: Hammond, Willis, Adams, Leak, Williamson

Nays: None

DELEGATION

CRYSTAL MORPHIS – DRAFT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Ms. Crystal Morphis of Creative Economic Development Consulting, LLC, (Creative) explained that Creative performs consulting work all over the southeast and works with ElectriCities which provides to its member cities a range of services, particularly for economic development. She discussed the methodology for gathering the information for the Draft Economic Plan including online survey and interviews with the Steering Committee and local individuals. She thanked City Manager Charles Nichols, Community Development Director Michael Mandeville and Economic Development Director Mark Ward for their assistance in gathering information and working through this process. She presented a PowerPoint with highlights as follows:

SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats)

- Strengths:
 - Richmond Community College
 - St. Andrews, UNC Pembroke
 - Future I-74
 - Laurinburg-Maxton Airport
 - Certified Retirement Community
 - Proximity to Ft. Bragg
 - Three-time All America City
 - Health care
- Weaknesses:
 - Work ethic
 - Declining population
 - Long-term poverty
 - Local regulatory process
 - Crime, safety
 - Lack of private investment
 - Recreation facilities and activities for youth
 - Leadership supporting economic development
- Opportunities:
 - Workforce development
 - I-74 travelers
 - Small business development
 - Leverage St. Andrews University and UNC Pembroke
 - Tourism development
 - Downtown revitalization
 - Retirement industry development
 - Re-brand the City
- Threats:
 - Low education levels compared to the region
 - Divided community

- Leadership
- Crime, drugs
- Poverty
- Declining property values
- Negative attitude
- Appearance and need for beautification

Economic Development Goals:

- Local job creation
- Better paying jobs
- Increased new business start ups
- Downtown revitalization
- Increased support to existing businesses
- Increased tax base
- Economic diversification
- Increased retail sales tax

Economic and Demographic Highlights:

- Population declining
- Fewer young workers
- More racially diverse than the state
- 73.2% are high school graduates or higher, below the county, regional, and state averages
- SAT and ACT scores approximately 86% of state average
- Low per capita and median household incomes
- Labor force is declining
- Unemployment rate declining but remains above the regional average
- Most people employed in Trade, Transportation, and Utilities, Government, Education and Health Services, and Manufacturing
- Highest paying sectors are Information, Manufacturing, and Construction
- 83% of all Scotland County businesses have less than 10 employees
- Retail sales increasing, tourism industry growing
- Crime rate in Scotland County decreasing since 2011

Strategic Plan:

- Goal: Re-brand Laurinburg
- Strategy: Change the Laurinburg Story
 - Engage a firm to re-brand the city
 - Public Information Officer
 - Website Overhaul
- Goal: Leverage Education Assets of the Region
- Strategy: Strengthen partnerships with all levels of education.
 - Align curriculum with targets
 - Internship Program
 - Work Ethics Certification
 - College Promise

- Goal: Quality Sites, Buildings and Business Parks
- Strategy: Develop buildings and quality sites
 - Infrastructure extension to Pate 82 site
 - Smart Site: NC Certification, Spec Building
 - Incubator on Incubator Site
 - Vacant Building Grant
- Goal: Business Support and Development
- Strategy: Make small business big business in Laurinburg
 - Economic gardening approach
 - Business retention and expansion
 - Pop-up markets
 - How-to kits for small business
- Goal: Leadership Development
- Strategy: Educate and engage the next generation of Laurinburg leaders
 - Leadership Laurinburg
 - Young leadership engagement

Implementation Guide – things to do in years One, Two and Three

- Year One
 - Branding Campaign
 - Public Information Office Position
 - Targeted Marketing
 - Infrastructure Extended to Pate 82 Site
 - Vacant Building Grant Program
 - Economic Gardening Approach
 - "How to Start a Business" Kits on Website
 - Market the Certified Retirement Community Designation
 - Community Leader Economic Development Training
- Year Two
 - Economic Development Website
 - High School and RCC Curriculum Aligned with Target Sectors
 - Work Ethics Certification
 - Regulatory Process Reform
 - Spec Building on Smart Site
 - Small Business Incubator
 - Pop-Up Downtown Markets such as food truck rallies or pop-up art markets
 - Provide St. Andrews and UNC-P Students Transportation to Special Events
- Year Three
 - UNC Pembroke and St. Andrews University Internship Program
 - Manufacturing Incubator
 - Young Leader Engagement

Upon questions by Councilmember Williamson, Ms. Morphis explained that she had conducted similar studies and made presentations for ElectriCities in Ayden, Albemarle, Kinston and Red Springs. She added that municipalities should have a strategic planning process and continually reflect on the strategic plan. She further added that perhaps the City

Manager and Economic Development Manager could report quarterly on the plan. She further explained that the market can change, so the strategic plan may need to have course changes along the way and be updated continually.

The City Manager explained that this study was provided by a grant from ElectriCities which was awarded to the City.

Councilmember Leak discussed the Economic Development partnership between Scotland County and the City. He added that the partnership focuses primarily on industrial economic development and not on retail.

Ms. Morphis explained that ElectriCities works in partnership with Retail Strategies which focuses more on retail recruitment. She added that partnerships such as between the City and Scotland County are so important in economic development.

Upon question by Mayor Block, Ms. Morphis explained that some municipalities similar in size to Laurinburg have an economic developer on staff; however, that position is typically more a community/economic developer who deals more with small business and retail recruitment as well as amenities that will attract more businesses to the community.

Upon question by Mayor Block, Ms. Morphis explained that all of the economic development planning projects, there is a one-year retainer so that staff can call Creative with questions and seeking advice. She added that ElectriCities has other grant programs such as Small Cities Grant that communities use for special projects and the Smart Sites Program of which the City has already taken advantage.

The City Manager explained that the City's Smart Sites location was off Stewartsville Road and contains 104 acres. He added that the City obtained an Industrial Development Fund (IDF) Grant to provide infrastructure to an additional 60 acres.

Upon question by Mayor Block, Ms. Morphis explained that city government has very few tools at its discretion to support economic development. She added that a city government sets policy and that is how it can affect economic development by making a community business friendly through customer-friendly attitude, infrastructure costs, transportation costs, and permitting fees. She further added that there are creative government financing tools that are not available to the private sector that would benefit or potentially draw private sector investment. She further explained that by making a community attractive aesthetically would also be beneficial for economic development. She added that currently there is a labor crisis due to the demographics shift and that communities may need to make decisions differently to attract young working people in order to attract businesses. She concluded her comments by stating that she looked forward to hearing the outcomes from this plan.

CITY MANAGER REPORTS

CONSIDER AUTHORIZING THE MAYOR TO EXECUTE THE INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT FUND GRANT AGREEMENT

The City Manager explained that the next three (3) items on the agenda involved the Industrial Development Fund Grant \$1.5 million grant which will be used for water/sewer and electric at the incubator property located behind the Small Business Innovation Center (SBIC). He added that the first item for consideration was a grant agreement, the second item was a resolution authorizing individuals to sign grant requisition forms, and the third item was the capital project ordinance. He further added that the grant will be administered by McGill & Associates.

Upon question by Councilmember Williamson, the City Manager explained that once the grant agreement was submitted to the North Carolina Department of Commerce, bids would be solicited and the project would begin as soon as possible. He further added that this project would extend the City's infrastructure from the SBIC, cross over the railroad tracks behind Carolina Container and serve the property on Aberdeen Road as well as serve the property behind the SBIC.

Motion was made by Councilmember Leak, seconded by Councilmember Hammond, and unanimously carried to authorize the Mayor to execute the Industrial Development Fund Grant Agreement.

CONSIDER RESOLUTION NO. R-2017-25 AUTHORIZING INDIVIDUALS TO SIGN REQUISITION FOR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT FUND FUNDS FORM

The City Manager explained that this resolution authorized individuals to sign Requisition for Industrial Development Fund (IDF) Form.

Councilmember Leak moved to approve Resolution No. R-2017-25 authorizing individuals to sign Requisition for IDF Funds Form. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Hammond, and carried as follows:

Ayes: Leak, Hammond, Adams, Willis, Williamson

Nays: None

(Resolution No. R-2017-25 on file in City Clerk's office)

CONSIDER BUDGET ORDINANCE AMENDING FY 2017-2018 BUDGET APPROPRIATIONS ORDINANCE TO RECEIVE INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT FUND GRANT

The City Manager explained that this was the capital project ordinance for the project previously discussed.

Councilmember Hammond moved to approve Ordinance No. O-2017-18 amending FY 2017-2018 Budget Appropriations Ordinance (Ordinance No. O-2017-15) to receive Industrial Development Fund Grant. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Williamson, and carried as follows:

Ayes: Hammond, Williamson, Adams, Willis, Leak

Nays: None

(Ordinance No. O-2017-18 on file in City Clerk's office)

CHRISTMAS PARADE-LET CLERK KNOW IF YOU ARE RIDING IN THE PARADE

The City Manager requested that the Mayor and Council notify the City Clerk if they wished to ride in the Christmas Parade being held on Saturday, December 2, 2017 at 2:00 p.m.

CITY HALL AND POLICE STATION

The City Manager explained that the first bi-monthly construction meeting with Edifice, Inc. and Creech and Associates concerning the City Hall and Police Station last Wednesday. He added that decisions are needed from Council on items such as the outside brick color. He further added that Edifice, Inc. and Creech and Associates had requested a special meeting before the end of November.

Following discussion, it was consensus of Council to recess the meeting until Monday, November 27, 2017 at 4:00 p.m. with Edifice, Inc. and Creech and Associates to consider design options.

COMMENTS FROM MAYOR AND/OR COUNCILMEMBERS

Mayor Block explained that City offices would be closed on Thursday and Friday, November 23 and 24, 2017 for Thanksgiving.

Upon question by Councilmember Leak, the City Manager explained that staff was working on Christmas lighting in order to coordinate with Christmas on Main. He added that Main Street lights are not lit until the Christmas Parade.

Councilmember Hammond explained that Christmas on Main was on Sunday, November 19, 2017.

Mayor Block explained that recently several citizens had mentioned utility bills that seem out of the ordinary, sometimes two (2) or three (3) times greater than normal. He asked the City Manager if there had been issues with utility bills.

The City Manager explained that he was not aware of any issues with utility bills.

CLOSED SESSION

At 8:04 p.m. motion was made by Councilmember Adams to go into closed session pursuant to North Carolina General Statute 143-318.11(a)(4), to discuss matters relating to the location or expansion of industries or other businesses in the area served by the public body, including agreement on a tentative list of economic development incentives that may be offered by the public body in negotiations; NC General Statute 143-318.11(a) (3) to consult with an attorney employed or retained by the public body in order to preserve the attorney-client privilege between the attorney and the City; North Carolina General Statute 143-318.11(a) (1) to prevent

disclosure of information that is privileged or confidential pursuant to the law of this State or of the United States, or not considered a public record within the meaning of Chapter 132 of the General Statutes, specifically 132-1.4; and North Carolina General Statute 143-318.11(a) (6) for the purpose of considering the qualifications, competence, performance, character, fitness, conditions of appointment, or conditions of initial employment of an individual public officer or employee. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Leak, and carried unanimously.

At 9:20 p.m., motion was made by Councilmember Adams to adjourn the closed session and resume the regular meeting. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Hammond, and carried unanimously.

AMENDMENT TO INCENTIVES AGREEMENT

Motion was made by Councilmember Willis, seconded by Councilmember Adams, and unanimously carried to approve Amendment One to Incentives Agreement with FCC (North Carolina) LLC.

OTHER

Councilmember Willis told the Mayor that it was an honor not to have to attend Council meetings anymore. He said that the Mayor was not a team player and that he ran terrible meetings. He discussed the Mayor's use of Facebook and spreading lies and half-truths.

RECESS

Motion was made by Councilmember Willis, seconded by Councilmember Williamson, and unanimously carried to recess the meeting until Monday, November 27, 2017, at 4:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers.

The meeting recessed at 9:23 p.m.

Matthew Block, MD, Mayor

Jennifer A. Tippet, City Clerk