

**CITY OF LAURINBURG  
CITY COUNCIL MEETING  
DECEMBER 11, 2018  
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, December 11, 2018 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, Mary Evans, James J. Garby, Jr., Curtis B. Leak, and Andrew G. Williamson, Jr.

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 7:01 p.m.

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

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

The City Manager requested that Item 13, Update on Economic Development, be moved to before Item 12, Community Development Update.

Mayor Block explained that the first item on the Consent Agenda, Consider draft minutes, needed to be removed from the agenda as requested by the City Clerk.

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

**RECOGNITION OF RETIREE – JEAN HEWETT**

Mayor Block presented a plaque to Mrs. Jean Hewett upon her retirement:

***APPRECIATION  
to  
HELEN JEAN HEWETT  
AUGUST 2008 – DECEMBER 2018***

*In special tribute for over 10 years of dedicated public service as an employee of the City of Laurinburg.*

*She began working as a Telecommunicator in the Police Department and finished her career as Records and Operations Aide for the Water Treatment Plant. As Records and Operations Aide, she earned the "C" Well Certification. Known for her positive attitude and quick smile, Jean will be missed by all.*

*The Mayor and the Laurinburg City Council express their sincere appreciation for her tireless and unselfish professional service to the citizens of Laurinburg. Displaying professionalism and integrity, she is the true epitome of a public servant.*

*We wish her many more years of continued success in the next chapter of her life.*

*Presented this the 11<sup>th</sup> day of December, 2018.*

*Matthew Block MD  
Mayor*

*Mary Jo. Adams  
Mayor Pro Tempore*

*Mary Evans  
Councilmember*

*James J. Garby, Jr.  
Councilmember*

*Curtis B. Leak  
Councilmember*

*Andrew G. Williamson, Jr.  
Councilmember*

## **RECOGNITION OF BOY SCOUT**

Mayor Block recognized and presented a pin to Boy Scout C.J. Coleman from Troop 420.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD**

Mayor Block briefly reviewed public comment procedures.

*Ms. Lynda Huntley, Pine Harbor Road, expressed concern about the recent fatal shooting with an illegal handgun in the community which she believed displayed the problem with illegal guns. She explained that she works for Mayor Block as his mayoral assistant, and that she is a staunch supporter of gun ownership. She discussed how the City of Greensboro is addressing illegal guns, and explained that there are ways to reduce illegal guns and crime. She concluded by stating that she believed that a crime consultant could provide information and suggestions for reducing illegal guns and crime.*

*Ms. Shirley Campbell, 913 Isabelle Street expressed concern about her high electric bill and the possible impact of the Christmas lights on citizen's electric bills.*

Mayor Block explained that the cost for the Christmas lights downtown and along Main Street would be paid by the Laurinburg.

The City Manager explained that the Christmas lights would not affect Ms. Campbell's bill.

Ms. Campbell asked when the City would be fixing the drainage problems.

Mayor Block explained that the storm drainage issues were high priority and that within the next 12 months it was hoped that the worst areas were fixed.

The City Manager explained that the staff is working on the priority list and the costs of fixing the storm drainage issues. He added that this information would be presented to Council during budget discussions, and that storm drainage costs are paid out of the General Fund.

Upon question by Councilmember Garby, the City Manager explained that the City would seek reimbursement from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for the costs of storm drainage improvements.

Upon question by Mayor Block, the City Manager explained that storm drainage improvements are paid from the General Fund and could not be paid from the Water/Sewer Fund. He added that many of the larger cities have Storm Drainage Funds.

*Councilmember Leak* explained that the community had lost one (1) of its unsung heroes, Mr. Earl Brown. He added that Mr. Brown worked with youth for over 20 years in the Laurinburg Housing Authority.

*Mrs. Linda Faulkner* explained that she had a water leak at her home which resulted in a \$400.00 bill from the City. She added that although the City offered to forgive the amount since it was the first time she had a leak, her husband paid the bill. She then expressed concern about the standing water on X-Way Road.

The City Manager explained that X-Way Road is a state-maintained road and the North Carolina Department of Transportation (DOT) is aware of the issues on X-Way Road.

Councilmember Adams explained that at a Transportation Advisory Committee meeting the situation on X-Way Road was discussed. She added that the DOT advised that work on the storm drainage issue would have to wait until the water receded.

Upon question by Councilmember Evans, the City Manager explained that when citizens contact the City, staff contacts the DOT office in Wagram, and that citizens with concerns about a state-maintained road can also contact the DOT office in Wagram.

*Minister Kenneth Samuda* discussed his vision of opening an inpatient and outpatient treatment center for those addicted to drugs because crime and drug issues are tied together. He added that he had found a site, 1700 Stonewall Drive to house the facility. He further added that he had

spoken with several Scotland County Commissioners about supporting his facility, and he wanted the help of the citizens, Scotland County Board of Commissioners, Laurinburg City Council and local doctors to help with this program. He further explained that currently Stonewall Road leading to the facility is flooded, and the drainage issues need to be taken care of for the safety of citizens and the potential patients of his proposed facility.

Mayor Block stated that Mr. Samuda has a great endeavor and that the facility is something much needed. He added that Mr. Samuda should keep in touch, and when he has more specifics to come back to Council.

Councilmember Adams requested that Mr. Samuda provide the names and certifications of individuals who would be working with him when he presented additional information to the Council.

*Mr. Justin Davis* expressed concern about the standing water on Stonewall Road. He discussed the need for something for the children to keep them out of trouble. He explained that he believed the City should research getting a Boys and Girls Club of America.

Councilmember Leak explained that Laurinburg is not large enough to support a Boys and Girls Club of America.

Mayor Block stated that Mr. Davis' concern has been raised by many in the community. He suggested that the Community Development Director could research the possibility of a Boys and Girls Club and report back to Council.

Councilmember Evans suggested that it was time for the City to plan something like a recreation or community center.

Mrs. Linda Faulkner explained that Lakeside, California has a population bigger than Laurel Hill, and it has a Boys and Girls Club.

A brief discussion ensued concerning a Boys and Girls Club, YMCA or a recreation center.

## **CONSENT AGENDA**

Mayor Block reviewed the Consent Agenda:

- a) Consider Resolution No. R-2018-31 Fixing date of public hearing to be held on January 22, 2019 at 7:00 p.m. on question of annexation of 29.90-acre tract of land on Old Johns Road
- b) Authorize the Mayor and City Clerk to execute Amendment #2 to Community Development Block Grant Contract (Water Infrastructure) Grant # 17-I-2966
- c) Authorize the Mayor and City Clerk to execute Personal Property Use Agreement between GrowingChange.org and the City of Laurinburg for Greenhouse
- d) Consider Resolution No. R-2018-32 Approving and Authorizing the Mayor and City Clerk to execute Corrective Easement between the City of Laurinburg and Town of

Maxton and Piedmont Natural Gas Company, Inc.

Councilmember Adams moved to approve the Consent Agenda. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Evans, and the vote was as follows:

Ayes: Adams, Evans, Garby, Leak, Williamson

Nays: None

## **DELEGATIONS**

### **FRANK EVANS – THANK COUNCIL AND CITY EMPLOYEES FOR HANDLING OF RECENT HURRICANE AND EVENTS THEREAFTER**

Mr. Evans not present.

### **PASTOR TONY FAIRLY**

Pastor Tony Fairly explained that he was the Associate Pastor at Life Changing Ministries. He discussed a program that Dr. Tony Evans created which would empower children in the schools and result in family transformation. He explained that his church wanted to establish a literacy program in the church and throughout the community.

Upon question by Mayor Block, Pastor Fairly explained that he would like to know if the City had any buildings available and also for Council to assist in publicizing the program he wants to begin.

### **DR. BILL MORGAN – REQUEST CONCERNING ELECTRIC BILL AT 618 N. MAIN ST.**

Dr. Morgan explained that he would write a letter explaining his concern and to move this matter to the January meeting.

### **PASTOR MICHAEL EDDS – DOWNTOWN**

Pastor Michael Edds explained that he had been before Council over the last several years about critical issues that affect thousands of lives including crime, recreation, unemployment and the deterioration of downtown. He discussed the dangerous condition of the former State Bank building owned by Mr. Marshall Melton and the destruction of the Market Furniture Building. He explained that he had researched Mr. Melton and found issues with his company, and that he had not paid his property taxes in Laurinburg in two (2) years. He questioned why the City had not been enforcing its building codes or developing codes that would address the issues with Mr. Melton's buildings. He also asked Council if anyone had researched Mr. Melton and discovered his issues with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC).

Mayor Block stated that Mr. Melton was not the contact person when the group first came to

Laurinburg, that Mr. Jed Hohl was the contact person.

Pastor Edds continued by discussion various articles in the City Code and City's Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) with regard to regulations and penalties for violations.

Mayor Block reminded Pastor Edds of the 10 minute time limit on Delegations.

Pastor Edds explained that the another item he has discussed with Council is the City's infrastructure that needs to be fixed such as storm drainage and deteriorating streets that have not been paved. He then discussed the success of the efforts of the Tis the Season group for their vision and proactive work to bring activity and people downtown during the holiday season. He explained that he believed Council should work together as the Tis the Season group did and provide the citizens its vision and fix the issues that need to be fixed.

Councilmember Williamson requested that Pastor Edds remain for the complete meeting as he believed that most of the issues discussed by Pastor Edds were on the agenda.

Pastor Edds explained that he planned to stay for the meeting.

### **CITY MANAGER REPORTS**

#### **CLIFTON DIAL AND EDUARDO ANDRADE – RECYCLING AT ST. ANDREWS**

The City Manager explained that Mr. Dial and Mr. Andrade were not present.

#### **CARL HEAD – FISCAL YEAR 2017-2018 AUDIT**

Mr. Carl Head of Roche Head & Associates explained that an audit is to express an opinion based upon testing of accounts and to provide a reasonable level of assurance that the City's financial statements do not have a material error. He added that the City received an unmodified opinion on Fiscal Year 2017-2018 audit, which is the best opinion that can be issued.

He then reviewed the following information:

	GENERAL FUND
Net change in Fund Balance 2014	(\$74,600)
Net change in Fund Balance 2015	\$387,944
Net change in Fund Balance 2016	\$83,576
Net change in Fund Balance 2017	(\$459,353)
Net change in Fund Balance 2018	\$63,416

He explained that the Cash Balances in each fund in 2018 were as follows:

General Fund: \$3,446,023.00  
Electric Fund: \$3,480,066.00  
Water Fund: \$6,022,612.00

Solid Waste Fund:                   \$ 523,248.00

He pointed out the cash increases in the enterprise funds are mainly a result of less operating expenditures in those funds as well as less principal and interest payments related to debt for the current fiscal year, and that gross revenues had a smaller impact on the increase in cash. He explained that the statement of cash flows attempts to reconcile net income or net loss to the increase or decrease in cash. He stated that the Electric Fund had an operating cash of increase of \$2.2 million in FY 18.

Upon questions by Mayor Block, Mr. Head explained that the increase in cash was due largely to less expenditures. He further explained that the classification of equipment can affect the cash flow. He added that if purchase the purchase price of a vehicle or equipment is below a threshold price, then it is classified as a repair versus a purchase, so there could have been less repairs in the current year than in the prior year. He further added that this number fluctuates year to year.

Mr. Head explained that the Water Fund operating cash increase was \$3.6 million, and the operating cash increase in the Solid Waste Fund was \$450,055.00. He added that the enterprise funds had increases in cash from operations, but after acquisitions of capital assets and payments on loans, the net cash increases were as follows:

Electric Fund	\$1,582,000.00
Water Fund	\$2,046,000.00
Solid Waste Fund	\$ 137,000.00

Upon question by Mayor Block, Mr. Head explained that without the prior year's expenditures and revenue figures, he could not say for certain the reason for the cash increase in the Water Fund; however, it was his recollection that it was due to more efficiency and less expenditures.

Mr. Head reported that the available Fund Balance in the General Fund as a percentage of General Fund expenditures was 47.51%, and the prior year it was 42.9%. He added that the Local Government Commission (LGC) requires a minimum of eight percent (8%).

Mayor Block asked approximately how more much in Fund Balance the City has than what the LGC recommends. He then stated it was something like \$2.5 million.

Mr. Head explained that the LGC has a recommended percentage, not a recommended dollar amount. He added that as an estimate, it would be several million since there is \$3,446,000.00 in the General Fund.

The City Manager explained that the eight percent (8%) of General Fund-Fund Balance required by the LGC is the unassigned Fund Balance, not the total Fund Balance.

Mr. Head explained that he understood that the percentage required is the available Fund Balance. He add that He wished that the LGC would designate the requirement as available cash that could be appropriated.

The City Manager explained that the City has a Fund Balance Policy that requires a minimum of 16% of General Fund-Fund Balance.

### **PROPOSED REDUCTION IN CITY WATER RATE BY 20%**

Mayor Block explained that he had requested this item be placed on the agenda. He added that he met with Mr. Head the previous week to discuss the possibility of reducing the water rates by 20%. He further added that the Water Fund had increased since the 35% rate hike in 2015, causing the Water Fund to become very healthy, and running approximately \$2 million profit this year. He further explained that Mr. Head ran a scenario to determine the impact of a 20% reduction of rates, and in that scenario, doubled the funding for special projects such as for wells.

Mr. Head explained that this discussion is not related to the audit. He added that he took the cash flows that were audited and ran a brief scenario of reducing the water rate by 20%. He further added that he did not use the budget and used some assumptions on what the cash flow would look like under the scenario. He further explained that this was hypothetical, a tool, and could fluctuate \$.5 million in either direction. He added that he was not privy to the infrastructure or capital projects that are to be included in the upcoming budgets.

The City Manager explained that the City has an adopted Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) for the next five (5) years. He added that in the past the City did not have cash in the Water Fund and therefore did not make major infrastructure improvements. He further added that the capital projects listed in the CIP for the Water Fund for the next five (5) years totals \$26.9 million. Since there was no cash available in the Water Fund, no big ticket items could be addressed in the past. He further explained that when Mr. Chuck Willis of Willis Engineering conducted the rate study in 2015 that resulted in the 35% increase in rates, the CIP with all of the needed infrastructure improvements was taken into consideration.

Mr. Head explained that he cannot tell the City Council that it can reduce rates, or if it should because that is a management decision. He added that he could talk with any councilmember or run any scenario. He further added that the Finance Officer does a great job and understands the process also.

Mayor Block stated that he did not intend to rush Mr. Head with the audit, and clarified that the audit was a good audit.

Mr. Head stated that it was a clean audit with an unmodified opinion. He added that he had some recommendations that were reviewed with the Finance Officer which did not rise to the level of improper expenditures or budgetary violations. He further added that he was meeting with the Finance Officer in the morning to discuss some things that might speed up the audit in the future. He further explained that every year journal entries must be made and his firm must prepare the financial statements, but that is not a material deficiency. He added that there were not budgetary issues, no grant issues, nor Powell Bill issues.

Mayor Block asked Mr. Head if during the audit he reviews how the approximately \$500,000.00 in Powell Bill Funds are spent by the City.

Mr. Head explained that the Powell Bill Funds are used in work orders and salaries. He added that he reviewed approximately 40-50 work orders and ensures that the internal controls were present.

The City Manager explained that an annual report of Powell Bill expenditures must be submitted to the State. He added that \$200,000.00 was spent on paving/repaving at least the last two (2) years.

Mr. Head explained that one could review the Powell Bill report and see where the funds are being expended.

Councilmember Evans explained that since the water rates were increased by 35% and there is money available in the Water Fund, perhaps some of the money could be used and water rates decreased. She added that if the rates needed to be increased in the future, that could be done.

Mayor Block explained that he believed that Council needed to more aggressively begin projects and reduce the water rate instead of stockpiling citizens' money. He added that the Water Fund is growing at \$2 million per year. He further added that if Council made a mistake and reduced the water rate by too much, citizens would understand a water rate increase. He further explained that a 20% reduction in residential water rates would still allow the City to accumulate some money and also to reduce the average residential monthly bill by \$10.00 to \$15.00.

Councilmember Leak explained that the City and Scotland County have water systems, and there is an agreement between the City and Scotland County that needed to be reviewed in order to make the County Water System to be more accountable.

Mayor Block explained that the County did not pass on the 35% water rate increase to its customers in year, instead chose to spread the increase over two (2) years.

The City Manager explained that the agreement with the County has a fixed amount that the City can charge the County for the administration of the collections.

Upon question by Councilmember Williamson, the City Manager explained that three (3) years ago when the Water Fund had no cash, no capital projects could be budgeted due to the lack of funding; therefore, revenue from 2015 and subsequent years began accumulating. He added that the Asset Inventory Analysis projects are almost complete which will provide an exact inventory of the city's water and sewer assets as well as provide information on needed repairs. He added that the lift station on Produce Market has been flooded due to all of the recent rain and has needed repairs for several years. He further added that the Produce Market Area Sewer Project is a \$2 million project that would come out of this amount; however, the City was fortunate to receive a \$2 million grant to cover the costs for the project. He further added that the CIP includes approximately \$27 million of capital projects over the next five (5) years. He further explained that the City's engineer reviewed the CIP when he conducted the rate study. The engineer also compared the City's water rates with surrounding communities as well as data available on the University of North Carolina website.

Upon question by Councilmember Williamson, the City Manager explained that the City has to have funds on hand to tackle the big projects which were created by Hurricane Florence in the event the City is not reimbursed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

Mayor Block explained that he had made his feelings clear that the City should reduce water rates and stop accruing more money. He added that he did not believe the majority of Council agreed with him, and that Council should be aware of the healthy Water Fund as it moves into the budget. He further added that the City needed to either be more aggressive on spending the money or reduce the water rates. He further explained that he asked Mr. Head if he would reduce the water rates, and Mr. Head said that he is an accountant and very conservative, and that he would probably wait a year or two (2).

### **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT – MARK WARD**

Mr. Mark Ward, Scotland County Economic Development Director, explained that he first wanted to correct two (2) comments made previously in the meeting. He added that Rockingham/Richmond County has not had more economic development announcements than Laurinburg and Scotland County. Rockingham has not had an announcement in the last five (5) years, Richmond County has not had an announcement since 2017, Laurinburg has not had an announcement in over three (3) years; however, the County has had several. He further explained that in relation to Council's discussion about the Water Fund, he has a project looking to locate in Scotland County that would require the City to build another water treatment plant since the City's water treatment plant is nearing capacity. He added that although Scotland County and the surrounding area has high unemployment, unemployment is not an indication of how businesses and the economy are doing. He then provided an update as follows on several active economic development projects:

- Nine (9) out of 13 projects would be located in the city limits or would be voluntarily annexed.
- One (1) project would be from a foreign investment company at the old Universal Forestry facility. Would be seven (7) to 10 jobs with about \$1 million in investment.
- The Scotland County Economic Development Corporation (EDC) is in the process of purchasing two (2) properties downtown that are deteriorating. The properties will be renovated so that small shops or businesses can come in and locate in the buildings. The properties are the former Treasure City Pawn Shop building and the former Creech Hardware.
- Spec Building at the Laurinburg-Maxton Airport has been sold. The proceeds will be used to pay off the debt for the building being constructed behind the Small Business Innovation Center (SBIC) and for investing in downtown projects.

Mr. Ward explained that the Incubator Project is progressing. Phase 1 is almost complete and McGill Associates will be bidding out Phase 2 soon.

Upon questions by Mayor Block, Mr. Ward explained that the EDC purchased the two (2) buildings downtown because the owners were willing to sell and they were in the worst shape of the buildings downtown. He added that the EDC Board decided which buildings to purchase.

Further discussion ensued about the buildings purchased by the EDC.

Upon question by Mayor Block, Mr. Ward stated that the Spec Building was constructed for a little over \$800,000.00 and that the City did not pay for the construction.

Upon question by Mayor Block, Mr. Ward explained that the City's SmartSite is not one (1) of the most attractive property; however, it is being marketed. He added that once the timber is cut, it would be more marketable. He also discussed potential sites along Future I-74 once a bypass is constructed around Laurel Hill.

Councilmember Leak explained that Scotland County Commissioner Carol McCall was the new Chair of the EDC and that he has been Vice Chair for quite a while. He added that he would like to give Councilmember Williamson, who also represents the City on the EDC Board, an opportunity to be Vice Chair.

Mr. Ward explained that it was the Mayor's decision as to who appoint the Vice Chair.

Mayor Block appointed Councilmember Drew Williamson as the Vice Chair of the EDC Board.

### **COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT UPDATE – MICHAEL MANDEVILLE**

Mr. Michael Mandeville, Community Development Director, provided the following update on Community Development activities:

- The Façade Grant provided \$25,471.56 to downtown property owners for improvements. Most of the money was for roof repairs.
- Since the litter contract began, approximately 13,700 pounds of litter have been picked up.
- He touched base with Retail Strategies. Recent activity included a national fitness concept and a national tool retailer. There is significant interest in the national fast casual restaurant business.
- Research concerning the City's ordinance prohibiting alcohol around billiards revealed that in the 1950's and 1960's people drank and played pool with fights resulting.

The City Attorney explained that the enabling State statute allowing the City to pass its ordinance was adopted in 1918.

Mr. Mandeville explained that the Downtown Parking Lot Project was progressing with one (1) of four (4) contracts signed. He added that Mr. West has changed his mind and does not want to sell his property at this time.

Discussion ensued concerning the contracts to purchase the properties.

The City Manager explained that at the beginning of the project, staff was directed to purchase all five (5) of the properties or none. However, since Ms. Patterson did not want to sell her

home, the designer determined that the project could work without Ms. Patterson's property. He added that Mr. West's property is necessary for the project.

Councilmember Williamson explained that while Council wanted to treat all of the property owners the same, Mr. West is not just selling property, but his business location. He added that he would like to see Council make an effort to purchase Mr. West's property to make the project work.

Further discussion ensued concerning Mr. West's property and negotiations with him. It was consensus of Council for staff to talk with Mr. West to determine the amount necessary for him to sell his property to the City.

### **DISCUSSION OF ORDINANCE RELATED TO ALCOHOL AND BILLIARDS**

Discussion ensued concerning the City's ordinance preventing serving alcohol where billiards are located. It was consensus of Council for Mr. Mandeville to research the matter further and report back the next month.

### **CITY ATTORNEY- OPTIONS FOR OLD STATE BANK BUILDING**

The City Attorney explained that the old State Bank Building was owned by a company controlled by Mr. Marshall Melton, and that it is one of several private companies created to purchase properties downtown. He added that the City had nothing to do with the purchases of the properties and that the City had not provided services. He further added that the City cannot limit or even screen potential property owners. He added that his research caused him concern. He further added that there was a limit on what the City can enforce in the City Code. He added that the regulations are narrowly in favor of the land owner. He further explained that the old State Bank Building does not meet the definition of unsafe. He added that the City has the authority to pass additional regulations for the downtown district. He suggested that staff work with the Main Street personnel, the downtown property owners and the Downtown Advisory Committee to determine what type of regulations were desired.

Discussion ensued concerning the structural integrity of the building and having it inspected by the Scotland County Building Inspector.

Further discussion ensued concerning the physical condition of the building and action that Council should take to strongly encourage the property owner to make much needed improvements on his buildings. The City Attorney suggested that he send a letter to the property owner strongly encouraging him to take action.

Discussion ensued concerning the former Firestone Store which was damaged when the Market Furniture Store building fell during Hurricane Florence. The City Manager explained that the City had deemed the building unsafe and were working with the property owner.

Following further discussion, it was consensus of Council for the City Attorney to send a letter as he suggested to the property owner as discussed.

Mayor Block suggested that staff seek assistance from the Main Street program and ask for an inspection by the Scotland County Inspection Department.

### **UPDATE ON JOINT MEETING**

The City Manager explained that as directed by Council, he sent a request for a joint meeting with the Scotland County Board of Commissioners and with a representative from the Scotland County School Board and the Scotland Health Care System. He added that he provided four (4) dates from which to choose, with the result being that other than the Health Care System, Tuesday, January 29, 2019 worked best.

Following discussion, it was consensus of the City Council to hold a joint meeting with the Scotland County Board of Commissioners on Tuesday, January 29, 2019 beginning at 7:00 p.m. with the location to be determined.

### **CONSIDER 2019 COUNCIL MEETING SCHEDULE**

Motion was made by Councilmember Adams, seconded by Councilmember Williamson, and unanimously carried to adopt the 2019 Council Meeting Schedule.

### **CONSIDER FY 2019-2020 BUDGET SCHEDULE**

The City Manager explained that typically Council holds a retreat to kick off the annual budget schedule, and then the Citizen Input Session would be held. He added that since there would be a joint meeting in January, 2019, Council could not schedule a retreat at this time, but that once the budget discussions began and Council wanted a retreat, it could be scheduled.

Motion was made by Councilmember Adams, seconded by Councilmember Garby, and unanimously carried to approve the 2019 Budget Schedule.

### **DISCUSSION OF HIRING CRIME CONSULTANT/FOLLOW-UP FROM NORTH CAROLINA LEAGUE OF MUNICIPALITIES CONSULTANT**

The City Manager explained that Mr. Anderson, consultant from the North Carolina League of Municipalities (League), wanted to complete his report after the new building is completed so that he can inspect evidence storage since this is a big liability item for the City. He added that the move into the new building would be in approximately two (2) months.

Mayor Block explained that he felt it was incumbent upon the City to make sure the City is doing everything possible to reduce crime. He added that this was not a slight against the Police Chief, but that he believed a fresh perspective would be worthwhile. He asked Council to consider hiring a crime consultant.

Motion was made by Councilmember Evans to consider hiring a crime consultant. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Garby.

Mayor Block added that the City Manager could be tasked to research and determine the cost of such a consultant.

Councilmember Williamson explained that he believed that consultants can be very helpful. He added that at last year's retreat the idea of having the consultant from the League was first brought up. He added that he believed that the City would learn a great deal from the League report. He further added that he was not going to support Councilmember Evans' motion as he would like to hear from Mr. Anderson first.

Councilmember Adams explained that she had reviewed the information Mr. Anderson provided to Council about the study he was conducting, and that she agreed with Councilmember Williamson.

Mayor Block called for a roll call vote, and the result was as follows:

Ayes: Evans, Garby

Nays: Leak, Adams, Williamson

#### **UPDATE ON CITY HALL CONSTRUCTION**

The City Manager explained that construction on the new building was set to be completed by the end of January, 2019. He added that temporary power had been removed, the elevator was installed last week, and that the carpeting and tile work was being finalized. He further added that brick located under some of the second story windows needed to be redone and would be once there was dry weather.

Upon question by Mayor Block, the City Manager explained that existing computers would be used and that the furniture bid had been posted.

Discussion ensued concerning the furniture bid. Mr. Harold Haywood, General Services Director, explained that the bids for furniture and file storage were due the end of the following week. He added that because the furniture was included in the budget, the City Manager could sign the purchase contracts. He further added that the amount budgeted was \$170,000.00. He further explained that the bids were advertised electronically, on the City's website and Facebook page, in the local newspaper and vendors were also contacted.

Upon question by Mayor Block, Mr. Haywood explained that for a purchase contract, the City has to take the lowest bid, or could reject all bids and then pursue State contract bids.

#### **RECREATION CENTER DISCUSSION/FOLLOW-UP**

Mayor Block explained that at last month's meeting, Councilmember Williamson had suggested that a joint meeting with the Scotland County Board of Commissioners along with representatives from the Scotland County School Board and Scotland Health Care System to discuss moving forward with a recreation center. He added that after the meeting, he believed

that the joint meeting would be a waste of time since the idea of a recreation center had been being discussed for many years with Scotland County, and that he was not participating in the meeting. He further added that the Tis the Season Group inspired him, and that he wanted to take the lead for a recreation/community center to put together a plan of what the citizens want, and move forward in 10 to 11 months when the majority on Council wanted to move forward.

Councilmember Williamson explained that if Mayor Block was not going to support the meeting, then perhaps the joint meeting should be cancelled.

Mayor Block explained that the County had no money and that was why he felt that a joint meeting was going to be a waste of time.

Councilmember Williamson explained that he believed that the situation was very different now from years ago. He added that there is a new Parks and Recreation Director and that there is momentum in the community and on the Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee for building a recreation center. He credited Mayor Block for continuing to discuss the recreation center which has helped the momentum for a recreation center. He added that if the Mayor was opposed to a County recreation center, then he believed that it would fail, and the joint meeting would be a wasted effort.

Mayor Block explained that he was not in opposition to a County recreation center, but if the meeting on January 29, 2019 resulted in the County recreation center moving forward, then he would support it. He added that he was not personally spending any more of his time doing the beckoning of Council on a fruitless avenue. He further added that he has not gone out on his own before is because he did not believe he had a Council that would support it, which he believed would change in the 2019 elections.

Councilmember Williamson asked Mayor Block if he wanted the City to be alone in the recreation center and not involve the County.

Mayor Block stated, "no".

Councilmember Williamson explained that this Council supports a recreation center, but not one solely by the City. He added that there is a County recreation department, and he did not want the City to be alone in this endeavor since there are 36,000 people in the county.

Councilmember Adams added that the Morgan Center is the location for the County's sports fields, and even though it is not the center of Laurinburg, it is located in the City. She added that it did not make sense for the City to purchase property to build a recreation center when the City does not have a recreation department. She further added that at a Citizen Input Session held during Mayor Block's first term as Mayor, he asked the citizens present who would pay higher taxes to have a recreation center, and no one raised their hands. She discussed the costs to build and maintain a recreation center along with cost of running programs.

Mayor Block discussed the operating budget for the Wagram Recreation Center. He explained that a huge department is not needed to run a recreation center and very little staff would be needed. He added that most cities of similar size have recreation centers.

Further discussion ensued concerning a recreation center. Councilmember Williamson explained that perhaps the Mayor was not looking at a recreation center with a pool and office space which would be less expensive to construct and operate. He added that he believed that the citizens would have a better facility if the City and County worked together.

Mayor Block explained that he believed that the plan for a recreation center should come from the City to represent what the citizens of Laurinburg would like, and determine how much the City could afford. He added that once the “where, what and how” was determined, it could be discussed with the County to ask if the County wanted to be a partner and take the recreation center under Parks and Recreation Department. He further added that he believed that one of the dilapidated properties on Main Street could be used for constructing a recreation center, and this would be a boost to the community. He further explained that Council is supposed to look at what is best for Laurinburg. He added that he believed the recreation center should be on Main Street and not at the Morgan Center. He further added that if the City cannot build a recreation center on Main Street, then the City could partner with the County to build a recreation center at the Morgan Center.

A brief discussion ensued concerning consolidation of parks and recreation. Mayor Block explained that if Council felt that meeting with the County was the best way forward, then he did not want to stop Council.

Councilmember Williamson explained that Council would not be effective if the Mayor was not with Council.

Councilmember Evans stated that the referendum did not get approved, and the City should start the initiative.

Councilmember Garby stated that everyone made good points in the discussion. He added that the meeting had been scheduled and he believed that the Mayor and Council should go to the joint meeting to keep the idea of a recreation center moving forward.

Further discussion ensued concerning the joint meeting, the potential location of a recreation center on Main Street, and the Mayor’s pushing a recreation center to the forefront. Mayor Block stated that he would attend the meeting if Council was honestly considering taking the lead on a centrally located recreation center.

#### **COMMENTS FROM MAYOR AND/OR COUNCILMEMBERS**

There were no comments from the Mayor or Councilmembers.

#### **ADJOURN**

Motion was made by Councilmember Garby, seconded by Councilmember Williamson, and unanimously carried to adjourn the meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 10:30 p.m.

---

Matthew Block, MD, Mayor

---

Jennifer A. Tippett, City Clerk