

**CITY OF LAURINBURG  
SPECIAL MEETING/  
BUDGET WORKSHOP  
MAY 2, 2019  
MUNICIPAL BUILDING  
303 W. CHURCH ST  
LAURINBURG, NC  
6:30 P.M.**

**Minutes**

The City Council of the City of Laurinburg held a special meeting/budget workshop on May 1, 2018 at 6:30 p.m. in the council chambers of the Municipal Building located at 303 West Church Street, Laurinburg, NC, with the Honorable Matthew Block, MD, 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, and Jennifer A. Tippet, City Clerk.

Leadership Team members present included: Harold Haywood, General Services Director; Carrie H. Neal, Finance Director; Stacey McQuage, Public Utilities Director; Tim Pierce, GIS Administrator; Darwin Williams, Police Chief; Randy Gibson, Fire Chief; Michael Mandeville, Community Development Director; and Betty Galloway, Human Resources/Risk Management Director.

Mayor Block called the meeting to order at 6:31 p.m.

Mayor Block gave the invocation.

**STORM WATER ENGINEERS**

Mayor Block explained that there have been issues with flooding in certain areas of town, and that Council wanted to address the more severe problems as soon as possible. He then opened the floor to the stormwater engineering companies for presentations.

**MCCONNELL AND ASSOCIATES, P.C.**

Mr. Gary McConnell, introduced Mr. Thomas Perdue, a Project Manager with McConnell and Associates, P.C. who has been involved in many of the firm's stormwater projects.

Mr. Thomas Perdue explained that McConnell and Associates, P.C. is a full-service engineering consulting firm with a corporate office in Raleigh. The company has been in business since 1993 and does civil, storm water, water and wastewater engineering consulting with projects across the United States and some international work. He then presented a PowerPoint presentation with highlights as follows:

- Sample of stormwater projects:
  - Town of Spring Lake – Stormwater Management Program Plan
  - Town of Pembroke/UNCP – Hydrologic Study
  - Town of Princeville – Hurricane Mathew Flood Assessment Study
  - Town of Hope Mills – Several Stormwater Projects
  - ArcelorMittal Tubarao – Stormwater Phosphorus Removal Project
  - Village of Bald Head Island – Stormwater Master Plan
  - Town of Green Level – Watershed Ordinance
  - Numerous Clients – Stormwater Part of Project

Mr. Perdue explained that the work in Pembroke includes three (3) main areas in town and will involve upsizing the culverts to increase stormwater flow.

- Funding experience includes:
  - Community Development Block Grants
  - USDA –Rural Development
  - Clean Water Management Trust Fund
  - NC Rural Development Center
  - Golden Leaf Foundation
  - NCDEQ: State Revolving Fund
  - American Recovery and Reinvestment Act
  - Lease/Purchase (Department of State Treasurer)
  
- Key aspects and objectives:
  - Hold a Kickoff Meeting with City Manager and Public Works Director
  - Gain Perspective on the Stormwater Program
  - Identify Problem Areas and How They Affect the City
  - Workshop with City Staff
  - Discuss the Aspects of the Current Stormwater Review Process
  - Hold Public Meeting
  - Explain Stormwater Issues
  - Hear Their Input
  - Model Stormwater Runoff Through the City and Hot Spots
  - Identify Major Stormwater Routes Through the City
  - Perform Comprehensive Evaluation of City’s Stormwater Infrastructure
  - Prepare an Summary Report
  - Recommendations with Cost Estimates for Infrastructure Improvements
  - Recommendations for Non-Infrastructure Improvements

Upon question by Councilmember Garby, Mr. Perdue explained that the company had not worked with Carolina Bays.

Upon question by Mayor Block, Mr. Perdue explained that the agreement could be developed so that it is broken down into different projects, with urgent projects tackled first.

Upon question by Councilmember Leak, Mr. Perdue explained that if hired, the company would be working for the City; however, if the City wanted to have a joint venture with Scotland County to address issues outside of the City limits that affect the City, then that could be done.

Upon question by Mayor Block, Mr. Perdue explained that the company designs projects, pursues grants, and then puts the project out for bid. He added that once the contractor is selected, McConnell would provide oversight and construction management services.

Mayor Block explained that one of the problems the City experienced during Hurricane Florence was flooding of the North Fire Station. He added that there was ongoing discussion about renovating the North Fire Station or building a new station. He then asked if McConnell would be able to analyze the North Fire Station situation and advise as to whether the City should renovate or build a new station.

Mr. McConnell explained that the company could look at minimizing the flooding and that part of the scope would be to identify what could be done and the priorities.

### **CAPE FEAR ENGINEERING**

Mr. Perry Davis, President of Cape Fear Engineering (CFE) explained that CFE was established in 1997. He added that also with him was Matt Haley, Vice President and Director of Engineering, and that they spent several hours driving around the City before the meeting. CFE specializes in engineering, architectural, geotechnical engineering and surveying and is a small business with public, military and private sector clients. It is located in Wilmington, NC, and has experience in coastal and eastern North Carolina which has flat land that does not drain well.

Mr. Davis turned the program over to Mr. Matt Haley who presented a PowerPoint with highlights as follows:

- The firm employs 40 people
  - 5 Professional Engineers
  - 4 Professional Land Surveyors
  - 2 Registered Architect
  - 2 Engineering Interns
  - 3 Surveying Interns
  - 5 Designers
  - 6 Survey Crews
  - 1 Construction Manager
  - 3 Inspectors
  - 2 Field and Laboratory Technicians
  - Administrative Support Employees
- Services include:
  - Civil Engineering
  - Stormwater Management and Erosion Control –Main focus
  - Survey, GIS, and Geomatics

- Geotechnical Engineering
- Construction Materials & Testing
- Land Planning and Master Planning
- Architectural
- Environmental and Coastal Engineering
- Structural Engineering
- Water and Sewer
- Construction and Inspection Services
- Full Design-Build
  
- Stormwater Management and Erosion Control
  - Stormwater System Inventories
  - Feasibility Studies
  - Stormwater Impact Analysis
  - Watershed Analysis and Planning
  - Low Impact Development
  - BMP Design and Permitting
  - Pre-Post Attenuation
  - Nutrient Load Reduction
  - Stormwater Collection & Drainage Design
  - Permeable Pavement Design
  - SWPPP Plans
  - BMP Inspections
  - As-builts and Certifications
  - NPDES Phase II Compliance
  - LEED Support
  - Coastal Stormwater Regulations
  
- Survey, GIS and Geomatics services:
  - GIS
  - Land Surveying
  - Topographic & Hydrographic Surveys
  - ALTA / ASCM Land Title Surveys
  - Construction Staking & Layout
  - Boundary & Easement Survey
  - As-built Verification Survey
  - Existing Conditions & Design Surveys
  - Route Surveys
  - Legal Descriptions
  - LOMA Surveys
  - Tree Surveys
  - Lot Surveys & Plot Plans
  - Subdivision & Recombination Platting
  - FEMA Elevation Certificates
  - Wetland Locating & Mapping

Mr. Haley explained that the first thing CFE does with a project is to get boots on the ground to survey existing conditions which will identify the slopes and inverts of ditches, and the grade and inverts of culverts. He added that the surveyors are all cross-trained in construction inspections, and will be able to look at the existing culverts and existing stormwater infrastructure in order to make notes about the areas in need of repair and further analysis. The company provides construction management, construction administration and inspection services. As the project gets designed, CFE can assist in getting a bid package out and selecting a contractor. And as that contractor is performing the actual work, we can be as hands on as the city needs us to be. All the way through the construction and ultimately the project closeout.

Mr. Haley explained that CFE has worked for many municipalities in southeastern North Carolina, the following specific stormwater projects recently completed or still in progress:

- Magnolia Greens Subdivision - Various Locations - Flooding Investigation - Town of Leland, NC - The Town of Leland engaged Cape Fear Engineering (CFE) to evaluate flooding of roadways at three locations within the Magnolia Greens Subdivision, Parkmore Court, Morningview Way, and Redfield Drive. CFE's recommendations were based on cost, permitting concerns, maintenance requirements, and welfare of the community and parties involved.
- Kure Beach Beachwalk Storm Drainage Improvements, Beachwalk Subdivision - CFE was engaged to evaluate an existing stormwater management system. Improvements brought the system back into compliance and improved accessibility for future maintenance and included restoring the ponds to their permitted geometry, piping swales, regrading to eliminate erosion issues, re-vegetation, rip-rap protection, and utilizing innovative methods to correct deficiencies.
- Oceanside Place Storm Drainage Improvements, Carolina Shores, NC - CFE provided a drainage field investigation and report due to nuisance flooding to the POA for Ocean Side Place in Calabash, NC. Based on the field report, CFE was engaged to provide stabilization improvement plan to correct the swale issues. The improvements included re-grading of the swale to eliminate the steep slopes, provided a geo-web fabric, relocation of roof drains, and sod for stabilization.
- Keel Street Improvements - Town of Wrightsville Beach, NC - The Town of Wrightsville Beach is utilizing Cape Fear Engineering to assess damage and design a replacement bulkhead wall at the end of Keel Street. Failure of the existing concrete bulkhead was caused by deficient drainage at the end of Keel Street that resulted in concentrated stormwater runoff eroding behind the wall and ultimately causing collapse. A new sheet pile bulkhead was designed with upgrades to the existing storm drain collection system.
- Wessex Subdivision Storm Drainage Improvements, Wilmington, NC - CFE prepared a drainage improvement plan to address standing water on roadways within the Wessex subdivision. An existing conditions and topographic survey was performed and standing water was documented along the affected route. The improvement plan included demolition and repair of sections of curb and gutter, pavement grades, driveway approaches, and roadway intersections. Additionally, street/yard landscaping was adjusted to provide positive drainage to the streets and stormwater collection system.

- Pine Valley Street Rehabilitation and Storm Drainage Improvements, City of Wilmington, NC - CFE is part of the team that holds an on-call contract with the City of Wilmington in support of storm water improvements. The project addressed historic drainage issues in part of the Pine Valley subdivision and consisted of re-routing storm water drainage away from ditches on private property and into a new collection system.

Mr. Haley explained that in addition to the municipal market, CFE also works in federal, commercial, institutional and residential markets. CFE is licensed from Maryland through New Mexico in order to work on federal projects.

Mr. Haley explained that CFE reviewed several past Council meeting minutes, and it appeared that there were two (2) specific problem areas – Cypress Drive and Isabelle Street. He discussed the following about these two (2) areas:

- Cypress Drive area consists of roadside ditches and driveway culverts. Some of the ditches have low spots which cause the water to stand. Some of the existing drainage pipes have been damaged, and some of the driveway culverts need repair and to potentially be placed at lower elevations to accommodate stormwater.
- Isabelle Street area has ditches that need maintenance, there are issues with upstream drainage pipes being at a lower elevation than downstream pipes.

Upon question by Councilmember Garby, Mr. Haley stated that they did not look at the Debra Drive area.

Upon question by Mayor Block, Mr. Haley explained that CFE could begin work in the next few weeks.

Upon question by Mayor Block, Mr. Haley explained that CFE is familiar with dealing with private property and drainage easements. He added that one (1) of the biggest problems to address is the responsibility for fixing a problem. He further added that property lines and dedicated drainage easements have to be located in order to properly identify where the problem is and the responsibility for fixing any problem.

Upon question by Councilmember Williamson, Mr. Haley stated that CFE is very familiar with Carolina Bays, and that some projects are designed to feature those as amenities. He added that there is always an issue of the high ground water table and the baseline flood that comes out of those areas.

Upon questions by Councilmember Evans, Mr. Haley explained that CFE does provide education and information to the area residents. He added that depending upon the situation, citizens may have to fund improvements on their property; however, that could not be determined at this time.

Upon question by Councilmember Williamson, Mr. Davis explained that currently the agency with funding at this time is the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). He added that a municipality's needs to get a problem fixed does not match the speed of funding from

FEMA. He added that if there are needs that have to be fixed now, the City may have to have a Capital Project to do so.

## **DRAPER ADEN**

Mr. Matthew Burnette of Draper Aden Associates introduced himself and Tyrus Clayton and Andrew Mericle. He then presented a PowerPoint presentation with highlights as follows:

- Draper Aden is a multi-discipline civil engineering firm offering civil, environmental, geotechnical and structural services. Also offer surveying, construction administration, construction management.
- Has eight (8) locations – six (6) in Virginia and two (2) in North Carolina-Raleigh and Fayetteville.
- Established in 1972 in Blacksburg, VA.
- Stormwater services provided:
  - Field Assessments
  - Public Outreach
  - Project Identification
  - Prioritization
  - Design
  - Construction Administration
- Need to develop collaborative effort and see what is most important to the City.
- The team would consist of the following:
  - Mr. Burnette who is a stormwater engineer would be the Project Manager
  - Tyrus Clayton would be the Assistant Project Manager and the second point of contact
  - Andrew Mericle, Senior Design Engineer
  - Also have survey crews, additional design engineers and environmental services and all 40 employees in North Carolina would be on the project. If needed, employees from Virginia would be available also.
- The City has some known problem areas, and project understanding would involve:
  - Review known problem areas
  - City-wide evaluation
  - Understand cause and effect and look at surrounding area

Mr. Burnette explained that the project approach would involve preliminary desktop assessment, detailed field assessments, public involvement utilizing online surveys, public meetings and/or mailing questionnaires.

Mr. Tyrus Clayton explained that the City has known problems, and that Draper Aden would look at those areas first; however, the entire city would be looked at to help put a plan together with funding for the future. He added that the storm drainage systems would be put through modeling software to review any changes and the possible effect changes could have either up or downstream of problem areas. He discussed the company's activities in the City of Princeton for the past 15 years, and how smaller projects were funded that resulted in larger projects being

funded by grant agencies over the years. He added that the City could consider a storm water utility that could provide funding for stormwater projects over the years.

Mr. Andrew Mericle discussed the design services offered by Draper Aden. He added that citizens would be engaged to determine the best approach to fixing the problems. He further added that working with City staff and citizens to plan the best design to resolve the stormwater problems would provide a quick and seamless as possible solution. He further explained that Draper Aden would take the design, carry through the bidding process, recommend contractor and provide construction management until the project is completed and handed back over to the City.

Mr. Burnett discussed several municipalities where Draper Aden had worked on or were working on stormwater projects including Elizabeth City, Durham, Princeton and New Bern. He explained that Draper Aden did assessments, developed computer models and attended public meetings about the stormwater projects. He further explained that Elizabeth City's and Durham's approach was similar to the City's in that there were certain known problem areas that were ranked and then solutions developed including ranking and cost.

Upon question by Mayor Block, Mr. Clayton explained that the presenters were from the Fayetteville office of Draper Arden.

Upon question by Councilmember Garby, Mr. Clayton explained that Draper Arden was working on projects in New Bern both before and after Hurricane Florence. He added that the company had been working with the City of New Bern since 2000.

Upon question by Mayor Block, the City Manager explained that the next step would be for Council to choose the stormwater engineer at the May 21, 2019 meeting.

*At 7:23 p.m., Mayor Block called for a short break.*

*The meeting resumed at 7:29 p.m.*

## **SET PUBLIC HEARING FOR MAY 21 FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

The City Manager explained that details concerning the economic development project could not be released at this time. He added that the Scotland County Board of Commissioners would hold a public hearing Monday, May 6, 2019 about this matter.

Motion was made by Councilmember Adams, seconded by Councilmember Garby, and unanimously carried to set a public hearing on May 21, 2019 to consider economic development incentives.

## **BUDGET DISCUSSION**

Upon questions by Mayor Block, the City Manager explained that he did not know how many times Council would need to meet to discuss the budget. He added that staff's plan was to

present a broad picture of the budget at this meeting and hear ideas and/or requests from Council. He further added that the enterprise funds were set up with capital projects that are multiple-year projects, so there would not be much fluctuation in those funds; however, staff needed direction from Council on the General Fund. The plan tonight was to give a general overview of the General Fund, and then determine when a meeting was needed.

The City Manager explained that staff had met internally and tweaked the numbers presented at the April 16, 2019 meeting. The current budget of the General Fund is \$8.6 million compared to \$8.1 million last year. Some of the increases were: \$150,000.00 for stormwater improvements, \$75,000.00 for engineering services for storm water. He added that because the budget was so tight this year, Council could consider budgeting for the engineer, and then come back for budget amendments for each project that the stormwater engineer recommends.

Other highlights of the General Fund proposed budget include:

- Tax rate is flat.
- Fees are flat.
- Currently have \$597,000.00 of Fund Balance appropriated in order to balance the budget, compared to \$217,000.00 the previous year.
- \$700,000.00 of assigned Fund Balance planned for the City Hall and Police Department financing and the final payment of the settlement of the lawsuit.

The City Manager explained that Scotland County had not provided much information concerning the tax revaluation; however it is estimated a reduction in property tax revenue of between a four percent (4%) to five percent (5%), which is \$130,000.00. The current draft budget includes a four percent (4%) reduction in property tax revenues.

- Capital Projects in the General Fund include:
  - \$20,000.00 to replace the roof at the Sanford Building. With the proposed lease to Smart Start, the first year would provide \$30,000.00 of rent.
  - \$40,000.00 for Beautification projects.
  - \$195,000.00 for five (5) police vehicles.
  - Addition of four (4) tsunami cameras at \$75,000.00.
  - \$75,000.00 for equipment in the Fire Department. Chief Gibson had requested a new pumper at \$500,000.00, but that has already been removed. However, if Council wanted to discuss using more Fund Balance Appropriated, this could be added back in the budget.
  - \$200,000.00 for street resurfacing.
  - \$50,000.00 for the Commonwealth Bridge project that has been ongoing to many years. Staff has been trying to work with North Carolina Department of Transportation (DOT) on a solution for bridge repairs because the bridge is not used much by vehicular traffic. The estimated cost of repairs from DOT has escalated from approximately \$300,000.00 to \$800,000.00 to \$900,000.00. The \$50,000.00 would allow for demolition and close the road.

Upon question by Mayor Block, Mr. McQuage explained that the US Department of Agriculture had looked at the building on North Main Street that had caved in, along with several other projects.

The City Manager explained that the property owner, Mr. Lloyd, was ready to get the building demolished and removed. He added that Mr. Mac McInnis, City Planner/Zoning Officer, was assisting Mr. Lloyd in obtaining quotes for demolition. He added that due to safety concerns, City employees could not demolish the building. He further added that there would be a large tipping fee for the materials, and this would be a lien on the property.

The City Manager explained that \$150,000.00 had been budgeted for stormwater projects and \$75,000.00 for a stormwater engineer. He added that the budgeted amounts were estimates by staff; therefore, Council could include \$75,000.00 for the stormwater engineer, and once the engineer brings back projects and Council has prioritized the projects, do budget amendments for the projects.

The City Manager received an estimate for concrete and asphalt for the Parking and Urban Design Project came in at \$689,000.00. He added that Mr. Mandeville was pursuing grants for the project. He further added that this project was not included in the budget at this time pending direction from Council. He further explained that the project could possibly done in phases, or staff could look for other budget cuts or other revenue options. He added that some of the landscaping for the project was included in the Beautification Department budget.

Mayor Block asked if there was a way to justify spreading the costs of the project among the enterprise funds.

The City Manager explained that the cost for putting the electric underground was charged to the Electric Fund. He added that there is a General Statute that allow Electric Fund transfers for specific projects, especially if the project was related to economic development.

Mrs. Neal explained that the General Statute allows transfer of the lesser of either three percent (3%) of gross assets from the previous year or five percent (5%) of revenues from the previous year. She added that if Council wanted to transfer funds from the Electric Fund for a specific project, the amount that could be transferred this year would be approximately \$480,000.00. She further added that if the money is transferred under this provision, it would allow the funds to be in the General Fund.

Mayor Block asked if a transfer could be made from the Water/Sewer Fund. He expressed concern about using funds from the Electric Fund since not all citizens were customers of City's electric utility.

Mrs. Neal explained that the legislation was specifically for the Electric Fund.

The City Manager explained that the legislation was passed because of ElectriCities' members using the Electric Fund to balance their annual budgets.

Upon question by Councilmember Williamson, the City Manager explained that there could be some small grants available from Electricities for the project.

Upon question by Mayor Block, the City Manager that there was a possibility of low interest loans and US Department of Agriculture (USDA) loans; however there would have to be collateral such as the property. He added that if this project is a priority for Council, then staff could bring back options.

The City Manager explained that there could be some improvements completed by City staff; however, the improvements would not be sufficient to allow the property to be used for events.

A discussion ensued concerning a 15-year loan. Councilmember Garby suggested that rather than pay interest rates, the money could be transferred from the Electric Fund.

Mayor Block stated that his concern was that only 60% of the City is on City electric, so not all of the citizens would be paying for the project, and that the burden would just fall on electric customers.

Following further discussion, it was consensus of Council that the Parking and Urban Design Project was a priority and for staff to provide other options for funding the project.

The City Manager explained that a revenue option that has been discussed in prior years was a municipal vehicle fee. He added that 198 municipalities in North Carolina have such a fee that can go up to \$30.00 per vehicle. He further added that this would generate \$327,000.00 in annual revenue for the City at the rate of \$30.00 per vehicle. He further explained that the municipal vehicle fee would be reoccurring every year whereas the Electric Fund transfer would be decided annually by Council.

Councilmember Leak expressed concern about adding a new fee to citizens at this time with so many citizens still recovering from Hurricane Florence.

Mayor Block stated that another option would be to raise the City tax rate by one (1) penny.

Upon question by Mayor Block, Mrs. Neal stated that each penny of the tax rate generates \$80,000.00 in revenue.

Mayor Block stated that the City tax rate could be raised one (1) penny and finance the rest of the project.

Mrs. Neal explained that the unique thing about the municipal vehicle fee is that it is often referred to as a "fairness tax" because the property taxes are not paid by everyone; however, the municipal vehicle tax is a more fair distribution of the burden to the citizens.

Further discussion ensued concerning the Municipal vehicle fee. Mrs. Neal explained that the City would work with North Carolina Department of Motor Vehicles (NC DMV) so that the fee

was collected when a vehicle was registered each year. She further explained that it would not affect any vehicle that was not registered with NC DMV and not located within the city limits.

The City Manager explained that another revenue source to consider is a convenience fee for credit cards. He added that the City pays \$40,000.00 annually in credit card fees. He further added that many local governments pass on the credit card charges to customers. He further explained that because estimated revenue for FY 19-20 decreased and expenditures increased, staff wanted to offer options for additional revenue such as the convenience fee and the municipal vehicle fee.

Councilmember Williamson suggested that these revenue ideas could be considered further along in the budget process when tougher decisions are needed.

Discussion ensued concerning whether to look at financing, the two (2) optional revenue sources presented by the City Manager, or a combination of financing and revenue sources. Mrs. Neal explained that the optional revenue sources would be a continuing revenue source and the transfer from the Electric Fund would be a Council decision each year.

Upon question by Councilmember Adams, Mrs. Neal explained that the Electric Fund was in good shape, and the Capital Project for the electric substation was just increased \$1 million, the Electric Fund is balanced, and there are still sufficient funds to make a transfer if Council wanted to do so.

The City Manager added that he would recommend a transfer from the Electric Fund only once. He further added that the electric substation project did not originally factor in recircuiting the electric system so the total project increased from approximately \$2 million to up to \$3.5 million.

Councilmember Leak suggested that staff look at the availability of a loan to help pay for the Parking and Urban Design Project and also to look at the municipal vehicle fee in the range of \$5.00 to \$10.00 per vehicle.

Discussion ensued concerning a convenience fee for credit card usage including negotiating with the credit card vendors on the fees charged.

*There was no decision on this matter.*

Discussion ensued concerning other possible sources of revenue such as a sales tax fee and a stormwater utility fee.

### *Municipal Elections*

The City Manager explained that Council needed to decide whether it would pay for one-stop and absentee voting at a cost of \$20,591.00 or without one-stop and absentee voting at a cost of \$9,589.00. He added that the difference in municipal election costs this year is that the other municipalities have opted out of one-stop and absentee voting leaving the entire cost to the City if Council wanted to keep one-stop and absentee voting.

It was consensus of Council to continue with one-stop and absentee voting at a cost of \$20,591.00.

*Request from Tis the Season*

The City Manager explained that Mrs. Terry Parker has requested funding for the Tis the Season as well as for City crews to hang perimeter lights on buildings downtown. He added that last year, the group requested that the City hang the perimeter lights; however due to the liability issue, the City does not attach anything to or do anything to private property. He further added that the City Attorney would need to advise Council concerning City crews hanging perimeter lights.

Councilmember Garby requested that this item be added to the May 21, 2019 agenda for discussion.

Discussion ensued concerning the request for funds for hanging baskets on Main Street. Councilmember Adams explained that she believed that the City's Beautification Department should take care of any hanging baskets downtown.

Mr. Mandeville explained that staff believed that if the hanging baskets are going to be done, then it should be done by staff, including watering. He discussed manpower issues in the department, and suggested that if Council wanted to add the hanging baskets downtown, that Beautification should not start the hanging baskets until spring of 2020.

The City Manager explained that Mrs. Parker presented this information to the Beautification Committee at its March meeting. The committee liked the idea; however, with Springfest one (1) month away, the committee wanted staff to address the existing flower beds first. He added that the idea came from the City of Hendersonville which has a contractor to water and take care of the hanging baskets. He further added that staff wanted to ensure that if Council wanted to move forward with the hanging baskets, that the proper brackets were used on the City's electric poles. The single arm brackets are \$212.00 each, and \$282.00 for double arm. He further explained that Mrs. Parker intended to discuss this information with Council and the fact that she has four (4) people that have pledged contributions to make the hanging baskets work.

Councilmember Adams explained that she had received a text from a person who stated that he/she would water the eight (8) hanging baskets on Main Street once a week. She added that the hanging baskets needed to be watered more than once a week, so she believed that the Beautification Department should take care of the hanging baskets.

Mr. Mandeville explained that staff was not opposed to the hanging baskets; however, the resources needed to be in place to make it successful.

Following further discussion, it was consensus for staff to discuss the hanging baskets at the next Council meeting to include details concerning the appearance and costs. It was also consensus to

consult the City Attorney concerning the liability issue for staff to hang perimeter lights on private buildings downtown.

Councilmember Adams explained that Tis the Season was requesting funding for additional Christmas decorations. She added that she believed that the City should purchase and maintain Christmas decorations and not provide additional funding for Tis the Season.

It was consensus of Council to fund Tis the Season at \$7,500.00 for FY 19-20.

#### **UPDATE ON NORTH FIRE STATION**

The City Manager explained that the only update at this time was that staff had submitted requests for funding through the Community Development Block Grant route, and have reached out to Golden Leaf and the Unmet Needs to try to find possible funding for this, but to date there had been no responses. He added that the Office of Fire Inspector was being lenient as far as homeowners' insurance. He further added that there was no funds were included in the budget to address the North Fire Station at this point. He explained that if Council wanted to rehabilitate the North Fire Station, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) would provide the \$111,000.00 for which the City is eligible. He added that his recommendation would be to wait on responses from the other possible sources of funds.

Upon questions by Councilmember Williamson, Mr. Haywood explained that FEMA estimated the cost for rehabbing the North Fire Station at approximately \$218,000.00 to \$220,000.00. He added that once the City accepts FEMA funding, the City would be required to be a part of the National Flood Insurance Program to cover any further flooding.

Upon question by Councilmember Leak, Mr. Haywood explained that staff had not obtained a cost for flood insurance.

Councilmember Leak expressed concern that the citizens know that the City is protected.

The City Manager stated that the City is protected; however response times are not what they normally are for some areas.

Councilmember Leak suggested that staff begin looking for another location to rebuild on the north side of town.

Councilmember Adams stated that she would agree with Councilmember Leak's recommendation.

A discussion ensued concerning potential locations. The City Manager explained that that staff had looked at property beside Food Lion in the Northside Shopping Center.

Councilmember Garby explained that he did not believe it would be cost-effective to try to rehabilitate the North Fire Station. He added that it would cost \$1 million to build a dam around the building, so he suggested finding a cheap piece of property on higher ground to build a new fire station.

A brief discussion ensued concerning the property next to Food Lion at the North Side Shopping Center. The property is owned by Z.V. Pate, Inc. and would offer ease of access onto US Highway 401 and 501.

Mayor Block explained that he missed where someone said the only way to protect the existing North Fire Station was to build a wall around it. He inquired who provided that analysis.

Fire Chief Gibson explained that the Hazard Mitigation Team from FEMA discussed a flood wall as possible mitigation for future flooding. He added that FEMA indicated that the City would need to seek an engineer to design a flood wall.

Mayor Block explained that he believed that Council should due its due diligence before building a new multi-million dollar fire station, and that there could be less expensive ways to address the flooding problem. He added that the North Fire Station had been in its location for 40 years and only had one (1) major flood in that time. He further added that the City was going to be bringing in a stormwater engineer, and that engineer could look at the North Fire Station and make a professional recommendation.

Chief Gibson explained that there were stress-cracks in the cinderblock walls that go from floor to ceiling, and the doors will not shut completely.

Councilmember Leak suggested that all of Council needed to see the damage at the North Fire Station.

Councilmember Adams added that there was mold all around the walls the day she toured when Governor Cooper toured areas in Laurinburg and Scotland County.

Chief Gibson explained that the cinderblock walls are hollow with Styrofoam insulation center, and he expressed concern that water could still be in the walls. He did not know how extensive mold remediation might be.

Upon question by Mayor Block, Chief Gibson explained that the City did a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) to get an estimate on rehabilitating the North Fire Station, so a contractor provided the estimate for rehabbing the North Fire Station. He added that any estimate does not include mold remediation.

Councilmember Adams expressed concern that another hurricane could hit Laurinburg and what happened in Lumberton could happen to the City, i.e., after Hurricane Matthew, another hurricane hit in two (2) years when some were still rebuilding from Hurricane Matthew. She explained that the North Fire Station is in a flood zone, and that she believed it would not be a good idea to rehab or rebuild on the same site.

A discussion ensued concerning the cost of a new fire station. Chief Gibson explained that the type of construction, such as the preference for wind speeds, would greatly impact the cost of constructing a fire station.

Councilmember Garby explained that he agreed with Mayor Block that the stormwater engineers should look at the North Fire Station to make recommendations. He added that he felt confident that the stormwater engineer would tell Council that the fire station does not need to be located on the site. He further added that they could also have an idea that would prevent the building from flooding again.

Councilmember Adams explained that the Army Corps of Engineers could look at the fire station area because they seemed to want to help because of how well the City maintained Leith Creek.

The City Manager explained that just after Hurricane Florence, a lot of entities seemed willing to help the City; however, eight (8) months have gone by and so far not much has transpired. He added that if another hurricane such as Hurricane Florence comes in the future and the current North Fire Station is rehabbed, staff would move all vehicles back to the South Fire Station and have a plan to operate out of the South Fire Station only.

Upon question by Councilmember Adams, Chief Gibson explained that the State Fire Marshal's Office Insurance Services Officer rating inspector stated initially that as long as the City was working towards a resolution and there was progress that the insurance rates would not change; however, he did not give a specific time frame for resolving the fire station issue. Chief Gibson explained that other fire departments in similar situations as Laurinburg put a temporary metal shell building that housed the fire trucks and some type of temporary housing was erected. He added that if Council wanted to entertain temporary housing in the parking lot and the bay doors could be repaired so that the fire trucks could be located in the bays. He added that this would temporarily put firefighters back on the north side of town.

The City Manager asked if Council wanted staff to put money in the budget for an inspection of the North Fire Station, and wait until the stormwater engineer has looked at the situation.

Mayor Block stated he believed the building should be evaluated, and he then asked what the cost would be.

The City Manager explained that he did not know what the cost of structural and mold inspection would be.

Mayor Block explained hopefully the stormwater engineer would be decided upon in the next month, and their input on the North Fire Station and its situation could be made so that Council could make an informed decision.

Councilmember Williamson stated that the benefit of having an inspection is that it would somewhat validate Council's decisions.

Councilmember Leak discussed the elevation and proximity to Leith Creek of the North Fire Station and the surrounding area. He stated that the number one (1) priority for Council was to keep the citizens safe on the north side of town.

A discussion ensued concerning temporary housing. Councilmember Garby suggested that staff determine cost of temporary housing.

Chief Gibson explained that he did not know about the availability of sewer.

***Health Insurance***

The City Manager explained that staff had just received the first estimate of health insurance premiums which came back with a 12.4% increase, and staff was working with Dunbar Insurance to reduce that amount.

Mrs. Galloway explained that the dental insurance premium was flat.  
A brief discussion ensued concerning the length of regular council meetings.

Councilmember Evans inquired about including \$5,000.00 in the budget for the Scotland County Reentry Council. There was no decision made on this matter.

**ADJOURN/RECESS**

Councilmember Williamson motioned to adjourn/recess the meeting. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Garby, and carried unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 9:05 p.m.

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Matthew Block, MD, Mayor

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Jennifer A. Tippett, City Clerk