

**CITY OF LAURINBURG  
CITY COUNCIL MEETING  
MAY 21, 2019  
CITY HALL AND POLICE DEPARTMENT  
303 WEST CHURCH ST.  
7:00 p.m.**

**Minutes**

The City Council of the City of Laurinburg held its regular meeting on Tuesday, May 21, 2019 in the Council Chambers of the City Hall and Police Department 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 7:00 p.m.

Mayor Block gave the Invocation and then led the Pledge of Allegiance.

He welcomed everyone to the first meeting in the City Hall and Police Department, and thanked the City Manager and staff for making the building come to fruition.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Councilmember Evans explained that she wanted clarification concerning Item D on the Consent Agenda, and would like that item pulled from the Consent Agenda.

Motion was made by Councilmember Evans, seconded by Councilmember Garby, and unanimously carried to approve the agenda by amending it to remove Item d) Consider Ordinance No. O-2019-15 Amending FY 18-19 Budget Appropriations Ordinance (Ordinance No. O-2018-08) By Allocating from Non-Departmental to Appropriate Department for New City Hall Furniture, Fixtures and Equipment, from the Consent Agenda.

**PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD**

Mayor Block briefly reviewed public comment procedures.

Mr. Joe Plitt explained that he was speaking on behalf of the Westland Forest Neighborhood Watch Group. He provided a brief history of the neighborhood group and its activities over the last eleven (11) months that have brought the neighborhood together. He further explained that Councilmember Adams and the Police Chief have attended meetings, and there has been a police officer at every meeting. He thanked that City for all of its efforts, and then requested assistance on the following:

- Sink hole in corner of Azure Court and King Street.
- Storm drains are continuously clogged.
- Damaged road on Heather Lane where root is pushing up the road.
- Road caving in at corner of Wilkinson and Gilchrist.
- Constantly fighting litter on the service road adjacent to US Highway 401.
- Speeding in the neighborhood. Informed today that the residential speed limit is 35 miles per hour, but downtown, the speed limit is 20 miles per hour.
- Two (2) abandoned homes in the neighborhood and the yards are overgrown with weeds.
- One (1) neighbor's tap water leaves a residue.
- Poor street lighting in certain areas. Chief of Police said he would look into this matter, but the residents have heard nothing back.
- Would like new Neighborhood Watch signs.

Mr. Plitt then asked if the City would be spraying for mosquitos this year. He then invited the Mayor and Council to attend the group's meetings held on the second Tuesday of every month at 6:30 p.m. at St. David's Episcopal Church.

Mr. Jacob Pate expressed concern that crime had continued rising, and he inquired if anything could be done about crime.

Mayor Block explained that Council had been discussing crime during the budget process which was ongoing. He added that currently the budget included a crime mapping analyst, but did not include hiring a crime consultant.

## **CONSENT AGENDA**

Mayor Block reviewed the Consent Agenda:

- a) Consider minutes of March 5, 2019 special meeting/Citizen Input Session
- b) Consider Ordinance No. O-2019-14 Amending FY 18-19 Budget Appropriations Ordinance (Ordinance No. O-2018-07) for Insurance Proceeds in the Amount of \$12,528.31 and Allocate for Equipment Repair as an increase to General Fund Fire Department
- c) Consider Resolution No. R-2019-04 Revising Resolution No. R-2018-21 Resolution Adopting Compliance Plans for Community Development Block Grant-Infrastructure Account Grant #17-I-2966 for Produce Market Road Area Sewer Project
- d) **REMOVED FROM CONSENT AGENDA**
- e) Authorize Mayor to execute Agreement with the Scotland County Board of Elections for 2019 Municipal Elections

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

Ayes: Garby, Adams, Williamson, Leak, Evans

Nays: None

**CONSIDER ORDINANCE NO. O-2019-15 AMENDING FY 18-19 BUDGET APPROPRIATIONS ORDINANCE (ORDINANCE NO. O-2018-07) BY ALLOCATING FROM NON-DEPARTMENTAL TO APPROPRIATE DEPARTMENT FOR NEW CITY HALL FURNITURE, FIXTURES AND EQUIPMENT**

Councilmember Evans explained that she requested this item be removed from the Consent Agenda because she wanted to know if this money was part of the loan for the new City Hall and Police Department or was in addition to the loan.

The City Manager explained that this ordinance involved funds budgeted in the FY 18-19 budget that were in Non-Departmental. He added that the budget amendment correctly allocates the dollar amount for furniture, fixtures and equipment for each department within the four (4) funds.

Upon question by Councilmember Evans, the City Manager reiterated that the funds were budgeted and approved in the budget for FY 18-19.

Upon question by Councilmember Evans, the City Manager explained that to the best of his knowledge, the only items in the next budget, FY 19-20, would be some audiovisual equipment for conference rooms.

Councilmember Evans stated that in looking at the expenditures, it did not appear that new computers were purchased.

The City Manager explained that employees used their existing computers and it was not necessary to purchase new computers.

Councilmember Evans explained that one of the arguments for the new City Hall and Police Station was because of computers and the wiring.

The City Manager explained that the wiring necessary for technology was totally different from computers. He added that in the next budget, he believed there would be some additional technology to be purchased, such as monitors in the Council Chambers and conference rooms.

Following further discussion, motion was made by Councilmember Adams to approve Ordinance No. O-2019-15 amending FY 18-19 Budget Appropriations Ordinance (Ordinance No. O-2018-07) by allocating from Non-Departmental to Appropriate Department for New City Hall Furniture, Fixtures and Equipment, totals as follows:

General Fund Total	\$213,005.00
Electric Fund Total	\$58,246.00
W/S Fund Total	\$58,246.00

The motion was seconded by Councilmember Williamson, and the vote was as follows:

Ayes: Adams, Williamson, Evans, Leak, Garby

Nays: None

(Copy of Ordinance No. O-2019-15 on file in City Clerk's office)

## **PUBLIC HEARING**

### **CONSIDER REQUESTS TO REZONE PROPERTIES ON GULF STREET**

Mayor Block explained that this public hearing was continued from the April 16, 2019 meeting to consider a request to rezone from Residential-6 to General Business Parcel Number 010050-04057 located on Gulf Street and to rezone from Industrial to General Business Parcel Number 01005-004055, also on Gulf Street. He then reopened the public hearing.

Mayor Block stated that Council wanted to know if a conditional use permit could be granted instead of rezoning the two (2) parcels of land.

Mr. Mac McInnis, City Planner/Zoning Officer, explained that a conditional use permit could be issued with some of the possible uses in the Residential-6 area being: library, church or religious facility, fire station, athletic field, golf course, park, outdoor recreational facilities, multi-family dwelling, multi-unit assisted housing with services, and residential child care facility.

Upon questions by Mayor Block, Mr. McInnis explained that no general business would be allowed by conditional use permit. He added that he had heard nothing from the residents in the area. He further added that he believed that General Business zoning was appropriate for the property based upon other zoning in the area, the shape of the lots, and that a railroad track abuts the property.

Mrs. Susan Covington stated that she represented the owner of the properties, was a licensed realtor in Scotland County and former director of Habitat for Humanity. She discussed a committee that was formed several years ago to improve the Newtown Area and Glen Acres. The efforts were unsuccessful because the citizens in the neighborhoods would not participate and help the committee. She added that sometimes bringing a business into a neighborhood helps the neighborhood.

There being no one else to speak in favor of or in opposition to this request, Mayor Block closed the public hearing.

Mayor Block discussed his wish to have a comprehensive plan to rehabilitate Newtown and to not have a business that would hamper such.

Upon question by Mayor Block, Mr. McInnis explained that the rezoning request could not be resubmitted for a year.

Councilmember Evans explained that she felt the area was residential and she would not want a business to come disrupt her home.

Councilmember Williamson stated that if the property was developed as a business, money

would need to be invested to improve the street, and that perhaps the development would jumpstart revitalization of Newtown. He added that if the property were developed, surrounding property values would increase.

Councilmember Adams explained that currently the properties are not very attractive, and that if developed by a business, it would affect change for that area. She added that she believed that rezoning to General Business would be good for the area.

Councilmember Leak explained that approximately 60% of Newtown is abandoned, and the City owns approximately 50% of the vacant lots.

Further discussion ensued concerning the revitalization of the Newtown area.

Councilmember Leak moved to approve Ordinance No. O-2019-09 rezoning from Residential-6 to General Business Parcel Number 010050-04057 located on Gulf Street and Ordinance No. O-2019-10 rezoning from Industrial to General Business Parcel Number 010050-04055 located on Gulf Street based upon the following:

The rezoning of adjoining Scotland County Land Parcels number 01005004057 (1.584 acres) from Residential-6 to General Business and Parcel Number 01005004055 (0.075 acres) from Industrial to General Business is consistent with an adopted comprehensive plan and any other officially adopted plan that is applicable because:

1. The General Business District accommodates retail and commercial service businesses which generally have as their market area the entire city and surrounding area.
2. The Comprehensive Plan 2035 FUTURE Land Use Map indicates the development of some mixed uses, some office and institutional uses, and general residential uses.
3. The area already consists of residential uses, some industrial uses, and general business uses. The properties in question are located within 200 ft. of an area consisting of mostly General Business Zoning.

**AND IS REASONABLE BECAUSE:**

1. The rezoning to General Business will allow uses consistent with other existing uses in the general area;
2. The rezoning to General Business will help maintain the present character of the City of Laurinburg while promoting diversity and future growth;
3. The rezoning to General Business will have no detrimental impact to the property values of the surrounding landowners; and
4. The rezoning to General Business will require no infrastructure improvements by the City of Laurinburg.

Ayes: Leak, Adams, Garby, Williamson

Nays: Evans

(Ordinance No. O-2019-09 and Ordinance No. O-2019-10 on file in City Clerk's office)

## **CONSIDER ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INCENTIVES**

Mayor Block opened the public hearing and invited Mr. Mark Ward, Scotland County Economic Development Director, to discuss the project.

Mr. Ward explained that Scotland County announced two (2) weeks ago that Carmichael Farms, LLC would potentially move into the incubator building; however before confirming that decision, Carmichael Farms, LLC needed to make sure that the City would provide some economic development incentives. This would provide 50 jobs and would be a \$26.5 million investment over a three (3) year period.

Upon questions by Mayor Block, Mr. Ward explained that the company would be the largest CBD manufacturer in the state. He added that the jobs would entail processing the hemp and manufacturing the CBD oil.

The City Attorney explained that the incentives would be provided to Carmichael Farms, LLC once it reaches the goal of 50 jobs and the \$26.5 million investment. The incentive provided would be a rebate based upon the electricity used. The first year, Carmichael Farms would get a rebate of 20% of the electrical usage, in the second year 15% of the electrical usage, in the third year 10% of the electrical usage, and in the fourth and fifth years a five percent (5%) rebate of the electrical usage. The City Attorney explained that it would take Carmichael Farms two (2) years to reach the investment amount and the job goal.

Upon question by Mayor Block, Mr. Ward explained that the potential electrical usage would be almost as much as the FCC plant, about \$25,000.00 to \$35,000.00 per month.

Mr. Ward explained that this was the first incentive package from the City since FCC in 2013. He added that the company is local and their family has been farming in Scotland County for 200 years. He further added that there was a claw back clause in the incentives agreement such that if Carmichael Farms fails to meet its goals, any rebate would have to be paid back to the City.

There being no one else to speak in favor of or opposed to the economic development incentives, Mayor Block closed the public hearing.

Councilmember Williamson explained that he had done some legal work on this matter and requested to be excused from voting due to conflict of interest.

Motion was made by Councilmember Leak, seconded by Councilmember Adams, and unanimously carried to excuse Councilmember Williamson from voting.

Councilmember Leak moved to authorize the Mayor and City Clerk to execute Incentives Agreement between the City of Laurinburg and Carmichael Farms, LLC. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Adams, and the vote was as follows:

Ayes: Leak, Adams, Evans, Garby

Nays: None

(Councilmember Williamson was excused from voting.)

**CITY MANAGER REPORTS**

**CHRIS ENGLISH-CHAMBER FISCAL YEAR 2019-2020 BUDGET REQUEST**

Mr. Chris English, Executive Director of the Laurinburg/Scotland County Area Chamber of Commerce, thanked Council for its support and partnership. He reviewed activities of the Chamber for the past fiscal year which included:

- Growth and continuous improvement
- Promoting community pride
- Anti-litter and recycling efforts of the Green Team
- Government Affairs Committee activities
- Chamber on the Half Shell Oyster Roast fund raiser
- Laurinburg After 5 being held downtown with greater attendance and different bands
- The annual Christmas Parade which was shown live on Facebook

Mr. English explained that the Chamber was requesting \$14,000.00 in funding from the City, the same as the previous year.

Upon question by Mayor Block, Mr. English explained that Scotland County provides funding approximately \$2,000.00 each year less than the City.

A discussion ensued about Laurinburg After 5 and the possibility of utilizing the Urban Parking Area that is being designed on the corner of Gill Street and Railroad Street. Mr. English expressed concern about the existing house adjacent to the area and the amount of shade that the current location of the stage on Main Street.

**TERRY GALLMAN-SCOTLAND ARTS COUNCIL FISCAL YEAR 2019-2020 BUDGET REQUEST**

Mrs. Terry Gallman, Treasurer of the Scotland Arts Council (Arts Council), providing an update on activities of the Scotland Arts Council such as a music series, housing Encore Theater, art camps for children in the summer, art classes for adults, assisting with Christmas on Main and Springfest. She added that prior to 2018 the City shared with the Arts Council; however, these expenses were solely paid for by the Arts Council in 2018. She further added that the funding request for Christmas on Main was increased this year to include not only the organization of the event, but also the family entertainment. The budget request was as follows:

2019/20 Proposed City Investment to  
Arts Council

Arts Council Membership - General Support	\$1,500.00
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Assistance in Organization of Christmas on Main	\$3,500.00
Spring Art Fest - organization/planning	\$2,500.00
Facility Support	\$1,000.00
Investment Total	\$8,500.00

Upon question by Mayor Block, Mrs. Gallman explained that the Arts Council did not have a director at this time, nor an administrative person. She added that the directors have stepped up and completed tasks. She further added that once the complete board approves, the Arts Council will hire a manager who will work into the director position with experience.

**JOANN GENTRY-LAURINBURG-MAXTON AIRPORT COMMISSION FISCAL YEAR 2019-2020 BUDGET**

Mrs. JoAnn Gentry, Executive Director of the Laurinburg-Maxton Airport Commission (LMAC) presented the budget for FY 2019-2020 which has been approved by LMAC. The total budget is \$1,524,600.00 which is an increase of \$68,500.00 from the current year’s budget. The airport is self-sufficient with money from state and federal government in form of grants that are used to upgrades and repairs to infrastructure. This past year completed projects included:

- Taxiways G and F on the south end of the airport that is mostly used by the military
- Main runway 23 threshold relocation and glide slope equipment

Mrs. Gentry explained that there are two (2) active projects which will be completed by July 26, 2019, and there are also two (2) projects that will hopefully be approved in July by the Division of Aviation

Motion was made by Councilmember Adams, seconded by Councilmember Garby, and unanimously carried to approve the Laurinburg-Maxton Airport Commission Fiscal Year 2019-2020 Budget.

**REQUEST FROM SCOTLAND HISTORICAL PROPERTIES COMMISSION**

The City Manager explained that Mr. Leon Butler and Mr. Danny Coulter of the Scotland Historical Properties Commission had been working on the police motorcycle that Council loaned to the organization for display; however they wanted to restore it further than has been done and were requesting \$2,775.00 from the City. The motorcycle remains City property but is housed in the museum. He further added that there were funds available in the Police Department’s budget this year.

Following a brief discussion, motion was made by Councilmember Leak, seconded by Councilmember Evans, and unanimously carried to provide funding to the Scotland Historical Properties Commission in the amount of \$2,775.00 to restore the police motorcycle.

## **CONSIDER REQUEST FOR REFUND OF SEWER PAYMENTS**

The City Manager explained that Ms. Sally McCoy presented a request to Council at the April 16, 2019 meeting for a refund of sewer charges for 25 years because she paid sewer fees but was not hooked up to City sewer. He added that the City policy allows reimbursement for three (3) years.

Ms. Sally McCoy explained that she had met with Ms. Tammie Simmons, Consumer Billing Manager. Ms. McCoy added that Ms. Simmons said that the reimbursement for 25 years was \$4,387.65. She added that she was not aware that she was not on City sewer, so she dutifully paid the monthly bill.

A discussion ensued concerning Ms. McCoy's history in the house. She explained that she moved into the house in August 1995, and was purchased from an estate which her niece was administering.

Upon question by Mayor Block, the City Manager explained that there have been citizens who had requested reimbursement for sewer payments when the property was not hooked up. He added that generally the City does not know until the citizen has an issue with sewer and calls a plumber which leads to discovery that the property was not connected to City sewer. He further added that this property was annexed into the City decades ago, and the property owner at the time chose not to tap on to the City sewer.

Councilmember Williamson explained that he was sympathetic to Ms. McCoy's situation; however, he was concerned about setting a precedent.

Mayor Block explained that since these type requests are not common and that he did not feel that refunding the entire amount would financially hurt the City, he was in favor of changing the City's policy on reimbursing for overcharges.

The City Attorney explained that he did not believe the City's policy on refunding utility overcharges, but each case considered individually.

Following further discussion, motion was made by Councilmember Evans to approve request for refund of sewer payments by Ms. Sallie McCoy in the amount of \$4,387.65. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Garby, and Mayor Block requested a roll call vote with results as follows:

Ayes: Evans, Garby, Leak, Adams, Williamson

Nays: None

## **UPDATE ON CODE ENFORCEMENT**

The City Manager explained that at the April 16, 2019 meeting, Council requested that staff inform Council of what the City Code states about nuisances and/or junk vehicles in yards.

Mr. Michael Mandeville, Community Development Director, explained that once a complaint is received concerning excess debris and nuisance, staff inspects the complaint within a day or two (2), and if the complaint is valid, staff sends a letter to the property owner seeking abatement. The property owner is given 10 days which is usually sufficient to have the nuisance abated. However, if the property owner is not cooperating and there has been no progress on abating the problem after 10 days, staff has the ability to access a civil penalty of \$200.00 per day until the nuisance is abated.

Mr. Mandeville explained that the junk vehicle ordinance states that in order to be considered a junk vehicle, it must be partially dismantled or wrecked, cannot be self-propelled or moved in the manner in which it was originally intended to move, or is more than five (5) years old and appears to be worth less than \$500.00, and does not display a current license plate. If a valid complaint is received, a letter is sent to the owner providing 10 days for abatement. Typically the owner will demonstrate that the vehicle runs or will make arrangements to have the vehicle removed from the property. If the owner does not demonstrate or have the vehicle towed, the City can have the vehicle towed. Mr. Mandeville explained that Mr. McInnis, Code Enforcement Officer, wanted Council to understand that Laurinburg is a rural community and some citizens have a vehicle or vehicles on their property that they want to repair when they have the money to do so. There is nothing in the City Code dictating how many vehicles a citizen can have on their property or where the vehicles must be parked.

Mayor Block asked Mr. Mandeville how staff felt about the ordinances.

Mr. Mandeville explained that staff enforces the City Code as written. He added that it was Council's decision as to whether the ordinances are sufficient.

The City Manager explained that if Council wanted to limit the number of vehicles someone can have on their property and dictate that the vehicles must be on a paved or gravel surface, then many people will be affected.

Mayor Block asked if staff believed that the ordinances as written are serving the City's best interests.

Mr. Mandeville explained that each municipality is unique and demographics and income must be considered. He added that the current ordinances work for the City. He further added that if Council thinks that the ordinances are not appropriate, staff would enforce whatever ordinance Council decides upon.

The City Manager explained that it was Council's responsibility to set policy, and if Council wanted to make the ordinances stricter, then Council needed to direct staff.

Councilmember Evans stated that she had driven by 803 Beech Street several times and that there are eight (8) to 10 cars in the yard.

The City Manager explained that if Council does not want eight (8) to 10 cars in a yard, then Council needs to change the ordinance.

Councilmember Evans stated that she did not mind the cars being in the yard if they were being driven.

Upon question by Mayor Block, the City Manager explained that a vehicle has to meet all of the criteria stated previously by Mr. Mandeville to be considered a junk vehicle.

Mayor Block stated that he believed that the criteria for it to be more than five (5) years old should be removed from the ordinance. He added that Council should also determine a number of vehicles that can be located on a piece of property.

Councilmember Garby stated that he could not support limiting the number of vehicles on property because he owns multiple vehicles that are located at three (3) different houses.

Councilmember Williamson explained that this topic brings up privacy rights for property owners. He suggested that staff research some possibilities for Council to consider. He added that Council may not change the ordinances at all.

Councilmember Adams explained that she was satisfied with the current ordinances.

The City Attorney explained that there could be other routes to declare a vehicle junk or nuisance if there are so many vehicles in the yard, it could be a health or safety concern.

Mr. Mandeville suggested that staff could research what municipalities similar in size, demographics and income levels to Laurinburg handle junk vehicles.

Further discussion ensued concerning the junk vehicle ordinance. It was consensus of Council for staff to research junk vehicle ordinances for other municipalities similar to Laurinburg.

Discussion ensued concerning pro-active or complaint-driven code enforcement. Councilmember Adams stated that with the current staffing, complaint-driven was appropriate.

Councilmember Garby stated that larger cities have staff that ride around all day looking for code violations.

Mayor Block suggested that the police officers could make notes of violations as they are riding around town.

Mayor Block expressed concern that the City should be more proactive to present the City in its best light. He added that he believed that there was sufficient staff to be pro-active.

Councilmember Williamson expressed concern that more pro-active code enforcement would put staff in a bad light with citizens rather than if staff is responding to a complaint.

Councilmember Garby suggested that sanitation staff could also make note of code violations and report them to the Code Enforcement Officer.

## **BEAUTIFICATION UPDATE – HANGING BASKETS**

The City Manager explained that Mr. Walker McCoy, Beautification Supervisor, would provide an update on the hanging basket proposal discussed at the April 16, 2019 meeting.

Mr. McCoy explained provided the following information on the hanging baskets based on the idea from Mrs. Terry Parker and Tis the Season:

- He looked at this when he first came to the City, but realized that he did not have the staff to accomplish the project. Watering the baskets is very labor and time-intensive.
- The proposed baskets are 24-inch to hang on brackets on the electric poles downtown. The bracket for the hanging baskets would mount under the bracket for the banners on the poles. Cost for the baskets are \$166.85 each and for an additional \$50.00 each, a water reservoir can be added which would double the watering time. Also for an additional \$54.00 for a fiberglass insert in the basket which will help prevent the plants from drying out quickly. Total for a basket \$433.40 per pole or \$543.10 per pole with the lines.
- Brackets that need to be used based on the specifications of the manufacturer of the electric poles are \$282.00 per bracket.
- Total cost for 26 baskets would be \$12,026.30 which includes \$50.00 per basket for plant material and soil.
- The ongoing annual cost would be \$1,300 per year based on 26 baskets.

Upon questions by Mayor Block, Mr. McCoy explained that he would rather the City water the baskets and additional part-time staff would be needed or the job could be contracted out. Based on his research, many municipalities contract out the watering or they have a full-time staff member that the only task is watering. If a part-time person makes \$10.00 per hour based on three (3) hours per day watering that would be \$30.00 per day. A contractor would cost between \$275.00 to \$325.00 per week depending upon how many days watering occurs, which he recommended six (6) days of watering. The City has a water buffalo that would be used to water the baskets.

Discussion ensued concerning the number of poles with hanging baskets to reduce the cost the first year to determine if the project worked. Mr. McCoy explained that he looked at doing just 10 poles; however, he did not like the look.

The City Manager explained that if Council wanted staff to move forward, the baskets and brackets would be purchased in this fiscal year, and ongoing costs would be added into the next fiscal year's budget. The brackets would be purchased from the Electric Fund and the hanging baskets and other items from downtown funds. Funding for either a part-time position or a contracted services would be added for watering the baskets would be included in the Fiscal Year 2019-2020 Budget.

Councilmember Leak expressed concern about the hanging baskets based upon the necessary watering, other costs involved, and that there were already banners on the poles.

Councilmember Williamson explained that he believed citizens wanted more beautification in the City, and specifically downtown.

Discussion ensued concerning the possibility of businesses or individuals sponsoring a basket to help reduce the costs.

Upon question by Councilmember Williamson, Mr. McCoy explained that the hanging baskets would not be hung and planted until April 2020.

Following a brief discussion, Councilmember Garby moved to purchase the brackets utilizing funds from the Electric Fund, and to purchase the hanging baskets and other supplies from downtown funds. Councilmember Williamson seconded the motion, and the vote was as follows:

Ayes: Garby, Williamson, Evans, Adams.

Nays: Leak

### **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT UPDATE AND AUTHORIZE MAYOR TO SEND LETTER TO SENATOR MCINNIS AND REPRESENTATIVE PIERCE**

The City Manager explained that the Governor included proposed downtown funding in his Fiscal Year 2019-2020 budget, but the House approved a budget that removed all of the downtown funding. The Governor's budget included \$180,000.00 for the City of Laurinburg for improvements to the Creech Hardware building, Market Furniture lot, and the Harris Building. The Main Street Communities are having a state-wide initiative to ask their state representatives to keep the downtown funding in the budget.

Mr. Mark Ward reviewed the options for layout of the Harris Building, and that once the layout had been approved, he would obtain quotes and estimates for renovations. He explained that the Scotland County Economic Development Corporation (EDC) was closing on the Creech Furniture Building on Thursday, May 23, 2019, and the roof would be repaired. He further added that he planned to talk to the owner of Market Furniture property to discuss possibly purchasing the property and making another green space.

It was consensus of Council to use Option 3, a copy of which is attached to and incorporated into these minutes as "Attachment 1".

Motion was made by Councilmember Adams, seconded by Councilmember Evans, and unanimously carried to authorize the Mayor to send letters to Senator McInnis and Representative Pierce requesting that the Locally Identified Projects be included in the Senate and House Fiscal Year 2019-2020 budget proposals.

### **SET CANDIDATE FILING FEES FOR 2019 MUNICIPAL ELECTION**

The City Manager explained that candidate filing fees for the 2019 municipal election needed to be set. He added that the current filing fees are \$25.00.

Motion was made by Councilmember Williamson, seconded by Councilmember Evans, and unanimously carried to set the candidate filing fees for 2019 municipal election at \$25.00.

**DISCUSSION CONCERNING WAIVING SEWER FEE WHEN SWIMMING POOL IS FILLED AND DISCUSSION CONCERNING UTILITY CUTOFFS AND RECONNECT FEES**

The City Manager explained that Councilmember Garby requested discussion of waiving the sewer charge when a customer fills a swimming pool. He explained that the City's sewer charge is based up on the water usage.

Councilmember Garby explained that some municipalities will waive sewer charges when a large amount of water that is not going into the sewer system, such as for fill up of swimming pools for a certain amount of gallons. He added that he used 40,000 gallons of water to fill his pool, and that he was being charged for a service that he was not receiving (sewer). He further added that in Cumberland County, a wholesale water rate was offered as well as no sewer charge.

Councilmember Adams explained that citizens had appeared before Council to make requests regarding swimming pools and fees, and that she would like to hear from the City's engineer on potential impact.

The City Manager explained that the City has an irrigation water rate schedule that does not include sewer charges.

Mr. Stacey McQuage, Public Utilities Director, explained that the City does not charge sewer on an irrigation meter. He added that in the Fiscal Year 2019-2020 Fee Schedule, a new fee for a \$1,000.00 deposit of hydrant use was going to be suggested. He further added that if Council approved the Fee Schedule in June, this would allow a citizen to connect, once, with permission and supervision of the City, to a fire hydrant to obtain a large quantity of water. He further added that the citizen would be charged for the metered water from the hydrant.

Upon question by Councilmember Garby, the City Manager explained that the deposit was structured high enough so that if the citizen did not operate the connection correctly, any repair costs to the City would be covered.

Councilmember Garby stated that was not in line with what he was discussing. He added that citizens were being charged for sewer service that was not being used.

Councilmember Leak suggested that citizens could hire a contractor to come fill swimming pools.

Councilmember Garby commented that a contractor was even more expensive than the City's sewer charge.

Upon question by Mayor Block, Mr. McQuage stated that the City does not charge sewer for irrigation.

Councilmember Garby explained that the Fee Schedule for irrigation water shows a higher fee than for residential water.

The City Manager explained that the City requires a back-flow valve for irrigation.

Discussion ensued concerning having the City's engineer review the fee schedule.

*There was no decision on this matter at this time.*

Councilmember Garby stated that he also wanted to discuss the City's policy concerning water leaks. He explained that every two (2) years, a customer is allowed an adjustment when there is a water leak. He asked about some type of adjustment concerning the reconnection fee.

A lengthy discussion ensued concerning the changes in the extension and cut-off policies for utility accounts.

Mrs. Carrie Neal, Finance Director, discussed the difficulty of tracking any type of adjustment/forgiveness of reconnection fee.

A discussion ensued concerning a citizen that had contacted the City Manager and several members of Council concerning waiving the reconnection fee. Councilmember Garby suggested that perhaps the reconnection fee and a better way of tracking it should be studied more and brought back.

*There was no decision made on waiving the reconnection fee nor was there consensus on bringing the matter back for consideration.*

Councilmember Garby moved to waive the sewer fees once per year when a customer fills a swimming pool. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Evans, and the vote was as follows:

Ayes: Garby, Evans, Williamson

Nays: Adams, Leak

**PRESENTATION OF DRAFT BUDGET, SET DATE AND TIME FOR BUDGET WORKSHOP (IF NEEDED) AND SET PUBLIC HEARING TO BE HELD JUNE 18, 2019 TO CONSIDER THE FY 2019-2020 BUDGET**

The City Manager explained that staff took the direction from Council at the May 2, 2019 budget workshop and made changes in the draft budget. He added that Council needed to set the public hearing on the Fiscal Year 2019-2020 budget and also to decide if another budget workshop was needed.

*Councilmember Adams requested a brief recess, and Mayor Block called for a brief recess at 9:40 p.m.*

*The meeting resumed at 9:46 p.m.*

The City Manager presented a PowerPoint on the draft FY 2019-2020 Budget, with highlights as follows:

**All Funds**

- Per the North Carolina General Statutes, Council will receive a detailed budget message and the budget on June 1, 2019.
- The budget currently is a zero balance budget and can be approved as it currently exists.
- The current health insurance premium increase is six and four-tenths percent (6.4%), down from the previous 2.4%. Staff continues to try to decrease this amount.
- Current draft budget includes the \$10.00 Municipal Vehicle Fee which nets approximately \$100,000.00 of revenue in the General Fund.
- Includes two and one-half percent (2.5%) Cost of Living Adjustment for employees
- The draft budget does not include the Convenience Fee for credit card usage, so the city will continue to absorb approximately \$40,000.00 in charges per year
- Budget includes transfer of \$483,622.00 from the Electric Fund for the Downtown Parking and Urban Project.

**General Fund**

- \$9,134,664 Budget Total (\$8,162,580 last year)
- Property Tax Rate (flat – \$0.40)
- \$545,291.00 Fund Balance Appropriated (\$217,009.00 previous year)
- \$700,307.00 Assigned Fund Balance (LCHPD Financial Plan plus final legal settlement)
- Revenues based on three (3) to five (5) year historical information
- Adjusted Tax Revaluation resulted in \$130,000.00 decrease in property tax revenue
- Includes \$150,000 Fund Balance Appropriated for the final McInnis settlement (professional services)
- Removed planned City Fire Pumper Truck (\$500,000)
- E911 decrease (\$50,000) per the agreement with Scotland County
- Additional School Resource Officer because of the new school under construction.
- Capital Projects in the General Fund include:
  - Sanford Building Roof \$20,000
  - Beautification Projects \$40,000
  - Parking/Urban Design Project \$483,622
  - 5 Police Vehicles \$195,000
  - Tsunami Cameras (+4) \$75,000
  - Loose Fire Equipment \$75,000
  - Fire Foam Unit & Hose Bed Cover \$19,300
  - Street Resurfacing \$200,000

- Commonwealth Bridge \$50,000
- Stormwater Projects \$150,000
- LEAD Program Intern \$20,000

**Electric Fund**

- \$17,650,789 Budget Total (\$16,723,582 last year)
- Electric Rate Schedule (flat)
- \$1,908,936 Fund Balance Appropriated (\$1,040,675)
- Capital Projects include:
  - LED Area & Flood Lighting Conversion \$100,000
  - LED Downtown Fixture Replacement \$75,000
  - Bucket Truck Replacement \$185,000
  - 2nd Substation Construction \$975,000
  - Circuit Re-Routing \$1,000,000
  - Smart Meters \$600,000

**Water/Sewer Fund**

- \$8,393,030 Budget Total (\$8,537,397 last year)
- Water/Sewer Rate Schedule (flat)
- \$1,598,764 Fund Balance Appropriated (\$1,561,763 last year)

Upon questions by Mayor Block, the City Manager explained that the Fiscal Year 2019-2020 General Fund total was \$1.9 million, with \$545,000.00 of Fund Balance Appropriated in order to balance the budget. He further added that he estimated the General Fund-Fund Balance to be approximately \$3.5 million.

Mrs. Carrie Neal, Finance Director, explained that the total General Fund-Fund Balance at the end of Fiscal Year 2018-2019 was projected to be approximately \$3.6 million, with \$1.3 million being the unassigned General Fund-Fund Balance.

Upon question by Mayor Block, Mrs. Neal stated that the unassigned percentage of the General Fund was projected to be 16% at the end of the current fiscal year.

Upon question by Mayor Block, the City Manager explained that the total General Fund-Fund Balance projected at the end of the current fiscal year would be a little under 50%.  
Carrie-Unassigned is 16%

Upon question by Councilmember Williamson, the City Manager explained that more than likely the \$217,000.00 of Fund Balance Appropriated in Fiscal Year 2018-2019 would be used. He added that ordinarily local governments expect to spend about 90-95% of the total budget.

The City Manager continued with the PowerPoint presentation as follows:

- Paint Water Plant \$34,000

- New Well \$300,000 (in Capital Project)
- Raw Water Well Improvements \$300,000 (in Capital Project)
- Raw Water System Expansion \$800,000 (in Capital Project)
- Redrill 3 Wells \$675,000 (in Capital Project)
- Dump Truck \$110,000
- AC Waterline 20” Replacement \$1,200,000 (in Capital Project)
- Jet Rodder Truck \$440,000
- Pump Station Renovations \$1,385,000 (in Capital Project)
- Influent Pump Station Improvements \$600,000 (in Capital Project)
- WWTP Aeration Basin Repair (rain) \$500,000

**Solid Waste Fund**

- \$2,487,394 Budget Total (\$2,750,302 last year)
- Solid Waste Fee Schedule (flat)
- \$118,984 Fund Balance Appropriated (\$341,892)
- Capital includes:
  - Knuckle Boom Truck \$175,000
  - Yard Waste/Recycling Scale \$75,000
  - Dumpster/Carts \$40,000

Upon question by Councilmember Adams, Mr. Stacey McQuage, Public Utilities Director, explained that the Recycling Center stays clean and he has seen no issues with people tossing items over the fence after hours.

The City Manager explained that he and the Budget Committee feel comfortable with the draft budget as it currently exists. He added that the General Fund-Fund Balance is in good shape, and that although the enterprise funds have major capital projects budgeted, the draft budget did not include many more additional capital items.

Councilmember Adams stated that she did not realize that Council had made a decision on the Municipal Vehicle Fee. She expressed concern about citizens being taxed more.

The City Manager explained that he assumed consensus of Council at the May 2, 2019 budget workshop about the Municipal Vehicle Fee. He added that if Council chooses not to have the Municipal Vehicle Fee, then the General Fund-Fund Balance Appropriated would increase by \$100,000.00, from \$545,000.00 to \$645,000.00 in order to balance the budget.

Discussion ensued concerning the need for another budget workshop prior to the public hearing on June 18, 2019.

Upon question by Mayor Block, the City Manager explained that staff was still negotiating with the insurance carrier. He added that staff felt that the premium increase was getting to be a manageable amount.

Following further discussion, it was consensus of Council to hold a budget workshop on June 5, 2019 at 6:30 p.m. with the City Manager determining what staff needed to be present.

Motion was made by Councilmember Garby, seconded by Councilmember Adams, and unanimously carried to set a public hearing to consider the FY 2019-2020 Budget to be held at 7:00 p.m. on Tuesday, June 18, 2019 in the council chambers of the City Hall and Police Department.

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

The City Manager, this was added after the site visit by Councilmember Evans and Mayor Block to see if there was any follow-up. He added that staff had submitted requests for funding through some Community Development Block Grant routes and to other funding agencies. He further added that there was consensus from the Fire Department staff that they would not like the option of temporary housing on the location. He further explained that it was not expressed at the last council meeting that the fire department was basically using the North Fire Station as a substation. He added that volunteers and part-timers can use the vehicles located at the North Station just like a substation. He reiterated that staff preferred to stay in the South Fire Station rather than deal with temporary housing in the parking lot or wherever it would be located on the North Fire Station grounds.

Discussion ensued concerning the Councilmembers who had or had not toured the North Fire Station, with the result being that the Mayor, Councilmembers Adams, Evans and Leak had toured the North Fire Station, and Councilmembers Garby and Williamson had not.

Mayor Block explained that the North Fire Station had not been manned since Hurricane Florence, which has resulted in the two (2) on-duty firefighters both sleeping at the South Fire Station, instead of one (1) sleeping at each of the stations. He added that not much had been changed in terms of response times to fire calls. He further added that he believed it was time for Council to rethink where a fire station is needed. He discussed the lack of schools and that fewer people lived in the north side of town versus the south side of town. He added that it did not seem fair to him to have a fire station in the center of town (sic South Fire Station) and then a big gleaming fire station on the north side of town, and a puny substation on the south side of town. He further added that the City should be providing equal services to the entire town, and that it made perfect symmetry and fairness to leave the two (2) firefighters staying in the center of town (sic South Fire Station) and make the North Fire Station like a substation similar to the South Substation where the vehicles are parked. He further explained that the part of the North Fire Station that was undamaged could be used for vehicle storage and the remainder of the North Fire Station could be demolished or renovated for other use or for storage. He added that it did not make sense to him to build a new several million dollar fire station on the north side of town when there is more of Laurinburg south of the central station (sic South Fire Station).

Councilmember Leak explained that the South Substation was constructed by Scotland County with the City's assistance in order to lower insurance rates for the homeowners in the Scotch Meadows Area. He added that if the residents of District 1 should have the same services as the south side of town and that if the homeowners' insurance rates in the north side of town

increased, this would not be fair. He further added that the future of Laurinburg is on the north side because of the industry that has been locating on the north side and because there is plenty of vacant land available.

A heated discussion ensued among the Mayor and several members of Council.

Upon question by Councilmember Evans, Mayor Block stated that it was not a factual statement that the homeowners' insurance premiums would increase without a fire station on the north side of the City.

Councilmember Adams explained that the North Fire Station was larger than the South Fire Station and did not have a conference room for training or meetings. She added that if Council decided not to build a new fire station in the north end of town, then the North Fire Station would need to be renovated in order to have the facilities needed for the firefighters.

Further discussion ensued concerning the need for a fire station on the north side of town and the growth of the City.

Upon question by Mayor Block, the City Manager explained that no action was needed, and that staff would wait for responses concerning funding opportunities.

### **STORM WATER ENGINEER**

The City Manager explained that interviews had been conducted with the top three (3) storm water engineers that responded to the Request for Qualifications (RFQ) and that the firms had presented at the May 2, 2019 special meeting. He added that based on the interviews, the consensus was that Cape Fear Engineering, Inc. was the top choice.

Following a brief discussion, motion was made by Councilmember Williamson, seconded by Councilmember Garby, and unanimously carried to authorize the City Manager to begin negotiating a contract with Cape Fear Engineering for storm water services.

### **DISCUSSION CONCERNING BRICK PANELS UNDER WINDOWS**

The City Manager explained that options for the brick panels under some of the windows at the City Hall and Police Department had been presented, and that with the completion of the building in two (2) to three (3) months, the contractor wanted to see what Council wanted. He added that there had been no discussion about cost with the contractor.

Following a brief discussion, it was consensus of Council to wait until all construction had been completed and the exterior of the new building had been cleaned in order to make a determination on the brick panels.

### **APPOINTMENT FOR BEAUTIFICATION COMMITTEE**

Mayor Block explained that two (2) individuals submitted applications for the one (1) position on the Beautification Committee.

Councilmember Adams suggested that both individuals be appointed since they both were such good candidates.

The City Manager explained that according to the current guidelines of the Committee, there was only one (1) position available.

Councilmember Evans suggested changing the guidelines.

Following discussion, motion was made by Councilmember Evans, seconded by Councilmember Williamson, and unanimously carried to change the Committee Guidelines to change the Laurinburg Downtown Revitalization Corporation (LDRC) appointment to a downtown business owner appointment, and to appoint Mrs. Sonya Jones as the downtown business owner, and to appoint Mrs. Janice Creed as the at-large appointment to the Beautification Committee.

## **MAYOR'S REPORTS**

### **UPDATE ON REENTRY COUNCIL**

Councilmember Evans provided an update on the Scotland County Reentry Council. She thanked Council for appointing her to the Reentry Council as she has learned a great deal. She added that Mr. Christopher Mitchell, Chairman of the Reentry Council, has requested \$5,000.00 from the City of Laurinburg for the Scotland County Reentry Council. She further added that the funds would not be used for a position. She further added that the Scotland County Department of Social Services had applied for a grant to benefit those recently released from incarceration. She encouraged Council to support the request for funding.

Upon question by Mayor Block, Councilmember Evans explained that the \$5,000.00 would provide funds for incidentals such as medications, transportation, job certification fee, etc. for the program participants.

Mayor Block suggested that this request for funding be discussed at the next budget workshop.

### **CLOSED SESSION**

At 10:28 p.m. motion was made by Councilmember Adams to go into closed session pursuant to N.C. General Statute 143-318.11(a)(3), attorney/client privilege and pursuant to N.C. General Statute 143-318.11(a)(2) to discuss an award or scholarship. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Evans, and carried unanimously.

At 10:44 p.m., motion was made by Councilmember Adams, seconded by Councilmember Williamson, and unanimously carried to adjourn the closed session and resume the regular meeting.

**COMMENTS FROM MAYOR AND/OR COUNCILMEMBERS**

Councilmember Adams explained that on May 31, 2019 from 10:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m., the North Carolina League of Municipalities would be offering an on-line webinar on “Use of Social Media for Local Elected Officials”. She added that this webinar was free and individuals must register for the webinar.

**ADJOURN**

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

The meeting adjourned at 10:46 p.m.

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Matthew Block, MD, Mayor

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Jennifer A. Tippett, City Clerk