

**CITY OF LAURINBURG
CITY COUNCIL MEETING
JANUARY 21, 2020
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, January 21, 2020 in the Council Chambers of the City Hall and Police Department at 7:00 p.m. with the Honorable James T. Willis, Mayor, presiding. The following Councilmembers were present: Mary Jo Adams, Mary Evans, James J. Garby, Jr., Donald Rainer, 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 Willis called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

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

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

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

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

There was no one present to speak.

CONSENT AGENDA

Mayor Willis reviewed the Consent Agenda:

- a) Consider minutes of August 20, 2019 regular meeting and September 17, 2019 regular meeting
- b) Consider Ordinance No. O-2020-01 amending the FY 19-20 Budget Appropriations Ordinance (Ordinance No. 2019-17) to accept ElectriCities Grant in the amount of \$5,000
- c) Approve Semi-Annual Surplus Property Sale Report

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

Ayes: Williamson, Rainer, Evans, Adams, Garby
Nays: None

CITY MANAGER REPORTS

UPDATE ON WATER/SEWER PROJECTS – CHUCK WILLIS, WILLIS ENGINEERS

The City Manager explained that Mr. Chuck Willis of Willis Engineers, Inc. would provide an update for Council on the water and sewer projects for which Capital Project Funds were set up in the previous fiscal year.

Mr. Chuck Willis, Willis Engineers, explained that his firm had been retained by the City to undertake some of the projects identified in the Asset Management Plans. He presented a PowerPoint with highlights as follows:

- Water Transmission Main
 - 20-inch asbestos cement pipe installed in the 1970s
 - Primary transmission line to most City customers
 - End of its useful life
 - Lacks proper isolation valves
 - High risk of failure
 - Phase 1
 - 5,000 feet of new 20-inch ductile iron pipe
 - Add isolation valves in strategic locations
 - Select alignment for future Phase 2 to connect to Caledonia Tank
 - Est. Cost - \$1,400,000
- Raw Water Well Replacements
 - City operates a network of 15 raw water wells
 - Oldest installed in the 1970s
 - Systematic repair and replacement program
 - Replace 3 wells
 - Reutilize site and electrical equipment - cost savings
 - Progressive Design-Build
 - Estimated Cost - \$750,000
- Sewer System Evaluation Study
 - Asset Inventory and Assessment Study (2019) identified high flow areas
 - Bridge Creek
 - College Park
 - Identify sources of I/I using CCTV inspection, smoke testing and other methods
 - Budget - \$100,000
- Mechanical Screening - Pump Station 19
 - High flow with large volume of rags and trash
 - Manually cleaned bar screen prone to clogging
 - Safety concerns
 - Add mechanical screen

- Estimated Cost - \$387,000
- Influent Pump Station and Headworks - Leith Creek WWTP
 - Screening, grit removal and pumping systems at the end of their useful life
 - Numerous mechanical failures, flood damage
 - Investigate grant/loan sources
 - Preliminary Design - \$80,000
- Pump Station Renovations – Pump Stations 8, 12 and 13
 - Pump stations built for the 1995 annexation (3 of 19)
 - Systematic upgrade program to renovate 2-3 per year
 - All new mechanical and electrical equipment
 - Add stand-by power
 - Increase site safety and security
 - Estimated Cost - \$858,000

Upon question by Councilmember Evans, Mr. Willis explained that he and staff have prioritized the projects, and some will take longer to design and construct. When the project planning is finalized, there will be project schedules.

The City Manager explained that all of these projects were set up in Capital Project Funds; however, additional funds would be needed when the hard costs of each project are determined.

Mr. Willis explained that as the projects are designed and bids received, Council would award the various contracts for the projects.

Upon question by Councilmember Williamson, Mr. Willis stated that he and Mr. Chuck Willis were not related.

NORTH CAROLINA LEAGUE OF MUNICIPALITIES POLICE DEPARTMENT STUDY – MATTHEW SELF

Mr. Matthew Selves, Director of Public Safety Risk Management for the North Carolina League of Municipalities (NCLM) explained that the Laurinburg Police Department had completed the NCLM’s “Law Enforcement Risk Management Review”. The review involved a comprehensive review of high-risk policies, operations and practices, and a detailed on-site administrative and operations review including equipment and facilities, officer interviews, and observation of operations. The review is conducted to validate that practices align with policy and with industry best practices. The review is supported by the North Carolina Police Chiefs Association. Mr. Selves thanked Chief Darwin Williams and his staff for prioritizing the review and for their proactive involvement. He then presented the certificate to Chief Williams to display in a prominent place.

Chief Williams thanked Mr. Selves and explained that the certification was accomplished by the department and the leadership of the City.

NORTH CAROLINA EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AND FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY UPDATE

The City Manager explained that staff had just received notification that the representative from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) was prohibited from attending the meeting by FEMA legal. Staff had requested that FEMA provide information to Council as to the reason for time lag of one and a half (1.5) years since Hurricane Florence hit, and the fact that nothing being done with the North Fire Station. He explained that even though the City has been awarded grants from The Golden Leaf Foundation, the process with FEMA needed to be continued.

Ms. Shonda Corbett, Grants Manager from the North Carolina Emergency Management Agency, explained that she is the Grants Manager for seven (7) counties including Scotland County, and was the Grants Manager for Scotland County after Hurricane Matthew. She is the City's advocate through the FEMA process to help ensure that the City gets as much reimbursement as possible, and to help make the City resilient. Every natural disaster has its own set of rules, so what worked with Hurricane Matthew may not work with Hurricane Florence. The policy handbook that must be followed, FEMA Public Assistance and Policy Guide (PAPAG) is specific for Hurricane Florence. She added that hopefully at the next meeting, FEMA Legal will give permission for a FEMA representative, field of Environmental and Historical Preservation, would be able to provide information to allow the City to move forward and decide how the North Fire Station will be rebuilt.

Upon question by Mayor Willis, the City Manager explained that the FEMA response with Hurricane Florence was much slower than Hurricane Matthew. FEMA went to a portal-type platform that was supposed to be more efficient; however, if there is any discrepancy in submission, even if it is a minor dollar amount, the entire submission is kicked back to the City to start the process again. Also, another frustration for staff is that the group of people that the City is to work with from FEMA keeps changing. The City is on its fourth project manager and fourth group at this point.

Ms. Corbett explained that her purpose was to provide the continuity throughout the process, and that she is the subject matter expert to understand the needs of the community as interpreted by the City's Leadership Team. Scotland County will be a part of a Hydrologic and Hydraulic Study from the State of North Carolina. Additional disaster funding was announced from the State of North Carolina for Hurricane Florence. There are a lot of things going on with FEMA and the State of North Carolina with regard to recovery efforts. There are currently 75 counties in North Carolina affected by natural disasters, Hurricane Matthew, Hurricane Florence, Tropical Storm Michael and Hurricane Dorian.

Upon question by Mayor Willis, the City Manager explained that the City is waiting on \$1.4 million reimbursement for one project that included immediate repairs and debris removal, and the separate project for the North Fire Station of \$3.5 million.

Upon question by Mayor Willis, Ms. Corbett explained that she could not provide a date when the City would be reimbursed. To date there have been 12 site inspections at the North Fire

Station. Each team that inspects has a different set of specialties and interests. One of the issues faced by she and City staff has been the lack of the information transferring from the different team to the next. She added that Mr. Nichols and Mr. Haywood have advocated very heavily for the City.

Upon question by Councilmember Williamson, Ms. Corbett explained that because of the demands in the State due to the number of natural disasters, it is difficult to get personnel to complete all of the ongoing projects.

The City Manager explained that because the City was fortunate to be in such good financial condition, as it absorbed \$1.4 million in disaster costs over two (2) budget years while waiting for FEMA reimbursement. He added that he would try to have a FEMA representative at the next Council meeting.

UPDATE ON NORTH FIRE STATION

The City Manager explained that he had been meeting with Fire Chief McQueen and Mark Ward, Scotland County Economic Development (EDC) Director, for potential locations of the North Fire Station that either the City, the County or the EDC owns in order to not have to purchase property. The City has been awarded two (2) grants from The Golden Leaf Foundation totaling \$1.5 million toward relocation of the North Fire Station. The fire station must be located no further south than the current location in order to not impact homeowners' insurance rates. The Fire Department staff felt that a location close to US Highway 401 would be beneficial for travel north or south. One of the properties that had been looked at was a site on Aberdeen Road which is currently owned by the EDC. The property is located between two (2) natural gas pipelines and would be unusable for industrial development; however, a three (3) acre fire station site could be located on the property. Environmental studies would need to be conducted; however, the site location is extremely preliminary and would need to be approved by the EDC Board. At this time, the property is located outside the city limits, so it would need to be voluntarily annexed if obtained by the City. Another site had been researched which was an existing building on US Highway 401; however, the cost was prohibitive.

Upon question by Councilmember Evans, the City Manager explained that he did not believe there would be a dollar amount for obtaining the property from the EDC since the City would need to provide infrastructure upgrades for water, sewer and electric to service the fire station, and that would benefit the remaining property owned by the EDC in the vicinity of the property.

Mayor Willis explained that since the City helped fund the EDC, he did not believe that obtaining the property would be an issue.

The City Manager explained that staff looked at several sites at the Industrial Park including one parcel on McFarland Road. Since McFarland Road was not on a main thoroughfare, it was felt that the new construction and new growth in the City would not be highlighted as much as it would be on the Aberdeen Road site.

Further discussion ensued concerning site location and the need to move forward with a piece of property that does not require expenditure of tax dollars. The City Manager explained that the Fire Chief had been looking for properties to make sure that the property was on high ground. He added that the EDC will need to address the standing water on its property on Aberdeen Road in order to attract industry.

Councilmember Evans suggested the property underneath US Hwy 401 Bypass across from Scotland High School located on Wilkerson Drive and owned by Cross Pointe Church could be a potential site.

The City Manager explained that the property being marketed by Cross Pointe Church is too close to the railroad tracks with trains carrying hazardous material. He added that staff had steered away from any property that the City would have to purchase in order to keep the cost at \$1.55 million for site work and construction. This site is also south of the current fire station.

Upon question by Councilmember Adams, the City Manager explained that staff had not conducted much research on the property on North Main Street located across from Bright Hopewell since it would have to be purchased.

Following further discussion, motion was made by Councilmember Williamson, seconded by Councilmember Evans, and unanimously carried to instruct the City Manager to further explore the site on Aberdeen Road owned by the Scotland County Economic Development Corporation, the site on North Main Street across from Bright Hopewell Church, and the site currently owned by Cross Pointe Church.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

Mr. Michael Mandeville, Community Development Director, provided an update as follows:

- The hanging baskets for downtown will arrive this week, and will be up for Springfest which is the last weekend in April. A part-time seasonal worker will be hired to help with watering the baskets and other beautification projects.
- In February, the annual strategic plan be done for the Main Street Program. The North Carolina Main Street Conference will be held in early March, and he and Daniel Walker will attend.
- The Parking Lot Project is proceeding. Barnhill Contracting was selected for the project, and the City Attorney is working on the contract. Most if not all of the work should be done by Springfest which is the last weekend in April.
- Plans received for Dunkin Donuts to be located on Crepe Myrtle Avenue.
- The City's application for a Bicycle Grant was not selected, and staff will resubmit application in spring for next grant cycle.
- Waiting to hear on Brownsfield Grant and Volkswagen Car Charger Grant.
- Work continues on the 2020 Census.

Upon question by Councilmember Adams, Mr. Mandeville explained that a message will be on the City's utility bills in March encouraging citizens to participate in the Census.

Upon question by Mayor Willis, Mr. Mandeville explained that local enumerators are being hired.

Councilmember Adams suggested advertising about Census employment on the City's website and Facebook page. Mr. Mandeville discussed using promotional materials to advertise the 2020 Census.

CONSIDER AUTHORIZING THE SALE OF SURPLUSED BUCKET TRUCK TO THE TOWN OF RED SPRINGS

The City Manager explained that member municipalities of ElectriCities make every effort to assist each other. The Red Springs Electric Director has requested a bucket truck that was going to be declared surplus and sold on GovDeals. Since the last time a similar truck was sold on GovDeals, staff recommends that the bucket truck be sold to the Town of Red Springs for \$5,500.00.

Motion was made by Councilmember Rainer, seconded by Councilmember Williamson, and unanimously carried to authorize the sale of a surplused bucket truck to the Town of Red Springs for the amount of \$5,500.00.

CONSIDER SETTING DATE, TIME, TOPICS AND NECESSARY STAFF FOR COUNCIL RETREAT

Following discussion, it was consensus of Council to hold a retreat on February 4, 2020 at 5:30 p.m. in the Council Chambers of the City Hall and Police Department. It was requested that the Mayor and Council notify he or the City Clerk with suggested topics for the retreat. Staff necessary for the retreat would be determined by the topics for the retreat.

SETTING DATE AND TIME FOR CITIZEN INPUT SESSION

The City Manager explained that the budget process each fiscal year normally starts with obtaining input from citizens at the Annual Citizen Input Session. He suggested that one could be held at 5:30 p.m. prior to the February 18, 2020 Council meeting or on February 25, 2020.

Following discussion, it was consensus of Council to hold the Annual Citizen Input Session on Tuesday, February 25, 2020 at 6:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers of the City Hall and Police Department.

COMMENTS BY MAYOR AND/OR COUNCILMEMBERS

Mayor Willis recognized Town of Gibson Commissioners Jerry Glover and Adam Liles in attendance.

Councilmember Evans attended the Martin Luther King, Jr. celebration at St. Andrews University and stated that it was great.

Councilmembers Adams and Rainer explained that Mayor Willis did a great job speaking at the Martin Luther King, Jr. event at Bright Hopewell Church.

Councilmember Adams invited the Mayor and Councilmembers to attend the Lumber River Council of Governments (COG) Advance being held February 21-22, 2020. The COG will pay for two (2) people from the City to attend. The City Clerk will send out the information to the Mayor and Council.

CLOSED SESSION

At 8:17 p.m. motion was made by Councilmember Evans to go into closed session to consult with the attorney. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Garby, and the vote was unanimous.

At 8:44 p.m. motion was made by Councilmember Evans to adjourn the closed session and return to the open meeting. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Williamson, and the vote was unanimous.

ADJOURN

Motion was made by Councilmember Garby, seconded by Councilmember Rainer, and unanimously carried to adjourn the meeting. The meeting adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

James T. Willis, Mayor

Jennifer A. Tippett, City Clerk