

*Joint Session, Scotland County Board of Commissioners, Laurinburg City Council,  
January 24, 2005, Commissioners Chamber, 1405 West Boulevard, Laurinburg*

**MINUTES**

**Scotland County Board of Commissioners  
Joint Session with the Laurinburg City Council, January 24, 2005,  
(meeting recessed from January 18, 2005)  
Commissioners Chamber, 1405 West Boulevard, Laurinburg, NC**

Commissioners in attendance: Chairman J.D. Willis, Vice Chair Betty Blue Gholston, Commissioners John Alford, Leon Butler, Charles "Scoofer" Jordan, Joyce McDow and Clarence McPhatter. Staff in attendance: Finance Officer/Assistant County Manager Kevin Patterson, County Attorney Ed Johnston and Clerk to the Board Ann W. Kurtzman.

Laurinburg City Council members in attendance: Mayor Ann Slaughter and Council Members Herbert Rainer, Lisa Griswold, Tommy Parker, Rembert Deberry and Curtis Leak. Laurinburg City staff in attendance: Interim City Manager Dee Hammond and Deputy Clerk Jenny Tippet.

At 7 p.m. Chairman Willis reconvened the recessed meeting. Commissioner Jordan delivered the opening prayer. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Chairman Willis thanked the Laurinburg City Council for agreeing to a dialogue on the possibility of combining the two Manager positions into one. He said if both boards agree it is not doable, this would be the time to lay it out on the table, be done with it and move on to issues that would be in the best interest of the citizens of Laurinburg and Scotland County.

Mayor Slaughter reconvened the City Council meeting. She noted that according to David Lawrence and David Ammons, both with the Institute of Government, combining the Manager position into one could prove difficult.

The following conversation took place at the meeting:

Council Member Leak suggested the County look to East Laurinburg, Gibson and Wagram to create a single Manager position rather than to the City, which is doing well on its own.

Commissioner Alford said the following questions must be answered: how would one Manager handle two separate budgets, report to each board and what would happen if one board was not satisfied with the Manager's performance.

Council Member Rainer said he would like figures that would show how the combined position would be beneficial to the City and the County. He said without financial benefits, why would a single Manager position be considered.

Vice Chair Gholston said the citizens are interested in ways to save money and in ways to combine services in order to cut the cost of government. She said with both governing bodies searching for a Manager, this is the best time to come together to discuss future possibilities. "We owe the citizens the opportunity to talk about it," she said.

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January 24, 2005, Commissioners Chamber, 1405 West Boulevard, Laurinburg***

Commissioner Jordan said he suggested the joint meeting because the two boards would likely not have an opportunity like this again. He said he was neither in favor of nor against the idea of one Manager. "We would do an injustice to our constituents if we didn't look at ways to make it work," he explained.

Commissioner Butler agreed and said with one Manager there eventually might be one governing board.

Council Member Parker predicted one person reporting to both boards would be a political nightmare. He suggested that if one Manager were hired there should be a sunset on that position, and the mission of the one Manager would be to find and eliminate duplication in services. Once done, the governing bodies would hire their own Managers.

Chairman Willis said in his opinion it would take one form of government, one board overseeing everything and one form of taxes in order for one Manager to function effectively. He said the process would be long term. He said the Commissioners requested dialogue with the City because this is what citizens wanted. He said it was not his intention to pit one board against another. He said if the City wanted figures, the County would provide them.

Council Member Leak said combining the City and the County would take an act of State legislation, which would void Laurinburg's charter. He said the governing bodies should look at consolidation of services instead, and he suggested the area of law enforcement.

Chairman Willis said if the two boards do get into a battle, it would be the citizens who would suffer. He said he recognized that the City and County are two different entities and perhaps the issue should be dropped.

Council Member Parker again suggested that consolidation of services and eliminating overlap is what should be discussed.

Council Member Griswold said she came to the meeting with an open mind and would welcome suggestions as to how the one Manager position would work. She said she saw total consolidation as a solution but didn't feel that two entities working with one Manager would work. She said the City's constituents also are County constituents, which is why the two governing boards should look at overlapping services such as planning and zoning, dispatcher services and law enforcement.

Mayor Slaughter said former City Manager Joe Huffman had so many responsibilities she didn't know how one person could take on any more than that. "He was a very busy man," she said.

Commissioner McDow said the governing boards owe it to Scotland County residents to have this dialogue because it's meaningful, and it helps her as an elected official to understand the pros and cons of issues.

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Commissioner McPhatter said that having served on the Board of Commissioners and City Council, it is important to have dialogue that is neutral. He said because the tax bill goes to everyone, it is the responsibility of both boards to look at ways to reduce that bill.

Commissioner Jordan suggested the Chairman and the Mayor continue discussions on consolidation of services and select a subcommittee to study services consolidations and report back to both boards on their findings.

Mayor Slaughter said that it would be important for both boards to have their Managers in place in order to continue consolidation discussions.

Council Member Deberry said there are other consolidation opportunities although one Manager position is not one of them.

Council Member Parker said according to David Lawrence of the Institute of Government, there wouldn't be an appreciable savings in hiring one Manager.

*Consensus by both boards was reached that Chairman Willis and Mayor Slaughter would continue consolidation of services dialogue and appoint a subcommittee of County and City staff to study ways to consolidate services with the subcommittee reporting their findings to both governing bodies.*

Mayor Slaughter suggested that no consolidation decisions be made before both boards have a Manager in place.

### **Other Business**

**Motion was made by Commissioner Butler and duly seconded by Commissioner Alford to appoint Mr. Wayne Evans as Chairman of the ABC Board. Vote: Motion unanimously approved.**

Mr. Patterson said a representative from the office of Rep. Robin Hayes will meet with County, City and School Board officials 4:30 p.m., February 4 in the conference room at the Scotland County Annex. He said the purpose of the meeting is to discuss federal appropriations for special projects.

**Motion was made by Commissioner Jordan and duly seconded by Commissioner Alford to recess to 4 p.m., February 3, 2005 in the County Manager's Office, 231 East Cronly Street. Vote: Motion unanimously approved.**

Respectfully Submitted,

Ann W. Kurtzman  
Clerk

J.D. Willis  
Chairman