

MINUTES

**Scotland County Board of Commissioners and Laurinburg City Council
Joint Session, May 14, 2009
Laurinburg City Council Chamber**

At 7 p.m. Chairman J. D. Willis reconvened the meeting recessed from May 4, 2009. Commissioners in attendance: Chairman Willis, Vice Chair Betty Blue Gholston and Commissioners John Alford, Bob Davis and Joyce McDow. Commissioners not in attendance: Commissioners Guy McCook and Clarence McPhatter. Staff in attendance: County Manager Kevin Patterson and Clerk to the Board Ann W. Kurtzman.

The City Council called its meeting with the following Councilmembers in attendance: Mayor Matthew Block and Councilmembers Tommy Parker, Herbert Rainer, Rembert Deberry, Amanda Faulk and Curtis Leak. Staff included Interim City Manager Dee Hammond and Deputy City Clerk Jenny Tippett. Councilmember Deberry delivered the invocation.

Mayor Block said the joint meeting was initiated by the City so both governing boards could discuss consolidation opportunities.

Tax Collection

Ms. Hammond and Mr. Patterson summarized the history of 2004 effort to consolidate City and County tax collections.

Mr. Patterson said tax collection consolidation would not represent a considerable savings to the County or the City but it would be convenient for the citizens because it would create a one-stop collections venue.

Chairman Willis commented that if nothing is saved from the consolidation perhaps it should be left alone. Councilmember Leak said the community thinks both governments have repetitive services. Councilmember Leak said the tax agreement should be fine-tuned so collections could occur in one location.

County Manager Patterson said there might be difficulty if the County collected all property taxes from this time forward and the databases weren't shared to include back taxes. Without the database, all back taxes would be applied toward the County first.

Chairman Willis suggested that Mr. Patterson, Ms. Hammond and Tax Administrator Mary Helen Norton revisit the 2004 agreement.

Mr. Patterson said it might be possible to approve the agreement so it would be in place by July 1 and then discuss how to handle back taxes.

Planning and Zoning

*Scotland County Board of Commissioners and Laurinburg City Council joint session
May 14, 2009, Laurinburg City Council Chamber, 305 West Church Street, Laurinburg*

County Manager Patterson said Planning and Zoning is part of the office of the County Engineer and the County budget is about \$9,000, which are revenues from fees and signage. Mr. Patterson said there were six County zoning issues in the past year. He said a consolidation of Planning and Zoning with the City providing the service would give the City more influence over the growth of the ETJ.

Mr. Patterson said a local act would have to be passed to consolidate both Planning and Zoning boards and City staff might have to attend extra meetings to get approval on zoning issues if the applications involved the County.

Mayor Block said the City would investigate the issue further with input from the City Planning and Zoning staff.

Animal Control

Councilmember Rainer asked if the County would consider taking over animal control.

County Manager Patterson said County staff could look at a contract.

Chairman Willis agreed and suggested staff research consolidating animal control into one unit to consolidate coverage with an eye to the best, most efficient use of manpower.

Both the City Council and County Commissioners, by consensus, agreed that a proposal should be developed for review by both boards.

Law Enforcement

Mayor Block said a great deal of citizen feedback concerns law enforcement. City residents want to know why they pay tax dollars for a Sheriff and a Police Department, especially when the Sheriff does not patrol within City limits.

Councilmember Tommy Parker asked if there could be a reciprocal agreement to patrol areas south of Barnes Bridge Road.

The Commissioners and City Council discussed the possibility of creating a committee to look at law enforcement and the development of a communitywide patrol system.

Chairman Willis suggested that he, Commissioner Davis, Mayor Block and the mayors of Gibson, Wagram and East Laurinburg meet to discuss consolidation of officer patrols to cover certain zones. Chairman Willis said this might provide better protection and quicker response times.

Cooperative Agreements

County Manager Patterson said agreements could be developed where County and City departments on a staff level could assist one another. Mr. Patterson said this cooperative effort

*Scotland County Board of Commissioners and Laurinburg City Council joint session
May 14, 2009, Laurinburg City Council Chamber, 305 West Church Street, Laurinburg*

exists without agreements but a memorandum of agreement would better define mutual assistance regarding labor and use of equipment.

Chairman Willis asked Mr. Patterson to prepare a local agreement for both boards to review.

GIS

County Manager Patterson said the County pays for a GIS server license and individually for access licenses in order to generate information. Mr. Patterson said the County pays about \$20,000 toward GIS and also pays for aerial photography.

C&D Tipping Fees

Mayor Block said the City would like to aggressively demolish unsafe structures but the cost of C&D tipping fees prevents that from happening.

Mayor Block asked the County, in the spirit of cooperation, to take a look at the fees and possibly change them so the City could move forward on demolition of unsafe structures.

Mr. Patterson said the \$37 per ton fee represents a break-even rate for the current landfill operations. He said a revenue shortage this year is a possibility because tonnage intake is down due to the current economic climate and fewer industries doing business at the landfill.

Chairman Willis directed Mr. Patterson and County Engineer Jim Blackwell to look at the fees and the budget to determine the lowest possible rate for the City. Chairman Willis reminded the City Council that whatever is decided must be consistent for the sake of other municipalities.

Parks and Recreation

Mayor Block said there is a need for a recreation facility in the City. The facility would have basketball courts, a walking track and activity rooms similar to the one being built in Wagram.

Mayor Block said last year the City and County looked into the open gym concept, but it did not move forward because of the cost involved.

Councilmember Parker said perhaps intermediate steps could be taken to figure out how to use school gyms without too much cost. Commissioner Alford said opening one gym for a short time period would only serve a very limited population. The possibility of getting churches involved in an open gym concept also was discussed.

Chairman Willis suggested that the City and County governing boards look at development of a recreation complex centrally-located in Laurinburg and decide if that would be a top priority.

Councilmember Leak discussed the condition the infields of Lincoln and Washington Parks, which are covered with grass.

*Scotland County Board of Commissioners and Laurinburg City Council joint session
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Chairman Willis suggested that the County give the parks within the City limits back to Laurinburg if there are concerns about their condition.

Councilmember Rainer said he believed that some parks are cared for better than others although the care should be equitable.

Chairman Willis said the County would look at Washington and Lincoln Parks to make sure they are not grassed over.

County Manager Patterson said he and Parks and Recreation Director Shannon Newton would review all parks with clay infields.

Mayor Block said the City would organize a committee to study the feasibility of an in-town centrally located recreation complex.

Councilmember Leak said for safety purposes, the County should erect a fence at the back side of Market Park.

County Manager Patterson said based on community input meetings, citizens asked not for a fence but that the back side of Market Park be cleaned out, which the County does.

Human Resources

Councilmember Rainer asked if City and County personnel could be consolidated.

County Manager Patterson said the County's hiring and employment structure involves a number of different hiring authorities and methods for calculating pay. He said half of the County personnel are governed by State policies and two different authorities.

Mr. Patterson said employee training activities for the City and County could be coordinated and explored.

Motion was made by Commissioner Alford and duly seconded Commissioner Davis to adjourn. Vote: Motion unanimously approved. Meeting adjourned at 9:05 p.m.

Ann W. Kurtzman
Clerk to the Board

J.D. Willis
Chairman