



**Laurens County Council
Regular Meeting
Meeting Minutes
January 10, 2017**

The Laurens County Council held their regularly scheduled meeting at 5:30 pm at the County Council Chambers in the Historic Courthouse. Chairman Joe Wood presided with all of the County Council in attendance.

Items 1-3, Call to Order; Chairman Wood called the meeting to order at 5:30 P.M. and invited all to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance and prayer. Councilman Pitts provided the invocation.

Items 1, Election of Chairman; County Attorney Sandy Cruickshanks asked for nominations to the Chairmanship. Councilman Tollison nominated Joe Woods. Councilman Jones nominated Councilwoman Anderson. Councilman Pitts made a motion to close the nominations, seconded by Councilman McDaniel and approved 7-0.

Mr. Cruickshanks called for a vote on the first nomination and it received 4 votes (Councilman Tollison, Pitts, Nash, Woods). Mr. Cruickshanks called for a vote on the second nomination and it received 3 votes (Councilman Jones, McDaniel and Councilwoman Anderson). Therefore Councilman Woods was appointed Chairmanship.

Mr. Cruickshanks asked for nominations to Vice Chairman. One nomination from Councilman Pitts for Councilman Tollison to be Vice Chairman was received. Councilman McDaniel made a motion to close the nominations, seconded by Councilwoman Anderson, and approved 7-0.

Mr. Cruickshanks called for a vote on the nomination and it was approved 7-0.

Item 4 Agenda Approval; Chairman Wood asked to add item 6a Chairman Comments, and a legal briefing to the Executive Session. Councilman Nash made a motion to approve the agenda as amended with Vice Chairman Tollison providing the second and the motion passed 7-0.

Item 5 Approval of Minutes; Vice Chairman Tollison made a motion to approve the December 13, 2016 regular meeting minutes with Councilman McDaniel providing a second and the motion passed 7-0.

Item 6 Reports to Council;

6a: Chairman Comments: Chairman Woods responded to an opinion article written by Councilman Jones. He addressed actions taken by a majority of the County Council on December 13, 2016 to award 2 years of transition health insurance to the former Sheriff in recognition of his 27 years of service to Laurens County. He stated that accusations that this was an illegal action by Council are unfounded. He also addressed the deficits that the County has endured due to the lack of full funding for the Local Government Fund by the State and pointed out the accomplishments that County Council has been able to achieve even with the deficits such as the new administrative building, reducing Fire ISO ratings, expansion to the detention center, and repairing fire stations.

6a (as on the original agenda) Dominion Pipeline Environmental Assessment Shelly Robbins from Upstate Forever and Michael Corley from South Carolina Environmental Law Project and Laurens County resident spoke in opposition to the proposed gas pipeline being routed through Laurens County. They reported that this

project is making a profit by taking properties sometimes through threat of eminent domain and asked that County Council stand up to dominion to protect the rights of Laurens County property owners.

Councilman Jones voices a concern on taking property through eminent domain and his support for property owners.

Chairman Woods explained that dominion has stated that the County will get \$1,000,000 in new revenue from this project.

Vice Chair Tollison expressed an interest in obtaining more information on this project.

Councilman Pitts recognized PW Director Rob Russian who noted that the County Public Works department has received encroachment permit applications from Dominion for this project. Councilwoman Anderson made a motion to hold the permits until we receive more information. Councilman Jones seconded the motion. Vice Chair Tollison noted that we have no grounds for holding the permits. After further discussion Councilwoman Anderson withdrew her motion.

Councilman Pitts made a motion to delay the permit process. Motion died from lack of second.

6b. Chuck Bobo Quarterly Permit Activity Report Building Codes Director Chuck Bobo reported on the permit activity for the 4th quarter of 2016. He also proposed an idea for County Council to consider in 2017 to allow developers that are building spec homes to get free permits for up to 10 houses stating that the revenue lost will be made up in property taxes within a year.

6c. Lisa Kirk FY 17 M5 Report Lisa Kirk reported the results of the FY17M5 finances.

Item 7 Old Business

Item 7a: Thompson Road Fire Station RFP Approval of Award Committee: PW Director Russian stated that the County will be issuing an RFP for design build for the Thompson Road Fire Station and recommended that two County Council members may want to be participants on that selection committee. Chairman Woods stated that he will give his recommendation for 2 CC members to the County Administrator.

Item 7b: Public Hearing Ordinance 826 Sale of Lot 5 Laurens County Professional Park: Chairman Woods opened the public hearing up for comment. No comment was received.

Item 7c: Third/Final Reading Ordinance 826 Sale of Lot 5 Laurens County Professional Park: Councilman Jones made a motion to approve the Ordinance, seconded by Councilman McDaniel; approved 7-0.

Item 7d: Project Hunter Second Reading of FILOT Ordinance: Councilman McDaniel made a motion to approve the Ordinance, seconded by Councilman Jones; approved 7-0.

Item 8a: Codification of County Ordinances Ordinance 827 First Reading: County Attorney Sandy Cruickshanks explained that the County has over 800 ordinances many of which are regulatory ordinances. Some of these regulatory ordinances have been amended and revised. By codifying our ordinances all the ordinances are put together in a book format. This format combines all ordinances by subject and combines ordinance amendments to be included with the original ordinance. Additionally these ordinances will be placed on a website for easier access by both internal and external users. The County codified our ordinances in 1989 but never took action to adopt this codified ordinance book. The process was updated in 2014 and again no action was taken to adopt this process. Adopting this codification ordinance will allow us to switch to have our ordinance all combined in a book format.

Councilman Stewart Jones made a motion to approve this ordinance in first reading. Councilwoman Anderson provided a second to the motion and the motion passed 7-0.

Item 8b: Proposed Moratorium on New Subdivisions: Public Works Director Rob Russian explained that the Planning Commission is revising the subdivision regulations and that a 90 moratorium would give the Planning Commission and the Staff time to complete this regulation and have subdivisions regulated by this new regulation. Councilman Pitts made a motion to approve this moratorium, Councilman McDaniel provided a second to the motion. Councilman Pitts asked if this subdivision regulation has anything to do with zoning to which it was explained that this does not have anything to do with zoning. Councilman Pitts then stated that he wanted to go on record that it is time for Laurens County to have a zoning ordinance. The original motion passed 7-0.

Item 9 Public Comment

Dan Patterson commented on an article in the paper dealing with opinions of a County Council member. Councilwoman Anderson asked for a point of order that public comment should not be discussing individual Council members.

Debra Watkins (Tinya McCallum) asked about the status of the Adhoc Animal Control Committee.

Item 10 County Council Comments

Vice Chairman Tollison stated his appreciation for the support of his fellow councilmembers on his nomination to Vice Chair and stated his goals of Council working as a team to grow our County regardless of our difference of opinions on individual matters. He stated he was proud that Council can come together to support each other. He also thanked the emergency services staff for their advance planning in response to the threat of a major snow storm last week.

Councilman Jones thanked Mr. Patterson for his comments but expressed his concerns on the attitude of the Chairman. He said he supports paying employees market pay. He also expressed a desire to looking at innovative and efficient ways to provide services. He stated that his family has many generations of Laurens County residents and that he has a strong passion for serving Laurens County. He and his wife built the new County webpage free of charge. He voiced his concern for the decrease in population and stressed the importance of being proactive in recruiting development to Laurens County. He expressed his support for transparency of government and his desire to continue working hard to make Laurens County a great place to live.

Councilman Nash stated how proud he is of the progress Laurens County has made.

Councilman McDaniel welcomed everyone to the meeting and stated his appreciation that 2016 was such a prosperous year for Laurens County and that he looks forward to the great things that are to come in 2017.

Councilwoman Anderson stated that she is looking forward to a great 2017.

Vice Chairman Tollison explained that accusations that decisions/actions were made behind closed doors in Executive Session were not accurate. He stated that the County Attorney is present during Executive Sessions to ensure all discussion are legally allowed to take place. He also explained that any decisions/actions are made in open session including the action to grant short term health insurance coverage to the outgoing Sheriff.

Chairman Woods commented further on an opinion article written in the local press by Councilman Jones. He stated that Council does not want to raise taxes if possible. He also explained that no promises were made on the steps of the Courthouse. He explained that Council does all that it can to balance the budget and provide services to the residents.

Item 11 Executive Session- Contractual, Legal Briefing and Employment Matter

Councilman McDaniel made a motion to enter into Executive Session, Councilman Pitts provided a second to the motion and the motion passed 6-0 with Councilman Jones abstaining from the vote (Councilman Jones did not participate in the executive session and left the meeting.

By consensus Council reconvened into open session.

Chairman Woods explained that no action will be taken on 2 contractual matters and one employment matter discussed in ES. Councilwoman Anderson made a motion to appoint an interim Clerk to Council due to the retirement of the former Clerk to Council, Betty Ann Walsh. Councilman Pitts provided a second and the motion passed 6-0.

Vice Chairman Tollison made a motion to grant the Sheriff's request to trade 3 County titled vehicles. Councilman Pitts provided a second to the motion and the motion passed 6-0.

ADJOURNMENT – With no further action required by Council, Chairman Wood adjourned the Meeting.

Jon Caime
Laurens County Administrator