



**MINUTES**  
**FEBRUARY 24, 2015**  
**LAURENS COUNTY COUNCIL**  
**HISTORIC COURTHOUSE – PUBLIC SQUARE**  
**COUNTY COUNCIL CHAMBERS**

---

**ATTENDANCE:** **COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT-** County Council Chairman Joe Wood; Vice Chairman Keith Tollison; County Council Members: Diane Anderson, Stewart Jones, Ted Nash and David Pitts.

**COUNCIL MEMBERS ABSENT** – Councilman Edward McDaniel (illness).

**COUNTY STAFF:** Laurens County Administrator, Ernest Segars; Laurens County Clerk to Council Betty Walsh and Laurens County Attorney, Sandy Cruickshanks.

**DEPARTMENT HEADS PRESENT:** Laurens County Human Resources Manager, Debi Parker; Laurens County Communications Director, Joey Avery; Laurens County Deputy Coroner, Vickie Cheek; Laurens County Sheriff, Ricky Chastain; Laurens County Emergency Medical Services Director, Chad Burrell; Laurens County Fire Director, Gregg Lindley and Captain Tyson, Detention Center Administrator.

**PRESS:** Vic McDonald, *The Clinton Chronicle*; Iva Cadmus, *WLBG Radio* and Corey Engle, *The Laurens County Advertiser*.

**SCHEDULED MEETING AGENDA ITEMS** - **1.)** Call to Order – Chairman Wood; **2.)** Invocation – Councilman Nash; **3.)** Pledge of Allegiance; **4.)** Approval of Agenda, February 24, 2015; **5.)** Approval of Minutes – February 10, 2015; **6.)** Second Reading, Ordinance #782, “To Provide For The Issuance And Sale Of Not Exceeding Two Million Four Hundred Fifty Thousand Dollars (\$2,450,000) General Obligation Bonds Of Laurens County, South Carolina (Laurens County Fire District), For The Issuance Of Notes In Anticipation Of Such Bonds, To Prescribe The Purposes For Which The Proceeds Of Such Obligations Shall Be Expended, To Provide For the Payment Thereof, And Other Matters Relating Thereto”; **7.)** First Reading, Laurens County Ordinance #783, which is, “An Ordinance to Amend, Repeal and Restate the Status of the Laurens County Emergency Services and Other Matters Appertaining Thereto”; **8.)** Program Report - University of South Carolina, Union – Laurens Campus, Alice Taylor-Colbert, Ph.D, Campus Dean; **9.)** “Bridging the Gap Advocacy” Program – Calvin Whitmire, President; **10.)** Administrative Report, Ernie Segars, County Administrator; **11.)** Public Comments; **12.)** Comments from Council Members; **13.)** Adjournment; **14.)** Executive Session, Employment Matter.

**MEETING NOTIFICATION** - The County Council Members, Department Heads, requesting general public and the Press were informed of the meeting in a timely manner.

**CALL TO ORDER** – Chairman Wood called the meeting to order and invited all to stand for the invocation and the Pledge of Allegiance. Councilman Nash provided the invocation.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA** – Chairman Wood called for approval of the agenda with any additions.

COUNCILMAN PITTS made the MOTION to approve the agenda as presented; COUNCILMAN NASH SECONDING; VOTE 6-0.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES** – VICE CHAIRMAN TOLLISON made the MOTION to approve the minutes from the February 10, 2015 regular session of Council. COUNCILMAN PITTS SECONDING; VOTE 6-0.

**PROGRAM REPORT – UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA, UNION AT LAURENS, ALICE TAYLOR-COLBERT, PH.D., CAMPUS DEAN** - Dean Alice Taylor-Corbett approached Council saying, “Thank you for allowing me to present to you what we are doing at USC-Union. We were founded in 1965 and I





am proud to say that we will be celebrating our fiftieth (50) Anniversary this year. We are a two (2) year institution and we exist with tuition revenue. Some folks think that we are financially tied to the University of South Carolina, we are tuition driven and they do provide support services for us. We offer a variety of programs and services within Laurens County. In our new location, we offer area citizens the opportunity to complete one of our associate or baccalaureate degree programs without leaving the community in which they live and work. General education classes fill requirements for many majors and are transferable to most college and universities. We are now affiliated with Palmetto College that includes all of the four (4) regional campuses in Aiken, Beaufort, Columbia and the Upstate with support from other campuses in Lancaster, Sumter and Union. We have been in Laurens County since 1983 and was fortunate to be asked in 1987 to become part of the Higher Education Program that owns our lands and our buildings”

Continuing Dean Alice Taylor-Corbert said, “We have had record enrollment for the last two (2) semesters. In 2013 we had four hundred eighty four (484) students at USC Union; this Fall we had six hundred seventy one (671); Spring six hundred thirty nine (639); last year five hundred seventy one (571). Two hundred (200) or more are always from Laurens County. For this Spring, we already have a total of two hundred twenty three (223) from Laurens County alone. Last Fall we had two hundred thirty two (232). We help to groom these students to move forward towards Bachelor Degrees. We also have now online programming along with a Bachelor of Arts in Organizational Leadership and a Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Studies”.

Continuing Dean Alice Taylor-Corbert said, “We would like to continue with what we start with these students. I come to County Council with an appeal. We have been funded over the last several years at a rate and have made close to seventeen thousand dollars (\$17,000) from the County funding. We would like to ask Council to consider this again this year and we would like to also make Council a promise that with this funding, we would guarantee free associate degrees for all students coming to us. How; ninety seven percent (97%) of Laurens County students, who are high school graduates come to us to finish an Associate’s degree. Of these every penny of their costs is paid for by State or Federal Grants. Another local educational system had a billboard last year that declared seven (7) out of ten (10) of their students had free Associates Degrees because of Federal and State Funds.; we had ninety seven percent (97%). We are pledging the funds that you provide to use for that. We also have an agreement with the Laurens County Community Foundation for us to raise funds. I have already had negotiations with an institution in the State to bring a Bachelors of Administration Degree to Laurens County. It will be at a cost that is much lower than other institutions can provide because it is at the rate at the Senior Campuses. We request that you assist us in a small way to continue our operations in Laurens County and to help us grow”.

Councilman Pitts said, “I commend you and your staff with your recent enrollments and I am assuming that the pledge with the Associates Degree the student would be able to qualify”. Dean Taylor-Corbert replied that it is the same criteria as used by the other institution and would have to be enrolled towards a degree seeking program.

Administrator Segars asked as clarification that the requested seventeen thousand dollars (\$17,000) would be used as tuition and that no other funds are requested. Dean Taylor-Corbert replied that no additional funds are being requested but we are asking for the continuation of what we received last year.

Councilman Pitts asked if the Laurens County Community Foundation had been contacted and considered with this whole process if this “Future Scholars” comes in to tuition? Dean Taylor-Corbert replied that they had been contacted and if Council so desires, the actual name can be changed. What we need to be able to do is market these services in Laurens County.

Chairman Wood asked if the six hundred (600) students noted were at the new facility on North Harper Street? Dean Alice Taylor-Corbert replied that they were not, but were from Union, Laurens and online as well as at a number of High Schools.





Chairman Wood thanked Dean Alice Taylor-Corbert for the information and stated that Council would consider the request during budget deliberations.

**“BRIDGING THE GAP ADVOCACY” – CALVIN WHITMIRE, PRESIDENT** – Mr. Whitmire explained “The mission of the Bridging the Gap Advocacy program is an attempt to reach out to the young with attempts to bridge the gap between our children and parents towards their future by promoting faith - creating a positive environment for all participants using effective communication, exposure and planning for a better desired outcome; education - grades 3-12 tutorial services; health – to promote healthy diet and exercise as well as job training and employment initiatives. Over all to make a positive impact and to invest in them in the early years so as to not lose them in the judicial system. We would like to request twenty five thousand dollars (\$25,000) from Laurens County”.

As an attempt to reach out within the Community, Mr. Whitmire informed Council that the first walk will be held this Saturday (February 28<sup>th</sup>) at 11:00 A.M. starting at the Laurens Middle School and walking to the Little River Park.

Councilwoman Anderson said, “I applaud your efforts as the children are our future. I was a teacher and know that there are a lot of ways to work with and help our children. Mentors need to be a prominent part of this stage in development of our children”.

Chairman Wood thanked Mr. Whitmire for the review and the efforts of the program and stated that the County does work within restraints of a tight budget and that consideration would be made during budget deliberations.

**SECOND READING, ORDINANCE #782, “TO PROVIDE FOR THE ISSUANCE AND SALE OF NOT EXCEEDING TWO MILLION FOUR HUNDRED FIFTY THOUSAND DOLLARS (\$2,450,000) GENERAL OBLIGATION BONDS OF LAURENS COUNTY, SOUTH CAROLINA (LAURENS COUNTY FIRE DISTRICT), FOR THE ISSUANCE OF NOTES IN ANTICIPATION OF SUCH BONDS, TO PRESCRIBE THE PURPOSES FOR WHICH THE PROCEEDS OF SUCH OBLIGATIONS SHALL BE EXPENDED, TO PROVIDE FOR THE PAYMENT THEREOF, AND OTHER MATTERS RELATING THERETO”** – COUNCILMAN NASH made the MOTION to approve second reading on Ordinance #782 as presented. VICE CHAIRMAN TOLLISON SECONDING for discussion.

Councilman Nash stated that he felt the County was doing the right thing towards helping the volunteers of the County Fire Service.

Councilman Jones asked if there were any projected yearly costs determined towards the stations. Chairman Wood stated that there were none at this time and that this would be determined during the budget process.

Councilman Jones said, “My hope is that this will encourage more to move to Laurens County. I look at this with a twenty mill max on the fire budget and how the additional costs to run these operations can be implemented without a tax increase”.

Councilman Pitts reminded all that if constructed, there would be reoccurring salary and equipment expenses that will have to be maintained.

COUNCIL VOTED 4-2. (Council Members Jones and Pitts were in opposition).

**FORESTRY GRANTS AWARDED FOR RURAL FIRE DEPARTMENTS** – Chairman Wood asked for Mr. Lindley to come forward and to offer and explanation about the recent grants awarded to Laurens County by the Forestry Service.





Mr. Lindley stated that the total allocated grants funds was sixteen thousand seven hundred forty eight dollars (\$16,748). The grant monies are to be for skid trucks, brush trucks and radio equipment. These items will be used within four (4) Fire Departments.

**SECOND READING - ORDINANCE #783, “AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND, REPEAL AND RESTATE THE STATUS OF THE LAURENS COUNTY EMERGENCY SERVICES AND OTHER MATTERS APPERTAINING THERETO”.** COUNCILWOMAN ANDERSON made the MOTION to approve Ordinance #783 upon second reading with VICE CHAIRMAN TOLLISON SECONDING.

Chairman Wood stated that this ordinance would be repealing six (6) outdated Ordinances dealing with Emergency Services that were created as far back as 1976.

Councilman Pitts addressed from page two (2) (F and G) by saying, “I feel that as a Councilman and as that it should be a priority of the full Council that if a resident of Laurens County needs services, regardless of who the provider is that we get there as fast as we can to save a life. I do have reservations that if there is an ambulance in Clinton, and if a call comes in to E911 Center and if this ordinance is enacted and passed, that the E911 Center would dispatch an county ambulance. And, if I read correctly, if an ambulance is not in the area, then E911 has the authority to dispatch another Laurens County ambulance. My concern is that if a third party provider is more closer than another County ambulance, does this ordinance prevent the third party from being dispatched?”

Continuing, Councilman Pitts said, “Having said that, I feel that this Ordinance is a step in the right direction and I offer full support of it upon first reading”.

Councilwoman Anderson said, “I want to be certain that if an emergency through the E911 Center is dispatched, I want to be certain that the best service is called upon. Based on all of the reporting over the years, we, Laurens County have had no problems getting to a scene to respond to the needs of a community”.

Vice Chairman Tollison said, “This Ordinance is only cleaning up six (6) original ordinances bringing us into a united E-911 System and is something that has been discussed for well over a year. I think that this will benefit by tying all into our E911 emergency call center for the County. This also allows us to share several things such as calls for emergency help where the caller not only gets emergency help, they get fire, ems and police respond teams. I agree with Councilman Pitts as to the ambulance service that is available and starting with the County Services. This puts a better control measure in place.

Councilman Nash stated that he was proud of the advancement of the E911 Service for Laurens County and that this is a big County and it does take time to get to the outer limits.

Councilman Jones replied, “I believe also that this Ordinance is a good Ordinance so far as cleaning up the previous Ordinances. As Councilman Nash stated, this is a big County in square miles with a low population. Utilizing private resources is an excellent option to help reach all of Laurens County. The parts that I question in this Ordinance are F and G. F where it states Council has exclusive rights to provide or cause to provide emergency medical services through its own system. I like the collaboration but question if this says a citizen can not call another service for emergency situations. Does my neighbor not have the authority to drive me to a hospital if they see me fall in my yard”. Administrator Segars replied that there was nothing in this Ordinance that would prevent someone taking you to the hospital.

Continuing Councilman Jones stated, “Another area I question is in section G of the Ordinance - *Council recognizes and affirms that any calls by a licensed physician or a duly authorized representative of a medical facility considered to be an emergency shall be handled by the Laurens County Emergency Medical Services Department or its designated and/or assigned provider* – does this mean that the medical practice cannot call a preferred provider?”





Chairman Wood asked for Councilman Jones to read the remaining sentence - *Further, Council recognizes and affirms that non-emergency or convalescent transport services provide transportation of patients that are considered routine or non-critical*. . Councilman Jones asked if that means it still has to go through the Laurens County Medical Services by calling E-911? Administrator Segars replied, “If it is an emergency”.

Councilman Jones said, “We need to utilize the private resources that we have available. I would like to see the Council Health and Services Committee have meetings with our EMS Director and third party services to try to avoid any conflicts and to try to work to better improve the services. I would like to also see an evaluation conducted by an outside third party to better help us with our emergency services”. Chairman Wood stated that evaluations do cost a lot of money.

Vice Chairman Tollison asked for clarification on the concerns of many about this ordinance not allowing a citizen to be transported to a hospital of choice....”As I understand it, we do have policy in place that addresses these concerns based on the availability and the type of emergency. This ordinance does not change any conditions of the policy now in place”. Chairman Wood replied that it does not make or imply any changes in said policy and County Attorney stated that protocol stays as is.

Continuing, Vice Chairman Tollison said,”In my mind, this takes us back to actually calling the E911 Center in case of an emergency. When called, I want immediate action. I would not want to have to remember a whole series of numbers to call while I was bleeding out. By calling E911 it allows the Dispatcher to get the right people to you in a timely fashion”.

Chairman Wood reviewed the six (6) Ordinances that would be amended as follows:

Ordinance 51 - passed in 1976 and provided the Civil Defense Director with the authority to organize and coordinate the activities of all rescue squads that operated in the county.

Ordinance 103 - passed in 1979 and dealt with the size of non-emergent transport units.

Ordinance 119 - passed in 1980 and created the Laurens County Emergency Services Commission. This Commission had policy making responsibilities for emergency service organizations such as ambulance, fire and rescue. Also authorized the Commission to control public funds for these services. Commission consisted of 5 members.

Ordinance 182 - passed in 1983 and amended Ordinance 119. A close reading of this Ordinance appears to show that it simply reworded 119.

Ordinance 201 - passed in 1985 and purports to repeal 119 and 182. This ordinance established once again the Laurens County Emergency Services Commission in keeping with the provisions of 119 and 182.

Ordinance 304 - passed in 1989. It expanded the Laurens County Emergency Services Commission from 5 members to 7 members.

Continuing Chairman Wood said, “Ordinance 304 references a County Emergency Services Commission of which we do not have anymore. I would like to say that many years ago, Laurens County created the EMS Service for their citizens. Very few can remember when you had an emergency need you would have to call a mortuary because they were the only ones with an ambulance. Over the years, it has not turned into a service we can not do without. There are many ideas floating around as to how this can be amended or changed. This Council is always looking for better ways and means of saving money for the taxpayers. In my opinion, our EMS Service is going to do the best they can to provide this service. It is in my opinion that the County EMS service is not there to make money but to provide services to the citizens of Laurens County. In the past several months there have been providers entering Laurens County to provide service and make money and there is nothing wrong with this. That is how the private enterprise system works. As elected representatives of this





County, this County Council is charged to make sure that this service is offered and conducted in the correct way. When the third party services came into Laurens County, Council enacted an agreement and approved by DHEC, for these parties to enter into with the County. All parties signed this agreement except for one and of recently just signed it”.

Continuing Chairman Wood said, “The E911 system was created for the citizens of Laurens County to control all emergencies within Laurens County – Fire, Police, EMS and to include the municipality emergency services. This is a service that was built and being maintained by the taxpayers of Laurens County. We have this new ordinance tonight to help back up these agreements. I am responding to several statements and rumors from a provider in our County. This Ordinance changes nothing about the way EMS works for this County. Anyone desiring to go to a certain hospital will be taken just as has been done in the past. As far as a choice of a citizen, you can call anyone that can give you the service. If it is an emergency it will be directed by the Laurens County E911 to the emergency service needed. I would say that the majority of citizens know to call 911 in an emergency. There are emergencies and there are non-emergencies out there. We have transports out there that provide non-emergency transports. I feel responsible as Chairman and a member of this County Council, allow anyone to disrupt any county services paid for by the taxpayers of this County”.

COUNCIL VOTED – 5-1 (Councilman Jones was in opposition).

**ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT:**

- 1.) Administrator Segars reminded all of the deadline for submission of the Ethics forms.
- 2.) Administrator Segars informed Council of a movement in Columbia to turn over a number of roads into the County system. The roads will be designated by the Department of Transportation. Approximately four hundred thirty two (432) miles are proposed along with some funding. The one catch is that the County Council will not be the ones to receive these roads; the Laurens County Transportation Committee would be the ones to actually receive from the State. With this Bill, all of the existing County Transportation Committees will be done away with, with another appointed in July. The County would be liable for maintenance and repairs to these roadways. I just do not believe Laurens County is in a position to do this as we already have over eight hundred (800) miles of roadways in the County now with a crew of eleven (11).

**PUBLIC COMMENT** – Chairman Wood opened the floor for public comment at 6:35 P.M.

- 1.) Rick Pitts, Indian Mound Road resident, addressed with Council his concerns for attention to clean waterways for the Saluda and Reedy Rivers as it concerns the fecal matter from the ducks at Pitts Park in Ware Shoals and the runoff of mud from the Gulches Off-road Vehicle Park.

Having no one else wishing to address Council, Chairman Wood closed the session at 6:40 P.M.

**COUNTY COUNCIL COMMENTS:**

- 1.) Councilman Jones encouraged all present to call their state representatives addressing the unfunded mandates continually being imposed on local governments...”I also want to see more freedom and competition in health care. I maintain my stance of disagreement in the proposed Ordinance that all citizens have to go through the County E911 System that it should be at the discretion of the citizen as to who to call”.
- 2.) Councilman Nash acknowledged the appointment of Ben Davis to the South Carolina Highway Commission.



- 3.) Vice Chairman Tollison echoed his congratulations to the fire departments that were receptive of the recent grants and noted that there are many others that receive grants, it is only because of the Forestry Commission wanting this to be made public.
- 4.) Chairman Wood thanked all of the public service employees of the County and noted that many are faced with dangerous situations on a daily basis.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION** – COUNCILMAN PITTS made the MOTION for Council to move into Executive Session at 6:45 P.M. to discuss an Employment matter”; VICE CHAIRMAN TOLLISON SECONDING; VOTE 6-0.

There was a COUNCIL CONSENSUS to reconvene in open session at 7:43 P.M.

Chairman Wood stated that no action was taken on the update on the employment matter.

**ADJOURNMENT** – With no further action required by Council, Chairman Wood adjourned the meeting at 7:45 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Betty C. Walsh". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Betty C. Walsh  
Laurens County Clerk to Council