

**CITY OF LAURENS
REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING
CPW TRAINING CENTER
214 CHURCH STREET, LAURENS, SC 29360
MAY 16, 2023
5:30PM**

PRESENT

Mayor Nathan Senn, Councilor Johnnie Bolt, Councilor Cassandra Campbell, Councilor Sara Latimore, Councilor Martin Lowry, Councilor Marian Miller, Councilor Alicia Sullivan, City Administrator Eric Delgado, and City Clerk Leslie Mattison

PRESS IN ATTENDANCE

Judith Brown - Advertiser

THE MEDIA WAS NOTIFIED BY AN EMAILED AGENDA.

CALL TO ORDER AND INVOCATION

Mayor Senn called the meeting to order with Councilor Latimore giving the invocation and was followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

MAYOR'S REMARKS

Mayor Senn began by stating that it has been an eventful month since our last meeting. He explained that this week is National Police Week. We see the difference that a police force with strong morale can make and it's important that we show recognition and appreciation. The work that they do is incredibly challenging. I have issued a proclamation to recognize this week as National Police Week.

Mayor Senn also stated that tomorrow he has the privilege of representing the City of Laurens in Myrtle Beach. The South Carolina Community Development Association is having their annual conference and we have been nominated to receive an award of excellence for the newly constructed downtown plaza. We are one of two finalists for this award. It is a gratifying thing to see that we have something that the community has been enjoying recently, but it's also something that has gained statewide recognition and appreciation.

On Friday, I have been asked to share a word of thanks and encouragement on the award that the Laurens Commission of Public Works and the city received. The Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration's National Gas Distribution Infrastructure Safety and Moderation Grant Program selected Laurens CPW to receive an award in the amount of \$5,083,760. The purpose of this grant is to assist in the repair of aging, leak-prone distribution pipeline infrastructure, and the acquisition of equipment to reduce incidents and fatalities and to avoid economic losses. He stated that this is the first time that the Laurens CPW has received any grant money for natural gas.

Furthermore, you will see in your packet that a workshop will be held on June 6th. We have been requesting applications from members of the community to serve on city boards. Those boards include the Historic Preservation Commission, the Board of Zoning Appeals, and the Planning Commission. The purpose of the workshop is to discuss those applications and hopefully take action on those applications shortly after.

On June 17th, the city will be hosting the 2nd annual Juneteenth celebration. I know that there is lots of exciting entertainment that has been planned for it, both educational and informative as well as comedy and music. Mayor Senn thanked Councilor Campbell for her work in helping organize this celebration. City Hall will be closed on June 19th for the Juneteenth holiday.

The City of Laurens is continuing to grow. We are excited about the possibility of new industrial growth. He looks forward to discussing this with council shortly. Mayor Senn stated that he thanks local businesses and the citizens that are invested in our town. The work is ongoing and exciting.

CONSENT AGENDA

Approval of the May 16, 2023 Regular Meeting Agenda

A motion was made by Councilor Lowry and seconded by Councilor Sullivan to approve the agenda. The motion was approved unanimously.

Approval of the April 18, 2023 Regular Meeting Minutes

A motion was made by Councilor Lowry and seconded by Councilor Sullivan to approve the meeting minutes. The motion was approved unanimously.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

A motion was made by Councilor Miller and seconded by Councilor Latimore to go into Executive Session. The motion was approved unanimously.

The meeting proceeded back into regular session at the call of the chair. No action was taken.

OLD BUSINESS

1. Land Sale (201 West Main Street): AN ORDINANCE (03-23-02) APPROVING THE EXECUTION AND DELIVERY OF A PURCHASE AND SALE AGREEMENT: AND OTHER MATTERS RELATING THERETO -

This matter was discussed in Executive Session.

A motion was made by Councilor Miller and seconded by Councilor Campbell to approve the second reading of Ordinance 03-23-02. The motion was approved unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Redistricting: AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF LAURENS, SOUTH CAROLINA REVISING CITY COUNCIL DISTRICT LINES (05-23-01)

– Mayor Senn began by stating that the city is required to take part in the Census every ten years. In the wake of receiving the data from the Census, City Council held a redistricting workshop where we met with members of the South Carolina Revenue and Fiscal Affairs Office (RFA). During the workshop, the process of redistricting was discussed and the things that the law mandates must be our priorities and the priorities which were outlined by council. These include cleaning up the districting map to make recognizable neighborhoods so there is a logical and natural sense of cohesiveness and community within individual districts, respecting the diversity of our city, and adhering to the legal requirements. We came up with a plan that we believed complied with federal law and submitted it to the RFA. The map you see before you represents not only the very hard work of Planning and GIS Coordinator Madison Workman and City Administrator Delgado in coming up with the draft version of the map, it also represents RFA's input and revisions to the map. Councilor Sullivan read a statement where she requested a reexamination of redistricting lines for the City of Laurens and of the redistricting process. The process should include information of our recent electoral count annexation information, new proposed subdivision areas, and a clear and concise copy of the mapping with all listed streets and neighborhoods. She also asked to be included in the drafting of the mapping process. She was not in attendance of the workshop due to a planned vacation. She did not receive a notice regarding the drafting of the maps. She only received a notice of the workshop. She requested the meeting notes, which she received. She wishes to inform the public of her concern of the redistricting process. This is not to put blame on anyone or attack anyone. It is simply to announce her concern and request going forward. After viewing the map, it displays District 2 with less areas where citizens reside and more areas of industrial parks. She wants to make District 2 equal to Districts 1, 3, 4, 5, and 6. Because of the growth of the city, the map should display a need for additional representation, not a decrease in representation. A copy of this request will be forwarded to the local and state NAACPs to provide transparency in the possible change of demographics in District 2.

Mayor Senn thanked Councilor Sullivan for her comments. He stated that some of the points she raised can be addressed by City Administrator Delgado. Mr. Delgado stated that he put together the map based on the input of the workshop which was to make the neighborhoods look cohesive. He ran through the data and submitted it to the RFA for approval and they did not approve it. They taught him more about the principles and they came up with the draft you have in front of you. You can't take current electoral

results and put them in this process. You have to take the 2020 Census data and you have to take Census blocks. He asked Councilor Sullivan to take a look at Council Campbell's District 3. He stated that it looks like an elephant's trunk. There is nothing we can do to break this up because that is a Census Block. Basically, more people need to participate in the Census. There are only so many ways we can divide this up and not infringe on minority districts. If we were to change this in any form, we would probably have legal repercussions. This map comes from the RFA. He stated that he explained to the RFA what council wanted and this the legal advice they gave him.

Councilor Sullivan stated that she understood and she just wants it noted into the minutes and for it to be received as information because she will be providing this information to local and state NAACPs.

Mayor Senn affirmed that she is welcome to provide her statement to anyone she wishes. He stated that one of the points she raised was that District 2 appears smaller and is skewed toward Hunter Industrial Park. What you have to understand, he stated, is that the amount of land does not equal the number of people. On a map looking from space, District 2 might look smaller. However, it doesn't mean you or any other member of council wouldn't be representing just as many people. In fact, the guidance that Fiscal Affairs gives in coming up with these maps reflects the fact that there can't be too much of a change in population. All of the districts should have roughly equal numbers of residents. If that is your concern, that is reflected in this map. Mayor Senn also explained that the city cannot include areas where growth is expected but not yet currently present.

A motion was made by Councilor Lowry and seconded by Councilor Miller to approve Ordinance 05-23-01.

After more discussion among council members, the motion was approved 6-1 with Councilor Sullivan voting against it.

2. Budget: AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF LAURENS, SOUTH CAROLINA, BUDGET FOR THE FISCAL YEAR ENDING JUNE 30, 2024 (05-23-02) – Mayor Senn began by stating that this year's budget was developed on the part of City Council at this year's Budget Workshop. A tremendous amount of work went into it by City Administrator Delgado. The budget reflects the priorities of City Council, it does not raise taxes, and it keeps the city's millage the same. Furthermore, it contains a 5% minimum pay raise for employees and a 22% State Health Plan increase. It is a \$10,366,061 budget.

A motion was made by Councilor Miller and seconded by Councilor Campbell to approve Ordinance 05-23-02. The motion was approved unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Councilor Bolt and seconded by Councilor Lowry to adjourn the meeting. The motion was approved unanimously.

APPROVED:



NATHAN SENN, MAYOR

ATTEST:



LESLIE MATTISON, CITY CLERK