

**CITY OF LAURENS
SPECIAL CALLED COUNCIL MEETING
CPW TRAINING CENTER
214 CHURCH STREET, LAURENS, SC 29360
SEPTEMBER 29, 2023
10:00AM**

PRESENT

Mayor Nathan Senn, Councilor Johnnie Bolt, Councilor Cassandra Campbell, Councilor Sara Latimore, Councilor Martin Lowry (remote), Councilor Marian Miller, Councilor Alicia Sullivan, City Administrator Eric Delgado, IT Director Colby Rice, and City Clerk Leslie Mattison

PRESS IN ATTENDANCE

Judith Brown – Advertiser and Terry Benjamin – GoLaurens

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.

A motion was made by Councilor Campbell and seconded by Councilor Latimore to allow Councilor Lowry to participate in this meeting remotely. The motion was approved unanimously.

MAYOR'S REMARKS

Mayor Senn provided a glimpse into what this Special Called Meeting is about. He began by stating that Presbyterian College has decided to deed the Capital Theatre property to the city at no cost. The original plan with that facility was to operate it as an esports arena, as well as a restaurant, movie theater, and a performing arts center for students and the community. After a change in administration, a natural assessment of priorities, and costs and expenses, PC wanted to make it very clear that they want to continue to have a strong relationship with the City of Laurens. PC also wants the Capitol Theatre to be successful and to be used to its highest potential. Based upon this, they made the decision to transfer the property to the city. This matter is before you as a resolution.

Mayor Senn also explained in the Spring of 1950, City Council established the Public Housing Authority. Law requires that the director of the Housing Authority and the Board make their records and books available to council and make regular reports to

council in order to make sure that the residents of the City of Laurens, in particular the residents who are housed at that facility have the resources that they need. The city has had discussions with the Executive Director and the last time that the matter of the Housing Authority was before council was when the Executive Director asked that the city dissolve the Housing Authority. This means that there would no longer be any authority of council to appoint members to that Board. Nor would there be any responsibility of the Housing Authority to report to council. When that matter was brought to council, it was just a matter of public comment. There was no agenda item to consider, therefore no vote was taken. Mayor Senn stated that he had spoken with each councilor individually and it seems clear that there is no desire on the part of council to move in that direction. The next time the city heard from the Housing Authority was an announcement by the Board that they wished to resign their posts. This leaves council with the responsibility to make sure the Housing Authority Board has its spots filled, that operations are maintained, that the residents are cared for, and that an executive director is hired who cares for the residents and helps people who are their moment of need get on their feet again. Mayor Senn explained that council does not hire an Executive Director, but they appoint members to the Board. Those members hire the Director. The city reached out to members of the community to see if anyone would be willing to serve and reached out to council asking for recommendations. There are five seats on the Board. The practice at City of Laurens Housing Authority is that one of the seats belongs to a resident and that seat is appointed by the mayor. The other four seats are appointed by council.

Mayor Senn continues by describing the updated agreement that has been reached between Laurens County and the City of Laurens regarding procedures in collection of city fees and taxes. The original agreement was reached in 1990 and was updated in 2017. However, there is some ambiguity in the agreement. On the advice of council and working together with our partners at the county, an updated agreement has been reached which resolves some of the ambiguity between the city and the county. There is a resolution before council to approve the agreement.

CONSENT AGENDA

Approval of the September 29, 2023 Special Called Meeting Agenda -

A motion was made by Councilor Latimore and seconded by Councilor Miller to approve the Consent Agenda. The motion was approved unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Resolution 23-09-01: A Resolution accepting the donation of the Capitol Theatre (TMS #906-12-08-017) to the City of Laurens from Presbyterian College – Councilor

Miller stated that she is thankful to PC for the donation of the Capitol Theatre and she looks forward to all the things that are planned for that building. Councilor Bolt stated that he wanted to echo what Councilor Miller said. He thanked PC for turning it over to the city because they could have sold it to anyone, especially after putting the money into renovations. The city has great opportunities to make something out of it. Councilor Latimore stated that she is already thinking of a nice Christmas play that can take place there.

A motion was made by Councilor Miller and seconded by Councilor Latimore to approve Resolution 23-09-01. The motion was approved unanimously.

2. Appointment of Members to the City of Laurens Housing Authority Board – Mayor Senn stated that there are seven candidates listed on council's ballots. The seven candidates are Mr. Ray Bell, Rev. John Booker, Mrs. Susan Cooke, Mrs. Teresa Downey, RN, Ms. Alicia Gagin, Mrs. Beverly Powell, and Mr. James Barton. Mayor Senn instructed council to vote for four candidates. The terms will be staggered so there will be continuity.

Councilor Sullivan stated that she had spoken with Rev. Booker and he no longer wishes to be a candidate. Mayor Senn stated that he had not received any messages from Rev. Booker and he will remain on the ballot for now. Mayor Senn stated that if Rev. Booker is elected and does not wish to serve, then he could immediately resign and another person listed on the ballot will fill that spot.

City Clerk Mattison tallied the votes and the four candidates who were elected are Mrs. Susan Cooke, Mrs. Teresa Downey, Ms. Alicia Gagin, and Mr. James Barton.

A motion was made by Councilor Miller and seconded by Councilor Bolt to approve these four individuals to serve on the City of Laurens Housing Authority Board. The motion passed 6 – 1 with Councilor Sullivan voting no due to the lack of preparation time to get familiar with the nominees.

3. Resolution 23-09-02: Approval of a tax collection agreement between the City of Laurens and Laurens County – Councilor Sullivan asked how much the sanitation fee will be that is going to be added to the county taxes. Mayor Senn stated that that matter is not before council at this time.

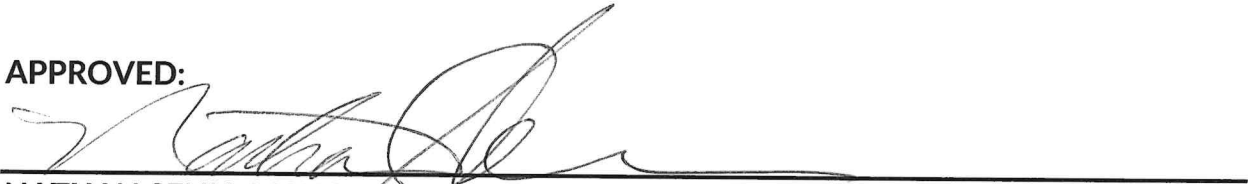
Councilor Lowry asked if there is going to be an increase in the city's cost for the county to collect the city's taxes. Mayor Senn stated that there will be an increase. Previously, the city agreed with the county to have them collect taxes and fees for 1% of the gross collections received by the county on the city's behalf. Section 2.4 of the agreement explains the increase. The fee will increase to 2.5% of the gross amount of collections.

A motion was made by Councilor Miller and seconded by Councilor Latimore to approve Resolution 23-09-02. The motion was approved unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT


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

APPROVED:



NATHAN SENN, MAYOR

ATTEST:



LESLIE MATTISON, CITY CLERK