

**CITY OF LAURENS  
REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING  
CPW TRAINING CENTER  
214 CHURCH STREET, LAURENS, SC 29360  
FEBRUARY 21, 2023  
5:30PM**

**PRESENT**

Mayor Nathan Senn, Councilor Johnnie Bolt, Councilor Cassandra Campbell, Councilor Sara Latimore, Councilor Marian Miller, Councilor Alicia Sullivan, IT Director Colby Rice, City Administrator Eric Delgado, City Clerk Leslie Mattison, CPW's General Manager - John Young, and CPW's Operations Director - Keith Woods

**ABSENT**

Councilor Martin Lowry

**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 Sullivan giving the invocation and was followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

**PIEDMONT MUNICIPAL POWER AGENCY UPDATE**

General Manager Andy Butcher was present to update council on the status of PMPA. He began by stating that he wants to cover three topics: 1) Accomplishments 2) Catawba Nuclear Plant 3) the future of PMPA. Examples of accomplishments include no rate increase since 2015 and a 5% rate reduction in 2018. Furthermore, he explained that the Catawba Nuclear Plant has not produced carbon since the 1980s except for a small piece of carbon that comes from Santee. General Manager Butcher stated that PMPA will be around for a very long time.

**MAYOR'S REMARKS**

Mayor Senn began by recognizing February as Black History Month. He stated that this year we celebrated the first city-sponsored Martin Luther King Day parade. This was a tremendous sign of progress. This is something that should be celebrated by the city as a city. He had the privilege of riding with Councilor Campbell and Councilor Bolt in the parade. It is important that we are a community that recognizes diversity and unity twelve months out of the year. Mayor Senn thanked city council for their efforts. Mayor Senn also stated that he just returned from the Riley Mayor's Design Fellowship

in Charleston. He explained that this was his second time attending. The first time he attended was as a fellow who was asked to participate and present some of the challenges that we had in Laurens. Since then, he has worked with graduate students, design professionals, and other elected officials to come up with good solutions the city's challenges. This time around at the Riley Mayor's Design Fellowship, Laurens was presented as the model for how to go about using smart design to encourage sustainable growth. The City of Laurens is literally teaching cities like Beaufort, Florence, and smaller communities like Williamston and Ridge Spring. We have lessons to share across the state. It is a pleasure for this city to be seen as an example of how to do things right. Mayor Senn stated that as he announced at the State of the City address, there is a ribbon cutting at the Capitol Theater on March 2<sup>nd</sup> at 5:30. This will be on the E-Sports venue portion of the Capitol Theater. They are continuing work on the café portion of that facility. Presbyterian College is excited to begin their E-Sports competitions and the city is looking forward to using it as well.

Our plaza construction on the north side of the courthouse is mostly complete. There are more tables and chairs on the way, which will double the seating capacity that is out there already. Also, new parking spaces will be painted where there hasn't been parking spaces before in front of City Hall and on Laurens Street. We had a nice event out there on the 14<sup>th</sup> for Valentine's Day.

We are already under way planning events for the Palmetto Blues & Roots Festival and our July 3<sup>rd</sup> event. Stay tuned for announcements about both festivals.

It's budget season already and so our city administrator is already at work with the task of preparing next year's budget. As we approach this time, our main priority is our city employees. We want to attract the best talent and retain the best talent. We are looking to give our city employees a good raise in order to stay competitive and we want to hear from council about their priorities for the year ahead. We want to make sure we have the best budget possible. The budget workshop has been scheduled for April 25<sup>th</sup>.

Code enforcement is something that we hear a lot about. We want to make sure people understand that we hear you and understand your concerns. There is more code enforcement going on right now than there has been in many years across the city and we are doing this with a two person department. They are not just doing code enforcement, they are also working with permits, the comprehensive plan, the Historic Preservation Commission, and all of the other things that go into that department. Also, as we approach this budget season, another thing that we are doing is working with the police department to add a Class One officer that will be able to help with code enforcement, but will also be able to serve in a police role, so the two departments can share that cost. Also, this will allow for flexibility when it comes to the time that our code enforcement spends on those tasks.

With the new addition to Streets & Sanitation, we will be moving some staff that is

currently located at City Hall to man the operations at the Streets & Sanitation Department. Darlene, who works at the front desk and takes payments for garbage at City Hall will be moved to the Streets & Sanitation facility. This means that we want to look at the best way we can approach streamlining the process of permitting and business license applications, essentially a small business liaison. Also, we plan to hire a permit tech that will be able to fill that role and will streamline that process so we can offer the best possible service to the public.

It's been announced by the Police Department that they have developed an app that will allow citizens to report crime and to give tips to help solve crime. We want to make sure that there is as little barrier as possible between residents of the City of Laurens and city government. We want to bring our systems up to date so it will match what residents have come to expect in every other facet of their lives. We are also working on the city side to develop a similar app which will allow people to obtain city council agendas, to look at city ordinances, to get city permit applications, to sign up for youth sports, etc. We are trying to bring the city into the 21<sup>st</sup> century while working as efficiently as we can.

While the Police Department is being discussed, Mayor Senn wanted to report that the City of Laurens police will be working with other city agencies for an enhanced enforcement effort from March 1<sup>st</sup> until March 17<sup>th</sup> in order to cut down on traffic violations. This is all part of having a safer city.

The city is continuing to work on the comprehensive plan. We have collected hundreds of online surveys and held six different input sessions. Now, this input from the public is being compiled along with information from city staff, non-profit organizations, and residents that want to keep the City of Laurens a great place. Once this information is combined into one draft document, it will be presented to the public. The public will again have additional opportunity for input and discussion. As we are developing these plans for the next ten years, it needs to reflect the desires of the community and to be a product of as much community input as possible. But also needs to benefit from the product of trained professionals who are able to give us the benefit of their education and training. Mayor Senn believes that the way the city approaches land use needs to be overhauled. There are better ways at approaching this need than the way the city has done for many years. We have to enforce the law that is on the books while it is on the books, but as we are planning for the next ten years, it would be foolish not to take a look at lessons we can learn from our own experience and the expertise of others so that we come up with the best possible system. One of the things that he hears frequently is that the community wants to make sure that we don't lose the character of Laurens or the small town feel of Laurens. Once all of the input is received, it will be presented to city council to be adopted by ordinance.

Mayor Senn reminded everyone that the city, after over a decade, is taking its own

garbage service back beginning February 27<sup>th</sup>. We are working with neighboring municipalities to lease trash trucks until the ones the city has on order come in later this year.

There is a very exciting announcement regarding the senior's program. There will be a press conference at The Ridge on Friday at 1:00. He invites everyone to attend.

There have been clean up days scheduled in the Pinehaven community. They are March 18<sup>th</sup> and March 25<sup>th</sup>.

There is a community meeting regarding Ward Three scheduled at The Ridge on February 28<sup>th</sup> at 6:30. He appreciates Councilor Campbell's help in organizing this meeting.

Hopefully, the takeaway from all of these things is that our community and everyone in our community matters. We want to grow our city and grow it together in a way that looks out for everyone.

## **CONSENT AGENDA**

### **Approval of the February 21, 2023 Regular Meeting Agenda**

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

### **Approval of the January 19, 2023 Regular Meeting Minutes**

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

## **OLD BUSINESS**

- 1. GO Bond:** AN ORDINANCE (02-23-01) TO PROVIDE FOR THE ISSUANCE AND SALE OF A NOT EXCEEDING ONE MILLION DOLLAR (\$1,000,000) GENERAL OBLIGATION BOND, SERIES 2023 OF THE CITY OF LAURENS, SOUTH CAROLINA, TO PRESCRIBE THE PURPOSES FOR WHICH THE PROCEEDS SHALL BE EXPENDED, TO PROVIDE FOR THE PAYMENT THEREOF, AND OTHER MATTERS RELATING THERETO.

A motion was made by Councilor Bolt and seconded by Councilor Latimore to approve Ordinance 02-23-01. The motion was approved 5 – 1 with Councilor Sullivan voting no.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

- 1. Code Adoption:** AN ORDINANCE (02-23-02) ADOPTING THE INTERNATIONAL CODE COUNCIL'S COLLECTION OF CODES, AS MODIFIED FROM TIME TO TIME BY THE STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA.

Mayor Senn stated that council should be familiar that state law states that these codes need to be updated and revised from time-to-time. By ordinance, city council will adopt the codes.

A motion was made by Councilor Campbell and seconded by Councilor Bolt to approve Ordinance 02-23-02. The motion was approved 5 – 1 with Councilor Sullivan voting no.

**ADJOURNMENT**

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

**APPROVED:**



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**NATHAN SENN, MAYOR**

**ATTEST:**



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**LESLIE MATTISON, CITY CLERK**