

**CITY OF LAURENS
REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING
CPW TRAINING CENTER
214 CHURCH STREET, LAURENS, SC 29360
MARCH 22, 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 and Iva Cadmus - WLBG

THE MEDIA WAS NOTIFIED BY AN EMAILED AGENDA.

CALL TO ORDER AND INVOCATION

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

DISABILITIES AWARENESS MONTH

Laurens County Disabilities and Special Needs Board Director Jason Tavenner thanked council for approving a resolution designating March as Disabilities Awareness Month. He stated that this proclamation raises awareness for all the contributions that people with disabilities are making in our communities, whether it be through work, play, or all other endeavors.

KEEP AMERICA BEAUTIFUL – LAURENS COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Courtney Stonell, KLCB Affiliate Coordinator, announced that she was proud to present to council the official certificate as a Keep Laurens County Beautiful affiliate. She stated that it is an honor to present this to everyone because it is because of the city's support that she is able to help keep the city and county clean. She has made a lot of good partnerships working with the city. She thanked council for their support for all of their efforts.

She continued by informing council about KLCB's Earth Day event. A "Team Up to Clean Up" is being presented in April as a challenge with all of the county's in the upstate. Any bags that are voluntarily picked up in April will count towards the bag count. She encouraged everyone to participate and show that Laurens County is dedicated to doing their part in the fight against litter.

MAYOR'S REMARKS

The voters of our city have spoken loudly and clearly. I look forward to serving the people of this city for the next four years, but our victory in the election last night was a victory of Laurens. We will carry on the great work we have begun, and the unified leadership who serve City Council and the effective team we have assembled across every city department will not skip a beat.

There will be more to say later, but tonight, we will carry on business as usual. Our City Code of Ordinances Section 2-6(f), which was passed in 2014, states that "newly elected city officials shall take office on the first meeting in April following the date of the general election." At our next meeting, we will come together to elect a Mayor Pro Tempore and Councilors Bolt, Campbell, Lowry, and I will all be sworn in at that time. Further details about that will be released in due course.

For now, I will give you a report on the things my administration and I have been working on and give you some dates to mark on your calendar.

Four years ago, our first order of business was to organize a city-wide community clean-up. Four years later, we have worked together with our partners in the County and the City of Clinton to help establish Keep Laurens County Beautiful, our local affiliate of Keep America Beautiful.

On April 20th, the City of Laurens and Laurens Commission of Public Works are getting together to get a head start on cleaning up our city. Our employees will lead by example, spending the day cleaning up the streets in every part of the city. Then, we're getting together for the second annual City v. CPW Kickball Tournament. We've welcomed a former Clemson Football Player, Tayquon Johnson, to the Police Department and we're going to insist that CPW doesn't get to have their team members wear steel-toed boots again. So, we're optimistic about our chances this year!

Then, April 22nd, Earth Day, we invite everyone to take part in a citywide community cleanup. Please follow our city's social media for more information and a link for groups to sign up online.

These are great opportunities to come together as public servants and community leaders to show that we are committed to keeping our city clean.

In April, we will hear a report on the City's finances and our annual audit from Gary Bailey. But I am happy to report that our city's financial health is strong.

In our Streets and Sanitation Department, we are bidding out the General Obligation Bond which will fund construction of our Streets & Sanitation Department Facility on Caroline Street. Once that bid is awarded, we will proceed with construction, and we look forward to that work beginning this Spring.

While on the topic of construction, I am pleased to report that the construction which is taking place at City Hall and our Police Department and Municipal Court facilities is advancing according to schedule. As part of this renovation, our new court facilities and council chambers will be equipped with up-to-date technology for presenting evidence to the Court and jurors, and presentations to City Council and the public at our regular meetings. We're also committed to transparency and making the proceedings of city council accessible to the public in our new space, so we will have improved technology for live streaming our council meetings.

We're also using a cutting-edge approach to technology in the way we investigate and prosecute crime. Our Police Department has secured thousands of dollars in donations from private companies in our city for the purchase of new license plate reader cameras. These cameras will serve as a force-multiplier, allowing us to identify stolen vehicles, or track the movement of criminals and suspects, allowing us to apprehend them more quickly.

Thanks to Europastry, our newest employer in Hunter Industrial Park, we have obtained a donation of \$15,000 for purchase of four of these new license plate readers. This is just another example of our commitment to making every part of the City of Laurens safe.

These cameras are just one piece of the puzzle. We will also be introducing new city ordinances which mirror state laws so that our police officers will have the discretion to write municipal tickets rather than uniform traffic citations from the state. This will give us the ability to keep funds collected from fines here in the city rather than sending that money to Columbia, but it will also allow us to enforce penalties without necessarily affecting points on someone's license which, in turn, affects insurance rates for drivers. If we have a young driver who is caught speeding, we can either issue a fine or require traffic school and community service, and not only will this prevent insurance rates from going up for Mom and Dad who are probably paying the bill, it will also make the young offender part of the solution to cleaning up litter in our city.

We have other exciting developments happening across the city.

There will be a new sports bar-type restaurant called "Garcia's Kitchen," which will be opening within the next few weeks in the Western Plaza shopping center. Please stay tuned for more information about the ribbon cutting at that new addition.

Our new Splash Pad will soon open for its first full season of use. Dominick Motors will be relocating to its new location on Exchange Drive within the next couple weeks, depending on how quickly the DMV does their required part in assisting with that transition. We are excited about the conversion of the current space to a new concessions and bathroom facility for use with the Splash Pad, and we'll also add a significant number of new parking spaces in the downtown area.

Our Parks and Recreation Department will be holding a Teen Life Skills Course on essential auto care and emergency services training at 6:15 on April 3rd. If you have a young person in your household who needs to learn how to change a tire, we've gotcha covered. To register, visit the link on the City of Laurens Parks and Recreation Department Facebook page, call or visit the Ridge.

We announced on Friday, March 10th, that after more than two years of hard work, Watts Mill would be redeveloped by Clear Mountain Properties if the city continued on its current path of progress. With last night's election results, I am pleased to report that the mill site's new owners will be submitting a request for the property to be annexed into the City of Laurens and we will be presenting a plan to the Planning Commission for their consideration shortly.

As we proceed with renewal of long-neglected areas, we are making sure we improve roads. SCDOT is will soon begin repaving of several DOT-maintained roads, but the city has accepted a bid from Satterfield to repave the following city streets:

- Kennedy's Ring
- Coleman Street
- Bub Avenue
- Reames Street
- Harts Court
- Vine Street

When it comes to roads, which are paved by SCDOT, our city's repaving needs are identified and prioritized by the County Transportation Commission. We believe it would be beneficial for the City of Laurens to have similar representation from the public when it comes to our city streets. So, I am forming a new transportation advisory board which will serve on a volunteer basis. Those who wish to serve on this advisory board will be selected from every ward across the city, and they will help us make sure that we have good input from community members when it comes to making decisions about repaving our few city-maintained streets, but also input we can pass along to the County Transportation Commission. We will be soliciting applications from individuals interested in serving on this advisory board, and I welcome the nominations from members of City Council as well.

We will have more to report soon, but I sure that I speak for almost every member of City Council when I say that we are united in our shared vision for the city's future, we are excited to be working together for the next few years, and we are grateful for the support of the citizens of Laurens and the confidence they have placed in us.

CONSENT AGENDA

Approval of the March 22, 2023 Regular Meeting Agenda

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

Approval of the February 21, 2023 Regular Meeting Minutes

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

OLD 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.

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

NEW BUSINESS

1. **Ordinance, Agreement, and Supplement for Local Revenue Service Programs:** AN ORDINANCE (03-23-01) AUTHORIZING AND DIRECTING THE CITY OF LAURENS TO ENTER INTO AN INTERGOVERNMENTAL AGREEMENT RELATING TO SOUTH CAROLINA LOCAL REVENUE SERVICES; TO PARTICIPATE IN ONE OR MORE LOCAL REVENUE SERVICE PROGRAMS; TO EXECUTE AND DELIVER ONE OR MORE PARTICIPANT PROGRAM SUPPLEMENTS; AND OTHER MATTERS RELATING THERETO.

Mayor Senn explained that, for many years, the Municipal Association of South Carolina has offered collection programs for certain business license taxes. Historically, these programs have been known as the Insurance Tax Collection Program, the Brokers Tax Collection Program, and the Telecommunication Tax Collection Program. In the last year, the Municipal Association has rebranded these programs as Local Revenue Services to better reflect its purpose and has renamed the three business license programs as the Insurance Tax Program, or ITP; the Brokers Tax Program, or BTP; and the Telecommunication Tax Program, or TTP. Because of the name change of the programs, and because of changes to the state's business licensing law from Act 176 of 2020, your continued participation in these programs requires your municipality to take action to pass new authorizing ordinances and agreements by May 26.

A motion was made by Councilor Miller and seconded by Councilor Sullivan to approve Ordinance 03-23-01. The motion was approved unanimously.

2. **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.

City Administrator Delgado explained that this ordinance is for the sale of the property located at 201 West Main Street (Truist Bank and the city's Police Department are currently located there). The building was appraised at \$1,500,000. The current offer is for \$1,000,000. The hotel feasibility study conducted in July determined that within five years, the property, if a hotel, would generate tax revenue (sales/lodging/real estate) of \$1,062,964. The long-term return on investment/direct economic impact makes this sale favorable.

He continued by explaining that the city could sell the property for market value to the right buyer. However, this option gives the city control over what goes back into Truist: A Hotel.

This ordinance allows the mayor and the city administrator to negotiate the property sale for nothing less \$1,000,000. Council can refine the parameters on the second reading. City Administrator Delgado suggested \$1,000,000 in cash and a payoff of the revenue bond, with a current balance of around \$200,000.

Truist's contract ends in 2026. The city will not break this contract.

A motion was made by Councilor Latimore and seconded by Councilor Miller to approve Ordinance 03-23-02. The motion was approved unanimously.

3. Motion to delegate authority to the City Administrator to restructure all city boards and present a new slate of nominees to council at a later date.

Mayor Senn explained that the city is planning to reset all of its volunteer citizen committees. These boards include the Historic Preservation Commission, the Planning Commission, and the Board of Zoning Appeals. A new board, the City Roads Advisory Committee, will also be added. It will be composed of citizens from each ward.

The city website has a link for anyone who is interested in learning about and applying for these boards. Applications must be received by June 1st.


City Administrator Delago explained that this motion was made in November after the executive session, but it was not an action item on the agenda. This motion is very much needed.

A motion was made by Councilor Miller and seconded by Councilor Sullivan to approve resetting the members of the city boards. The motion was approved unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT

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

APPROVED:



NATHAN SENN, MAYOR

ATTEST:



LESLIE MATTISON, CITY CLERK