

MINUTES
MAY 27, 2014
LAURENS COUNTY COUNCIL
HISTORIC COURTHOUSE – PUBLIC SQUARE
COUNTY COUNCIL CHAMBERS

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

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 EMS – Chad Burrell, Director; Laurens County Finance Director, Lisa Kirk and Laurens County Human Resources Manager, Debi Parker;

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

SCHEDULED SPEAKERS: Jason Tavenner, Director, Laurens County Disability and Special Needs.

SCHEDULED MEETING AGENDA ITEMS - 1.) Call to Order – Chairman Coleman; 2.) Invocation – Councilman Nash; 3.) Pledge of Allegiance; 4.) Approval of Agenda, May 27, 2014; 5.) Approval of Minutes - May 13, 2014 regular session and May 12, 2014 budget session; 6.) Laurens County Disability and Special Needs Board Funding Request for Fiscal Year 2014/2015 Budget; 7.) Third Reading Approval, Laurens County Ordinance #765, “An Ordinance to Impose Limitations and Restrictions on Property Owned by Laurens County For Public Outdoor Recreational Use And Other Matter Appertaining Thereto”; 8.) Discussion of the establishment of an EMS transport station in Western Laurens County; 9.) Second Reading Approval, Laurens County Ordinance #767, FY 2014-2015 County Budget; 10.) Second Reading Approval, Laurens County Ordinance #768, FY 2014-2015 Educational Millage; 11.) Second Reading – Ordinance #769 – “An Ordinance to Amend Ordinance #465 Providing For the Use of the maximum legal percentage of Local Option Sales Tax Funds for the Fiscal Year 2014-2015; And to further Use and Apply Funds For the Purpose of Revenue Shortfalls in Laurens County and Other Matters Appertaining Thereto.”; 12.) County Council Committee on Health, Welfare and Public Safety Report – Councilwoman Anderson, Chairperson; 13.) Administrative Report, Ernie Segars, County Administrator; 14.) Public Comments; 15.) Comments from Council Members; 16.) Adjournment.

MEETING NOTIFICATION - The County Council Members, Department Heads and the Press were informed of the budget session meeting in a timely manner.

CALL TO ORDER – Councilman Coleman called the May 27, 2014 session of Laurens County Council to order at 5:30 P.M. in the Council Chambers of the Historic Courthouse. Chairman Coleman invited all to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance followed by the invocation provided by Councilman Nash.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA – VICE CHAIRMAN MCDANIEL made the MOTION to approve the agenda as presented with COUNCILWOMAN ANDERSON SECONDING; VOTE 7-0.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – COUNCILMAN NASH made the MOTION to approve the minutes from the May 12, 2014 budget session and the May 13, 2014 regular session of Council. VICE CHAIRMAN MCDANIEL SECONDING; VOTE 7-0.

LAURENS COUNTY DISABILITY AND SPECIAL NEEDS BOARD – In lieu of a misunderstanding of attendance at the May 20th budget session with Council, Mr. Tavenner addressed Council on the proposed facility expansion and of the need for monetary support.

Mr. Tavenner said, “Thank you Council for allowing me to speak. In my fifteen (15) years with the Disability and Special Needs, I do not recall us attending with a financial request. We have saved our request for a major project we are conducting here in Laurens County. As you all know, we at the Laurens County Disability and Special Needs have a variety of programs from “Residential Homes”, “Adult Day Programs”, “Family Support” and “Day Camps”. In our need to raise awareness of services in the Clinton Community, we have purchased property with the intent of expanding our day programs, specifically in the Clinton area. We intend on making services more available to the entire County and to increase the quality of services. We are presently talking with the Town of Gray Court and using the old Pleasantview School. We have five hundred (500) families in Laurens County and employ well over two hundred eighty (280) people within Laurens County.”

Mr. Tavenner explained the overall costs as follows:

Project Cost -	\$800,000	
Funding Sources -	SC DDSN (Stte Funds)	\$400,000
	The Bailey Foundation	\$ 10,000
	Laurens Electric Cooperative	\$ 10,000
	Memorials	<u>\$ 1,320</u>
	Total	\$421,320
Unfunded Portion -	\$378,680	

Chairman Coleman thanked Mr. Tavenner and expressed gratitude over the programs conducted for the Laurens County citizens and of the importance to the community.

THIRD READING – ORDINANCE #765 “AN ORDINANCE TO IMPOSE LIMITATIONS AND RESTRICTIONS ON PROPERTY OWNED BY LAURENS COUNTY FOR PUBLIC OUTDOOR RECREATIONAL USE AND OTHER MATTERS APPERTAINING THERETO”. – COUNCILWOMAN ANDERSON made the MOTION to approve Ordinance #765 as presented with COUNCILMAN TOLLISON SECONDDING; VOTE 7-0.

DISCUSSION OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN EMS TRANSPORT STATION IN WESTERN LAURENS COUNTY – EMS Director, Chad Burrell appeared before Council requesting to rescind the request for building, staffing and equipping a Transport Station in Western Laurens.

Director Burrell said, “This is a very important need within Laurens County and I feel that the timing is not exactly right for this right now. I feel that more research into the matter with funding sources needs to be in place as well as public education on the needs”.

Chairman Coleman said, “EMS in Laurens County is one of the best in the State and we do need to proceed with more research concerning the location of and funding sources for an additional station. I would like to assign this task to a County Council Committee sometime midyear to research in more detail so that it would be funded and manned properly”.

SECOND READING – ORDINANCE #767 – FISCAL YEAR 2014-2015 COUNTY BUDGET - Administrator Segars reviewed the following:

General Fund	\$21,747,213
EMS	\$ 3,485,458
Victim’s Assist	\$ 183,661
Solid Waste	<u>\$ 1,964,227</u>
Total	\$27,380,559

COUNCILMAN PITTS made the MOTION to approve Ordinance #767 upon second reading as presented with COUNCILMAN TOLLISON SECONING: VOTE 7-0.

Chairman Coleman stated, "We still need to have a public hearing and a third reading on this budget. I feel that I need to say publicly that this Council struggles to pass a budget without raising taxes when your insurance costs go up three hundred thousand dollars (\$300,000); workman comp going up two hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$250,000); health insurance going up by fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000) and a shortfall of over seven hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$750,000) from the State. There are just no way to fund these increases and offset the funds cuts from the State."

Administrator Segars informed Council that Public Hearing and Third Reading would be planned for June 24th.

SECOND READING – ORDINANCE #768 – FISCAL YEAR 2014-2015 EDUCATIONAL MILLAGE –
VICE CHAIRMAN MCDANIEL made the MOTION to approve Ordinance #768 upon second reading with COUNCILWOMAN ANDERSON SECONING for discussion.

Councilman Tollison asked Chairman Coleman to state the millage amount. Chairman Coleman replied one (1) mill.

Councilman Pitts said, "This in conjunction with the Future Scholars Program discussed at the last meeting, I do not see the need for a millage to be added for the Future Scholars, I would like to see that a percentage be taken from the total educational millage already in place and placed in a special account; then honor the remaining funds with the ninety – ten split. This way Council controls the funds and is put in the hands of the residents of Laurens County and not in the general funds hands of the institutions of Higher Education. I believe this a way to at least begin the Future Scholars Program and at least touch the hands of the residents of Laurens County".

COUNCIL VOTED 6-1 (Councilman Pitts in opposition) to the earlier motion.

Chairman Coleman said, "I am an opponent of the scholarship program...I do not think it fair to cut the other institutions at this time.....I would like to see Council consider adding a mill or half a mill to this at some point in time. There are other Counties in the State that are doing this same thing....it is not just Laurens County".

SECOND READING – ORDINANCE #769 – "AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND ORDINANCE #465 PROVIDING FOR THE USE OF THE MAXIMUM LEGAL PERCENTAGE OF LOCAL OPTION SALES TAX FUNDS FOR THE FISCAL YEAR 2014-2015; AND TO FURTHER USE AND APPLY FUNDS FOR THE PURPOSE OF REVENUE SHORTFALLS IN LAURENS COUNTY AND OTHER MATTERS APPERTAINING THERETO." – COUNCILWOMAN ANDERSON made the MOTION to approve Ordinance #769 upon second reading as presented with COUNCILMAN PITTS SECONING for discussion.

Councilman Nash stated that he felt in wrong to take the twenty nine percent (29%) of the Local Option Sales Tax as the citizens voted twenty (20) years ago for one hundred percent (100%) to be used for the rollback in taxes.

Councilman Tollison stated that Council could not achieve a budget without using the twenty nine percent (29%).

Councilman Wood said, "I agree with Councilman Nash. This will be the second time in taking the twenty nine percent (29%) option and we have only used these funds in times of need. We have used these funds to prevent a tax increase. I can not object to taking it this year because I feel like it is necessary to avoid a tax increase. These are rainy day funds and not just for taking because it is there. To keep our services, we have to do something".

COUNCIL VOTED 7-0.

REPORT – COUNTY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, WELFARE AND PUBLIC SAFETY -
Councilwoman Anderson, Chairperson of the Committee on Health, Welfare and Public Safety said, "The Committee and staff have discussed the document presented to us. We do have some concerns and have requested that the document be sent to the South Carolina Department of Environmental and Health Control (SC DHEC) for review. Once we obtain their comments, we will bring it back to Council for consideration".

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT – Mr. Segars, County Administrator, stated that he did not have anything to report at this time.

PUBLIC COMMENT – Chairman Coleman opened the floor for public comments at 6:00 P.M.

- 1.) Mr. Stewart Jones – “I just want to thank Council personally for thinking logically about this. One thing that I keep hearing is that the cost of living is up for us all. One thing not mentioned is the value of the dollar going down and is presently four percent (4%) of its original value. I do not believe we need to make matters worse for those that have the least. I hear Council say that fifteen dollars (\$15) is not much but, I know I can feed my family of four (4), five (5) meals on fifteen dollars (\$15). Two things that have brought this to point for me is that the population for Laurens County since 2008 has remained flat....decreased. Laurens County has more ambulances than Greenville County. Laurens County has one (1) ambulance for every thirteen thousand two hundred (13,200) people while Greenville County has one (1) ambulance for every seventeen thousand five hundred (17,500) people”.

With no others wishing to address Council, Chairman Coleman closed the public comment segment at 6:04 P.M.

COMMENTS FROM COUNCIL:

- 1.) Councilman Nash said, “I think we are on the right road for our graduates. Offering technical training for those who are not ready for the workforce. Ninety percent (90%) of the lottery funds that does go to the technical colleges are for administrative overhead and not for teaching the trades”.
- 2.) Councilman Wood said, “I feel that if a person that has dollars invested in themselves, they will stick with an educational program rather than when someone is paying it off for them. This Country is a Country of handouts. You have people out there that will not even work for minimum wage. Ten (10) more ambulances are not going to solve our problems. The fee is a tax increase no matter what way you look at it. As noted on the per capita per ambulance, I do not think we have but four (4) working box units in the County and the numbers quoted are off a good bit for a population of sixty nine thousand (69,000). I was approached many times over the past weekend at the Feastival about the fifteen dollar fee; there are so many untruths told an floating around about the fifteen dollar (\$15) fee. I am amazed at the untruths told. I am not sitting here advocating a tax increase. There are seven (7) people sitting around this table trying to make it better for the citizens of the County. People don’t work for nothing and the trucks are not given to us. I am glad we are going to put it off because you can not pay for something without the money.”

Also, Councilman Wood reported of the recent Catfish Feastival activity; over thirty thousand (30,000) attended over a three (3) day period.

- 3.) Vice Chairman McDaniel said, “While we are the subject of education tonight and really is not something we should really have anything to do with. It has always been a thing for me when you see advertising saying going from bachelor in two to three years with online courses....all you really get is a piece of paper and a group of nonfunctioning people that are defeating the purpose of going to school. Most folks don’t make it even after four years of sitting and listening to educators.”
- 4.) Councilman Pitts said, “According to the Piedmont Tec billboards, seven (7) out of ten (10) tuitions for technical studies is free. I want to go on record for saying that I support Piedmont Tec and USC Upstate. By doing as I suggested with the Educational millage, we, this Council control where the dollars will be spent. Rather that going to the general fund of that institution with them controlling how the money is spent.”
- 5.) Chairman Coleman said, “Having Piedmont Tech in Laurens County has much interest from all over the State others are looking at what we have done and supported. We are helping to provide training for the job industry needs. Greenwood County has twice the taxes that Laurens County have. Laurens County is a great place to live”.

ADJOURNMENT – Chairman Coleman adjourned the meeting at 6:16 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,



Betty C. Walsh

Laurens County Clerk to Council