CITY OF LAURENS
REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING
126 EAST PUBLIC SQUARE
OCTOBER 19, 2021
5:30PM

PRESENT
Mayor Nathan Senn, Councilor Johnnie Bolt, Councilor Cassandra Campbell, Councilor Sara Latimore, Councilor Marian Miller, Councilor Alicia Sullivan, City Attorney Tom Thompson, IT Director Colby Rice, City Administrator Gary Coleman, and City Clerk Leslie Mattison

ABSENT
Councilor Martin Lowry

PRESS IN ATTENDANCE
Kelsey Woods – GoLaurens, Iva Cadmus – WLBG, and 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.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION & HEARING
1. Clinton Police Chief Sonny Ledda recognizing Laurens City Police Chief Chrissie Latimore as the new president of the South Carolina Police Chief’s Association – Chief Ledda began by presenting a video of him recently swearing Chief Latimore in as president at the Police Chief’s Association conference. He stated that Chief Latimore joined the Association four years ago. It takes three years to go from second vice president to first vice president, now to president. He stated that right out of the gate, she threw her hat in the ring and threw everything in there and is making everyone proud. He commended her efforts and her determination. Chief Latimore thanked mayor and council and stated that she is going to do her best to make everyone proud.

2. Main Street Director Jonathan Irick updating Mayor and Council on Squealin’ on the Square – Main Street Director Irick was happy to give council the update that Squealin’ was a great success. He stated that there was a lot of participation from the community and 16 barbecue teams competed. There were competitors from Texas, Pennsylvania, and the overall winners of the competition were from Indiana. The golf carts taking
people back and forth to their cars were very successful and helpful. He thanked the Police Department and the Streets and Sanitation Department for their help with this event.

Main Street Director Irick also explained that The Wells-Clardy Cottage is being renovated. The home was built in 1895 and is located at 409 West Main Street. Main Street will be doing some fundraising events in the future to help cover the cost of renovation and is asking for any volunteer help. He is proud to say that they are saving a historic structure that will eventually become an Air BNB for Main Street.

Main Street Director Irick also informed council that work continues on both the Bailey Building and the Swofford Building around the square. He explained that the stucco building at 110 Court Street is currently an Air BNB and is rented out every weekend until the end of the year. Additionally, Main Street Christmas activities are coming up and the music festival will take place in the spring. Also, the newly installed electric charging station in the city’s parking lot is frequently being used.

3. **Public Comment** – Stanley Yeargin was present and explained to council that he is a member of the Jersey Street Community. He had a car stolen a couple of years ago and the case was never solved. He believes that it will be beneficial to put cameras in place around the community.

**REPORTS & COMMUNICATIONS**

1. **Police Department Report** – Chief Chrissie Latimore was present to update council on the Police Department. She stated that two officers have recently graduated from the academy and they are waiting on two more to go to the academy. She stated that the city now has its own Victims Advocate. Amanda Veal was hired for this position in August. She congratulated Scott Franklin on his promotion to PIO. She also congratulated Jawarski Shelton on his promotion to Lieutenant and Olga Baza-Norato and Reid Miller on their promotions to Sergeant.

2. **City Councilor Reports** – Councilor Miller stated that there will be a community meeting on October 23rd. The meeting will be held at Springfield Baptist Church and the topics of community clean up and community concerns will be discussed. Councilor Campbell stated that they had a booth set up at Squealin’ for the Community Watch Program.

3. **Mayor’s Report** – Mayor Senn began by addressing littering and community clean up. He stated that it is not a change that comes overnight. It is a culture change and it comes from building a sense of pride in the community. The effort we have seen from leaders in our community goes a long way towards changing the culture.
Since the last council meeting, a workshop has taken place with Council and the City Administrator where department heads spoke about the specific needs for their departments. Council has come to a consensus on the spending priorities of the American Rescue Plan money that has been allocated to the city. A broad overview of this includes reimbursing lost revenue to the city. This lost revenue can be used as unrestricted funds which will provide the ability for the city to replace a 40 year old ladder fire truck and upgrade long overdue technology improvements. This will help us respond to any future pandemic challenges so we can work remotely when necessary and have greater technological capabilities as a Covid response measure. We intend to compensate our first responders and city employees for the hardship and extra time they experienced working through Covid. A major modernization will be planned for our Police Department and court facilities. This modernization will consolidate the Police Department and provide a clear distinction between Municipal Court and the city Police Department architecturally, but also to provide facility upgrades that are long overdue. Additionally, it is a goal of this administration to work with community partners and bring fiber internet to every street in the city. One of the benefits of bringing fiber to the streets across the city and to improve technology is that some of the camera upgrades and replacements will have the ability to tie into a fiber network. Mayor Senn pointed out that our Police Department has already seen some benefit from the city’s current cameras. The graffiti “artist” who tagged some city buildings with graffiti was identified by these cameras, charged, and was sentenced to a significant amount of community service. Mayor Senn expressed his appreciation to council for their cooperation in reviewing the city’s needs and priorities because these are investments that will last for many years to come.

Furthermore, he announced that applications have been received for the City Administrator position. He stated that we are committed to bringing in the best candidate that is going to help bring the City of Laurens into the next phase of growth from the day-to-day operations standpoint.

There have been several community members that have suggested that the city show Halloween movies on the Square during October. Since the city already has a stage, we have reached out to Main Street Laurens to coordinate this with them.

There is a major announcement coming on Thursday at 6:00pm. But this is all he can say about this statement at this point.

Mayor Senn wrapped up his comments by stating that since the city has been searching for an administrator, there was an individual that expressed to the mayor that when municipal officials are gathering across the state and they talk about up and coming cities and places that are doing things well, Laurens is on the short list of the names that
gets mentioned on a regular basis. There are very special things happening in our city and he appreciates the comradery that council has to make these things happen.

CONSENT AGENDA

1. Approval of the October 19, 2021 Council Agenda
A motion was made by Councilor Miller and seconded by Councilor Latimore to approve the agenda. The motion was approved unanimously.

2. Approval of the September 21, 2021 Regular Meeting Minutes
A motion was made by Councilor Miller and seconded by Councilor Latimore to approve the meeting minutes. Councilor Bolt pointed out one item that needed to be amended. The smoke alarms that were donated to the city’s fire department were donated by WoodmenLife instead of Modern Woodmen. The motion was approved unanimously.

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

APPROVED:

NATHAN SENN, MAYOR

ATTEST:

LESLIE MATTISON, CITY CLERK AND TREASURER