

**CITY OF LAURENS
REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING
MUNICIPAL CENTER
250 WEST LAURENS STREET, LAURENS, SC 29360
JULY 16, 2024
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, IT Director Colby Rice, and City Clerk Leslie Mattison

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 Mayor Senn giving the invocation and was followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

MAYOR'S REMARKS

Mayor Senn stated that Freedom Fest was a great success. There were vendors present from as far away as Columbia, SC. There were visitors who came to celebrate from Florida, Georgia, and North Carolina. The city is still waiting for the results from the Visitor 360 report that will provide information about the number of attendees.

He continued by giving departmental updates. The annual fire inspections are nearing completion. They have less than 40 inspections per shift left to do. The Streets & Sanitation new facility has received its Certificate of Occupancy. There will be a media day on July 22nd and then on July 23rd the recycling center will be open to the public.

There is directional signage that is coming soon to the city that will help better mark the entrances into the city limits, into neighborhood areas, and that will point the way to parks.

Mayor Senn attended the Laurens County Development Cooperation's monthly meeting. He shared several statistics with council such as unemployment in Laurens County right now is 3.8%. This is on track with South Carolina's statewide unemployment rate of 3.4%. SC Works is hosting a career fair on Thursday at Laurens High School. This will give recent graduates and any members of the public who are interested to meet with representatives of local employers.

CONSENT AGENDA

Approval of the July 16, 2024 Regular Meeting Agenda and June 18, 2024 Regular Meeting Minutes - A motion was made by Councilor Lowry and seconded by Councilor Bolt to approve the Consent Agenda. The motion was approved unanimously.

PUBLIC FORUM SESSION

No one was present that wished to address the commissioners.

NEW BUSINESS

1. 2022-2023 Fiscal Year Audited Financials Presented by Gary Bailey - The FY 2023 audit occurred during September and October 2023. The City's basic financial statements consist of three components: 1) government-wide financial statements, 2) fund financial statements, and 3) notes to the financial statements. One of the major highlights of the audit is that the net position of the city increased by \$2,118,809 for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2023 to a balance of \$11,714,020. Furthermore, at the close of the fiscal year, the city's governmental funds reported an ending fund balance of \$4,624,266. He continued by summarizing the specifics of the audit and by detailing the findings.

2. Annexation (Ordinance 07-24-01): ANNEXATION ORDINANCE 100 PERCENT PETITION METHOD FOR TWO PARCELS OF REAL PROPERTY CONTAINING 20.426 ACRES AND 0.812 ACRES, BEARING TMS# 414-01-10-034 & A PORTION OF 414-01-11-001 – Mayor Senn began by explaining that this is the old Watts Mill site and asked if council had any questions. Councilor Sullivan stated that she is excited about this project and she wanted to ask Mayor Senn some questions “for transparency.” Her first question was what is 100% petition annexation? Mayor Senn explained that the process involves the property owners submitting a petition to the municipality that requires the signatures of all property owners in the annexed area. The petition should include information like the county tax map numbers and a map of the property. Councilor Sullivan's second question was wanting an explanation on the wording “a portion of one of the areas.” Mayor Senn explained that the tract has one tax map number, but only a portion of that tract will be annexed. Stormie Ellenburg, Director of Development for Clear Mountain Properties, was present at the meeting and offered council a clearer explanation. She stated that the property involved in the annexation is only the former mill site because that is all that they own. They own 20 to 21 acres, so that is all they have the ability to develop. She also explained to council that they have been working with the South Carolina Department of Environmental Services regarding the cleanup that is always required of former textile mill sites. Earlier in July, Clear Mountain Properties had already received approval from Laurens County Council for this \$50 million development which will tentatively include 178 rental townhomes.

Clearwater has agreed to include architectural details and historic elements that mimic the original mill. The design includes walkability and community engagement. Several councilors stated that they are very appreciative because the site has been sitting desolate for years.

A motion was made by Councilor Bolt and seconded by Councilor Campbell to approve the Ordinance 07-24-01. The motion was approved unanimously.

3. Planning Assessment Period (Ordinance 07-24-02): AN ORDINANCE IMPOSING A PLANNING ASSESSMENT PERIOD ON PERMITS, APPROVALS, OR OTHER AUTHORIZATIONS OF SUBDIVISIONS OF PROPERTY, MULTI-FAMILY DEVELOPMENTS, AND NEW OR RELOCATED MANUFACTURED HOMES WITHIN THE CITY FOR A PERIOD OF SIX MONTHS – Mayor Senn explained that imposing the planning assessment period will prevent unplanned rapid growth as seen in some neighboring counties and will allow a planning process to take place for responsible growth. This is a pause for six months in permitting and approval of new development until council and staff can complete and develop more specific regulations. Council agreed that this is a necessary step in promoting the growth of the city on a steady and responsible pace.

A motion was made by Councilor Lowry and seconded by Councilor Miller to approve the Ordinance 07-24-01. The motion was approved unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT

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

APPROVED:

NATHAN SENN, MAYOR

ATTEST:

LESLIE MATTISON, CITY CLERK