

**LENOIR CITY COUNCIL
TUESDAY, JANUARY 16, 2024
6:00 P.M.**

PRESENT: Mayor Joe Gibbons presiding. Councilmembers present were Jonathan Beal, Ike Perkins, Todd Perdue, Ralph Prestwood, Kimmie Rogers, Mayor Pro-Tem David Stevens, Crissy Thomas, City Manager Scott Hildebran, City Clerk Shirley Cannon and City Attorney Timothy Rohr.

I. CALL TO ORDER

- A. The meeting was opened by a moment of silence and the pledge of allegiance as led by Mayor Gibbons.

**WARMING
SHELTERS:**

- B. On behalf of City Council, Mayor Gibbons shared the faith based community and churches will be discussing providing warming shelters for people in the community that may need it during this extremely cold weather. He asked everyone to pray for those who need these services and thanked everyone for all of their assistance. Mayor Gibbons said Council just wants everyone to be safe in this weather.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION;
FIREHOUSE SUBS GRANT:**

- C. Fire Chief Norman Staines reported in 2005, the Firehouse Subs Public Safety Foundation Board of Directors established the 501c(3), non-profit Firehouse Subs Public Safety Foundation. This Foundation awards grants four times per year and the City of Lenoir Fire Department applied and was awarded a grant up to \$26,698.62 to purchase a variety of hoses and nozzles. The Fire House Public Safety Foundation will initiate the purchasing process no later than Friday, February 9, 2024.

The requested equipment will be 18 fire nozzles and 72 sections of 1¾ inches of fire hose that will standardize all initial attack hose and nozzle combinations on all City fire trucks. These nozzles will have an increased gallons per minute flow over many of our current nozzles, which in turn, will increase their fire suppression. Chief Staines pointed out a quicker fire extinguishment will allow firefighters to spend less time in these dangerous environments plus offer firefighters additional protection. Chief Staines stated they are currently awaiting notification when the new equipment will arrive and mentioned the vendor will pay for the cost of shipping the equipment.

On behalf of the Fire Department, Chief Staines thanked City Council, City Manager Scott Hildebran and Finance Director Donna Bean for all of their assistance and support throughout the grant process.

II. MATTERS SCHEDULED FOR PUBLIC HEARINGS

III. CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS

- A. Minutes: Approval of the minutes of the City Council Meeting of Tuesday, January 2, 2024 as submitted.
- B. Engineering Services Contract, McGill Associates: Staff recommends City Council approval to enter into a contract for engineering services with McGill Associates for the Lenoir-Valdese Waterline Interconnection Project as submitted. (A copy of the Engineering Services Contract is included in these minutes by reference. Refer to pages.)
- C. Capital Project Budget Ordinance, Wayfinding Signs: Staff request City Council to adopt the Capital Project Budget Ordinance for the Wayfinding Signs Capital Project in the amount of \$591,500.00 as submitted. (A copy of the Capital Project Budget Ordinance is hereby included in these minutes as by reference. Refer to page.)
- D. Resolution; Firehouse Subs Public Safety Foundation Grant: Staff recommends City Council adopt the submitted Resolution Accepting the Firehouse Subs Public Safety Foundation Grant in the amount of \$26,698.62 as submitted. (A copy of the resolution is hereby included in these minutes by reference. Refer to page.)

Councilmember Ike Perkins asked for clarification regarding item C. Capital Project Budget Ordinance for wayfinding signage. City Manager Hildebran stated the City awarded the low bid to Rite Lite Signs for the project at the January 2 Council meeting and noted the City has available funding sources. The Capital Project Budget Ordinance is to create a fund in order to expend the funding amount.

Upon a motion by Councilmember Perkins, Council voted 7 to 0 to adopt items (A through D) on the Consent Agenda as described above and as recommended by City Staff.

IV. REQUESTS AND PETITIONS OF CITIZENS

COMMENTS; HOMELESS

ISSUE:

- A. Reverend James Wilfong, 1555 Miller Hill Road, Lenoir, NC and Pastor of Highway to Hedges Church, addressed City Council on behalf of the homeless population. Reverend Wilfong read scripture from the book of Matthew Chapter 25, verses 34 – 40 and said he believes that everyone can do better to help this situation. He stated he reached out to other churches about opening their doors to the homeless and has spoken with several members of City Council. Reverend Wilfong shared he will be driving several of the homeless people to Crossroads Community Church located on the Connolly Springs Road after the meeting as the church has agreed to open their facility to provide shelter. These individuals will be provided shelter from 7:00 p.m. each day until 7:00 a.m. the following morning.

Reverend Wilfong shared some of his background regarding being homeless twenty-seven years ago and pointed out everyone has been good to him over the years. Reverend Wilfong emphasized something needs to be done immediately to help these people as they do not have anything or anywhere to go. Reverend Wilfong finished his remarks by saying do the best you can until you know better, then do better.

Ken Carswell, Jr. addressed Council and commented his homeless situation was probably his fault. Mr. Carswell shared he was offered a job and would be starting on January 19. Mr. Carswell said he wants to see the homeless have a place where they can go, take a shower and have a meal. He stated the Soup Kitchen is currently providing meals for them and thanked City Council for allowing him to speak.

Ben Willis, Community & Economic Development Director, Western Piedmont Council of Governments (WPCOG), referred to the passion that Reverend Wilfong and the individuals present have for the homeless and noted it is a challenging and tough situation. He referred to the handout he distributed to Council and explained how the City of Lenoir, non-profit organizations, businesses and other groups previously met together and discussed creating a Homeless Response Team made up of individuals that have a variety of experience along with a new position for a Navigator who would be responsible for compiling pertinent information provided by homeless individuals throughout the four county area. In addition, these individuals would be given information about where to go for mental health services, temporary housing along with assistance regarding how to get a job. Mr. Willis stated these are federal programs and the process is hard to navigate. He referred to how these individuals need to obtain identification cards and other supporting documents.

Mr. Willis further explained this program is fairly new and noted the population is over 360,000 in the four county area. He shared their goal is to look at a long term approach and stated it is a seven year plan. In addition, Mr. Willis pointed out the available funding the federal government previously provided municipalities covers the four-county area and is only a drop in the bucket as to what is actually needed.

Councilmember David Stevens commented this process is the most efficient way to utilize these funds.

Councilmember Ike Perkins said the faith based community can join in and offered his church's van and kitchen to be used as needed. He stated he agrees and is on board with Reverend Wilfong that something needs to be done about this situation.

Mr. Willis thanked City Council and reiterated the faith based community will play an integral part with this situation.

On behalf of City Council, Mayor Gibbons stated the City wants to see things done to help this issue and will do what it can. Mayor Gibbons thanked all of them for what they are doing for the homeless population and stated we want everyone to have a chance and get involved.

V. REPORTS OF BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

VI. REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE CITY MANAGER

A. Items of Information

PLANNING BOARD:

1. The Planning Board will hold a work session on Monday, January 22 at 5:30 p.m.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE:

2. The Committee of the Whole will meet on Tuesday, January 23 at 8:30 a.m. at the Police Department Training Room.

FOOTHILLS REGIONAL AIRPORT AUTHORITY:

3. The Foothills Regional Airport Authority will meet on Wednesday, January 31 at noon at the Airport facility.

THANK YOU; MLK**STAFF:**

4. City Manager Hildebran thanked Lester Whittington and his Staff for all of their hard work during all of Martin Luther King, Jr. Day events.

Mayor Gibbons also commended Sam Sturgis for being the recipient of the annual Martin Luther King, Jr. award. Mayor Gibbons stated Mr. Sturgis is a fine man and a great leader in the community.

Councilmember Thomas further thanked Chief Phelps along with staff of the Police Department for their assistance in providing transportation during the march from the MLK Center to J.E. Broyhill Park on Monday, January 15. Ms. Thomas stated the officer was appreciative of the celebration and honored to be a part of it. She remarked the Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday is for all people and remarked we are a team that always shows up and supports each other.

B. Items for Council Action

VII. REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE CITY ATTORNEY

VIII. REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE MAYOR

**BOARD APPOINTMENT; WESTERN
PIEDMONT COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
TAC COMMITTEE:**

- A. On behalf of a recommendation by Mayor Gibbons, and upon a motion by Councilmember Perdue, City Council voted 7 to 0 to appoint Councilmember Ike Perkins to serve a term on the Western Piedmont Council of Governments (WPCOG)'s Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) as recommended by Mayor Gibbons.

IX. REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF COUNCILMEMBERS

**CLOSED
SESSION:**

- A. Pursuant to N.C.G.S.§143-318.11.5, and upon a motion from Mayor Pro-Tem Stevens which unanimously carried, City Council entered into closed session to discuss the acquisition of property.

**OPEN
SESSION:**

- B. Upon a motion by Councilmember Thomas, City Council voted unanimously to re-enter into open session.

X. ADJOURNMENT

- A. There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 6:42 p.m.

Shirley M. Cannon, City Clerk

Joseph L. Gibbons, Mayor