

County council approves status quo on fire contract with Clinton

By John Clayton
Editor

The Laurens County Council voted unanimously Tuesday night to deny the City of Clinton an increase to a fire services contract between the two entities.

The 5-0 vote occurred after an executive session held to discuss the contract and a personnel matter during Tuesday's regular meeting. Chairman Davis Pitts was absent and the District 4 seat previously held by Stewart Jones sat empty. Jones was elected to the South Carolina House of Representatives on April 23 and resigned from council.

Clinton had officially requested a 12 percent increase for the 2019-20 fiscal year, about \$36,000 more than the current deal but county council members declined to increase the value of the \$293,068 contract.

The vote on the fire services contract came on the heels on a report to council from Fire Services Director Greg Lindley who said three departments in the Lake Greenwood area are suffering from a lack of volunteers.

"We are doing what we can to fill in and recruit," Lindley said, noting a program to recruit high school students and

train them so that they can be full-fledged firefighters by their 18th birthdays.

But he also said his agency will be putting together a plan for council's approval to hire at least part-time professional firefighters to fill the gaps at the Mountville and Waterloo volunteer fire departments. Additional hires and increased hours are estimated to cost \$122,000.

Lindley said Mountville, the smallest of the county's departments, is down to three volunteers. Waterloo has five and has been operating without a chief for more than three years. Cross Hill has 20 volunteers, but has not had a board of directors to take care of operational needs and management for several years.

The county currently employs 13 part-time firefighters, but they are stretched thin across the county, Lindley said.



Photo by John Clayton

SEEING RED — A ladder truck purchased for the Joanna Volunteer Fire Department sits outside the Historic Laurens County Courthouse Tuesday. The pre-owned ladder truck was purchased for \$210,000 from Chapel Hill, N.C. It was previously painted "Tar Heel Blue."

Pomp & Circumstance: Local graduates set to march on

By John Clayton
Editor

Mortarboards are flying through the air as May winds to a close and June arrives with graduation ceremonies for the Class of 2019 and related events throughout the county.

Laurens District 55 and Clinton high schools have their respective graduation ceremonies scheduled for 7 p.m. on Wednesday, June 5, while Laurens County's two private schools set earlier dates.

In addition to graduation ceremonies, Clinton's Class of 2019 will hold a graduation breakfast at 8:40 a.m. on Monday, June 3, and a senior cookout at 6 p.m. on Tuesday, June 4.

Clinton will announce its valedictorian prior to graduation. The keynote speaker will be Beth Wiggins.

LDHS will hold a Senior Awards program at 1 p.m. Tuesday, June 4, at the school's

lecture theater before welcoming its nearly 390 graduates Wednesday evening.

District 55 also plans to live stream the graduation ceremony, which is held in the school's gym, for those who do not have tickets. Tickets will be available for streaming in the LDHS Lecture Theater and in designated classrooms for those without tickets.

Laurens Academy's graduation ceremony was scheduled for 7 p.m. this Friday at Belk Auditorium on the campus of Presbyterian College. Valedictorian Hannah Stribling and salutatorian Ruthie Moore are atop the class of 13 students.

LA held its senior awards day the previous Saturday.

Lighthouse Christian Academy held its graduation ceremony on May 10. Catelyn Wilson earned valedictory honors.

Advertiser writer Judith Brown contributed to this story.

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