

City of Darlington Historic Landmarks Commission
Monday, October 19, 2020
City Hall, 400 Pearl Street, Darlington

Attending were Commission members Mrs. Pierson, Ms. Brasington, Ms. Pruitt, Mr. Chace, and Mrs. Howle; Mayor Curtis Boyd; city planner Ms. Rock; and guests, Mr. and Mrs. Bridgers.

Mrs. Pierson called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

Minutes from the February 3, 2020, meeting: Ms. Brasington made a motion to accept the minutes as presented. Ms. Pruitt made the second. The motion carried unanimously.

Minutes from the Joint meeting on September 15, 2020: Mr. Chace made a motion to accept the minutes as presented. Ms. Pruitt made the second. The motion carried unanimously.

Discussion with Mayor Boyd on Vision for Historic Districts: Mayor Boyd thanked the commission for meeting with him tonight as he continues in his 10th month in office to get acquainted with all aspects of the city government. He said his vision is to grow Darlington. He said my theory is that you clean yup before you invite guests over, and I'm working to get what we have cleaned up. If we want industry, business, people, we need to make the town inviting, so the town can grow and prosper. We are in a Catch-22. We need more businesses to get more people and need more people to get more businesses. Ms. Brasington asked about the old Chevy dealership on Pearl Street. Mayor Boyd said the Council on Aging has bought the property and will build a new space there. He said people do look at even empty property and it needs to look appealing. He said my perspective is that people can say something is happening. If we improve what we have, people will look, and we'll start growing. We have a lot of problems with drainage. The Tyner warehouse came down because Curtis Boyd gathered eight more men to get that building down. We got it down in six months. If I see an eyesore, I stepped out and buy it. If it were not for the storm water issues on Russell Street, we would have it sold for apartments beginning in January. The street got paved, but we are still fighting because the drains were not fixed. We will meet with SCDOT tomorrow. We got the property rezoned and progress is being made. We need to show homes being built and filled and get more people building houses. I want the town to be manicured. TV failed to mention that I was making progress with DOT, with Senator Malloy, and with Rep. Williams. The project on Wells Street and Orange Street went from \$300,000 to \$600,000, and now it's under an emergency order to get fixed because of what I am doing. DOT said we got a meeting with DOT and the Senator because of comments I made. They are finally willing to sit at the table and talk with us. I have stepped out and bought eyesores, so somebody wouldn't make a mess of them. Mayor Boyd said I pushed to get that two-story house on West Broad Street down. Houses like that are beautiful. But can you buy it? We saved 99% of the wood from the barn on East Broad Street to be repurposed. Ms. Pruitt said from a regulatory

standpoint, we should have fined the past owners and had the city take the house and could have prevented that house coming down. Ms. Rock said the city worked with the homeowners, probate court, and more to attempt to get the matter resolved before the City took the step of demolition.

Mayor Boyd said I am asking for action from you to clean up these historical homes. Mr. Chace said, in the mayor's defense, that he brought Mr. Gandy to the site during the end of demolition and helped him gather items to preserve and kept them in my yard. After more than a month of not being picked up, Mr. Chace said he took it to the landfill. Mayor Boyd asked for the commission to develop regulations to help keep these buildings from getting to the point that they need to be torn down. Mr. Chace said that buildings purchased in the historic district need to see some progress in a certain time period. Mayor Boyd said he feels like living in a historic district should be like an HOA, collecting fees to maintain the area. He said there needs to be a proactive way to generate some funds to have the district look like it should. Ms. Pruitt said if there was a fund to help people in town fix up historic properties would be worthwhile to investigate. Mrs. Pierson said it starts with identifying properties that need attention. We made a list of properties that looked as though roof work was needed and sent letters to owners. Some responded and some did not, but it made a little bit of difference. The deterioration of a property begins with the roof. Maybe there is a way to put tarps on some of the houses with permission of the homeowners for those who can't afford a whole new roof just to minimize the damage. Ms. Pruitt said there used to be stabilization funds for roofs for historic properties. Mrs. Pierson also noted that an upstate agency had a warehouse where they stored items from historic homes that were torn down, and it became a stockpile of pieces for those who wanted to renovate the other remaining historic properties. Mayor Boyd asked how many properties were on the registry in Darlington. Ms. Rock said 188. Ms. Pruitt said we should offer our assistance with grant applications and work with people to find the appropriate materials, and maybe we can find a place to accumulate or store these pieces. Mrs. Pierson said a store in Mullins has a lot of old windows and lumber, and they made arrangements with the City to take items out to sell before the City burns down the properties to be demolished. Ms. Pruitt returned to the issue of the process. Ms. Rock said that due to COVID 19 the City was discouraged from holding unnecessary meetings. Given the board's previous comments about the property over several years, the result would have been the same. Mayor Boyd asked how do we preserve these homes. Mrs. Pierson said the only way to preserve is to own them. She said people have a very negative feeling about all of this; we need to do as much positive and transparent as possible. Ms. Pruitt suggested penalizing people through fines that accrue daily, then when the value of the property is exceeded, the city can take it and find a new owner. She said we need to work with the judge. Mayor Boyd reiterated that he was not here to tear down more houses, but he wants to do something to address the neglect. Ms. Pruitt said she would research sample ordinances. Mayor Boyd asked to investigate TIF funding. The Board discussed possible 50-50 matching grants from the City or something similar. Mayor Boyd challenged the commission to develop an ordinance what would help property owners not just make them mad and present it to Council. Mr. Chace showed a bracket he proposed using to display the name of his historic home with an ornate post. Mayor Boyd said he would pay for the first sign and

would like them in all the yards. Ms. Pruitt said a nice sign in your yard could be a fringe benefit of joining one of the historic districts.

Historical Brochures Draft: Ms. Rock asked the commission for feedback as she would like to develop a brochure to describe the districts to visitors.

New Business: Mr. Bridgers asked for help with the sidewalks on West Broad Street. He said he contacted SCDOT, and they blamed most of the damage on the trees. Ms. Rock said the City had several on the list to be removed with the sidewalk being replaced, but it would not be all of them.

The meeting adjourned at 7 p.m.