City of Darlington Beautification Board

Minutes for February 17, 2021

The meeting of the Beautification Board was called to order at 5:00 p.m. by Ms. Rock. Attending were Board members, Mrs. Ishman, Ms. Rock, Mrs. Martin, and Mrs. Sprott; and guests Darlington Garden Club President Linda Beckham.

Mrs. Martin gave the opening prayer.

Mrs. Ishman made a motion to accept the minutes of the November 18, 2020, meeting as written. Mrs. Sprott made the second. The motion carried unanimously.

Treasurer's Report: Ms. Rock indicated that the Board has approximately $10,926.89 remaining for FY2020-2021, due in part to a budget transfer of $1,500 made to cover other Planning Department expenses. The donation fund has roughly $10,442 remaining. The Board previously agreed to hold most of those funds for constructing a brick welcome sign on the Harry Byrd Highway Sports Complex property. Mrs. Ishman said we need to replace the sign on South Main Street and put it on the side at Chestnut instead of in the median since it keeps getting kit. The Board agreed and wanted to allocate the remaining funds soon as not to lose them.

Administrator's Report: Ms. Rock said the Board should expect a significant reduction, back to $6,000 or $7,000 for the next fiscal year due to uncertainties and COVID.

Palmetto Pride Grant Award: Ms. Rock reported that the City was award $5,515 from Palmetto Pride to be used for trail cameras and accessories to reduce illegal dumping. The cameras would be moved to various locations to catch perpetrators in the act of dumping, so the culprits can be properly identified and fined, rather than punishing the property owner who may have nothing to do with the waste. Ms. Rock said she initially requested funds for 10 cameras, but now that she has gone to order them the suppliers are out of stock of the $100 ones. The Board agreed that five or six better quality cameras would be worth the investment. Mrs. Martin said the fines will pay for itself. Suggested locations include Russell Street, Third Street, and Old Florence Highway.

Pride of Darlington Awards & Certificates: For the residential Pride Award, Mrs. Ishman made a motion to nominate Howard Nettles house of Georgia Drive. Mrs. Martin made the second. The motion carried unanimously. For the business Pride Award, Mrs. Ishman made a motion to nominate The Grand Old Post Office. Mrs. Sprott made the second. The motion carried unanimously. The Board asked to wait to install the signs until March for photos so more trees and flowers would be in bloom. Mrs. Sprott made a motion to recognize Main Street Jewelers for the new awning and painting with a certificate. Mrs. Ishman made the second. The motion carried unanimously.

SCDOT Traffic Control Box Posters: Ms. Rock said, despite this Board's request and the Historic Landmark Commission's request to see the final product before it was installed, the posters about the Darlington Raceway have been installed on the SCDOT traffic control box at Dargan and Pearl Streets. Based on how this was handled, she suggested giving the installers photos and information that the Boards wanted to include. Suggestions included the old Post Office at the box at Smith Avenue near the current Post Office; old railroad photos and cotton bales at South Main and Hampton Streets; the lunch place where Hardees now stands; Southern Air; old City Hall at the current City Hall; and the old fire department trucks, Nytronics, cotton mill, industries, the round drive in, Belk's, and Marshalls.

Christmas Update: Ms. Rock asked for feedback about the Christmas décor. The Board felt the lights went up too early and stayed up too long. Ms. Rock noted that the department had a number of folks out with COVID in December and January that may have limited the City's capacity to remove the decorations in a timely manner. The Board expressed dissatisfaction with the tree lighting service itself, that the preacher could not be heard due to the festivities, the need for chairs, and the disrespectful nature it had toward the speakers and God. Suggestions included doing the lighting on different day from the parade; adding instrumental Christmas music instead; sing more carols; karaoke Christmas; or simply making it all "Holly Jolly" without the prayers. Ms. Rock said she would bring these comments to the Darlington Kiwanis Club that runs the Carol Lighting Service.

North Main Street Sign Update: Ms. Rock said the frame and parts have finally come in, and it should be installed in the next week.

Pollinator Garden Update: Mrs. Beckham said the Club wants to plant desperately but does not want to invest in plants and seeds without a clear picture of where the hardscape (path) will go. The Club has had volunteers cleaning the space, painting, and adding compost. The best time to plant those seeds is December through February. The Club would rather not waste another planting season and needs direction.

Garden Club Update: Mrs. Beckham said the Club has not done much due to weather and COVID but will come alive again in the spring. The Club suggested giving grants to property owners to improve their landscaping. The Club has also been talking with SCDOT about fixing the fence on the Pearl Street spur that goes to Lamar Highway and possibly planting vines and flowers to beautify that entrance to town. Downtown, the club wants to see local artists display their work in vacant properties like an Art Crawl. She added they were embarrassed at how the federal government does not maintain the post office property better.

Unfinished Business: Ms. Rock gave the Board details about a learning opportunity through the Forestry Commission if they were interested in attending. The Board said they had heard multiple complaints about how the power company was hacking up trees and suggested removing them rather than let them look so bad. Mrs. Ishman made a motion to allocate $1,200 to Clean Up Day. Mrs. Martin made the second. The motion carried unanimously. Mrs. Sprott said we needed to do a separate litter pick up day because of so much trash. The Board agreed the problem was citywide and a way to encourage participation would be a free hot dog lunch. Ms. Rock said the proposed bistro tables around the Square were denied by SCDOT. Mrs. Ishman asked to install at Liberty Lane and the Cashua Street walkway so people have a place to sit and eat lunch if they like. Mrs. Ishman also requested that Ms. Rock ensure that all the bicycle racks were installed if not already.

The next meeting will be at 5 p.m. Wednesday, March 17, in the courtroom at City Hall.

The meeting adjourned at 6:21 p.m.