CITY OF DARLINGTON

SPECIAL MEETING HELD IN THE COURTROOM/COUNCIL CHAMBERS LOCATED AT

400 PEARL STREET, DARLINGTON, SC

DECEMBER 13, 2021 AT 5:30 PM

Present: Mayor Curtis Boyd, City Manager John Payne, Councilperson Bryant Gardner, Sheila Baccus, Howard Nettles, Elaine Reed, John Milling and John Segars. Also present was Mrs. Lisa Bailey, Maci Schafer, and Bobby Bryant from the News and Press.

PRAYER

Mayor Boyd did the invocation which was followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF MEETING AGENDA

Councilwoman Elaine Reed made a motion to approve the meeting agenda for our Special Meeting on Monday, December 13, 2021. Councilman Bryant Gardner seconded the motion. Councilpersons Nettles, Baccus, Milling, Segars and Mayor Boyd all in favor of the motion.

Mayor Boyd asked were there anyone who wished to speak tonight.

Mayor Boyd said the business that we are here for tonight is for bids for the new trees for the County Courthouse. We will take a second to try to explain everything that we are trying to accomplish. The purpose of this meeting tonight, was if we back up, we have tried to take a different approach to the trees around the courthouse that belong to the county that are inside the city limits. Mayor Boyd said, "For the last few years, the tree committee stated that, from my understanding, if we take any of the trees down, which they were asked to be taken down before by Charles Stewart or County Council, somewhere of that nature asked before if they could take the trees down. They were told that if they did, they had to replace the trees, and this was a couple of years ago. Mayor Boyd said he brought back up to Charles about a month or so ago that we were getting a grant from Duke Energy, that's a Beautification Grant that is only specific for beautification that can be used inside of the city. So, my words to Mr. Payne were, the county has worked generously with us by helping us with the downtown area for grants and for the parking lot at the old library. He asked if we could use that money to help them back to replace these trees and so he said that we could. Mayor Boyd said that he went to Charles and presented to him that we could do that, and he said he would like for us to have approval through the Tree Committee. Mayor Boyd said he took it to the Tree Committee. Mayor Boyd said he met with

The Tree Committee and presented to them that I would like to see some type of tree that we could wrap for Christmas. He said they came up with the Nellie Stevens Holly Tree which would stay green all year long. Mayor Boyd said as he talked with a few other people Mr. Williams and some other ones suggested that it would be best to put different trees in between so that we wouldn't have just one specific tree there. The Tree Committee suggested Southern Sugar Maple. So, when we left the Tree Committee that was the proposal and to give two willow oak trees that would not branch out into the highway, the side closest to the Mexican Restaurant and Carolina drugstore. So, there would be seven Southern Sugar Maples and two Willow Hollows, and 14 Nellie Stevens Holly trees was what was presented, and I got purchase prices for. The two bids were, one was over $13,000 and the other was over $6,500. He said he has a third bid coming in tomorrow which he feels sure it will be higher according to what she told me. So, the lowest bid we have is $6,500 which will be $1,500 above the grant money. There's been a debate back and forth that we have been rushing this. There is a possible rush of this because if we continue to wait much longer then it's another year before you plant the trees again. They need to be planted by the end of February. So, we were trying to get this to the county council so that they would know that we were in agreement to helping them out with the trees. Mayor Boyd said we would purchase the trees and then they would be in turn at that point to take care of the planting trees and digging up the roots and any electrical work they need to do and transferring the trees, but he would present to council. In no way, Charles Stewart pushed for this. Nobody has been pushing for this but me. So, if anybody wants to take anybody's blame or point a finger at anybody, Curtis Boyd is the one who pushed to try to get this done so that we can use this grant money to make downtown look better. Mayor Boyd said, "So, we would like to possibly use the Beautification Board has asked if they could possibly step in and make recommendations also with the Tree Committee and so we are fine with that, I'm fine with that". If you ask 500 people, 500 people will give you 500 different trees they probably would like. So, again the Tree Committee and the Beatification Board can meet together but my understanding is that it was only the Tree Committee according to Lisa. Is that correct? The Tree Committee is the one that has to make the recommendations. Lisa said, "Yes, the Tree Board since they are just replacing trees. The Tree board is who they had to go through. She said if they were doing an entire landscaping plan with bushes and other materials then it would go to beautification, but because it was solely about trees, it went to the Tree Board". Mayor Boyd said, "So my proposal tonight is what I'm asking for a vote for that they can take back to county council is that we agree to offer $6,500, $5,000 of the grant money an additional $1,500, could that come out of the tree money so it wouldn't be coming out of hospitality or anything it would just be coming out of our budget money for trees ? Mayor Boyd said to offer the county a proposal that we would agree to offer $6,500 on whatever trees that they choose to put in. Mayor Boyd said our suggestions were given to them by the tree committee. They can take that and bring it back to the Tree Committee if they want to change it. Mayor Boyd said if we don't go ahead and do it before February then we have to wait an additional year to start planting and taking trees down. So that was the purpose of trying to go and get this done while the money was here, and it does not get left behind again as things sometimes seem to do a lot of times get pushed to the side. Mayor Boyd asked if anyone had any other comments. Councilwoman Reed asked, "There is no issue between the Beautification Board and the Tree Board regarding the kinds of trees that we are putting there or the fact that we are replacing them? Mayor Boyd said the Beautification Board was not asked, he was told to ask the Tree Board and that is what we did. We presented it to the Tree Board. and the Tree Board presented those three trees, the Willow Oak, the Southern Sugar Maple, and the Nellie Stevens Holly. Lisa said the Tree Board did discuss other tree

varieties besides that. Councilman Milling said, I've got a sugar maple. You've got a sugar maple. I don't know about your root system, but I've got them on my sugar maple, there are a number of roots that are above ground. If the area in which they were going to be planted was not big enough, it could break the concrete up. Lisa said those areas are pretty large. They are probably 20 or 30 feet. Lisa said there is about 20 feet of open dirt under those trees. Lisa said there are 2 southern sugar maples on city property of note that the Tree Board has planted for Arbor Day. She said one is out in front of this building, it's a smaller one and then there is a second one that's much larger. It was a bag in burlap size tree Southern sugar maple that is next to the Dargan House, the white House, City Administration Building. She said it has a bench around it and the Beautification Board was involved in that and so they certainly do approve of that type of tree because it is native. Councilman Milling said, "Mine has taken a while to grow so it may be that none of us would have to worry about it anyhow". Lisa said it does not grow super-fast. Councilman Milling said none of us would have to worry about it anyhow. Councilman Gardner said his suggestion is to authorize the City Manager to approve $6,500 for the purchase of trees on contingency of it going to County Council getting their approval and then also there seems to be some people in the community who have voiced an interest in the subjects of getting our Tree Board over the next month to meet with our Beautification Board have them blanket approve it and authorize the City Manager to move forward with their suggestion. Councilman Milling asked, was that a suggestion or a motion? Councilman Bryant said, "That's not a motion, that's my thoughts". Councilman Nettles said, "And I agree. I think voting to allow the money to be spent and we want to get the involvement, even though you did it the right way Mayor, I mean the way they suggested it because we've all gotten calls today and emails from folks who said let's get the Beautification Board involved. If we at least present it and have a working session or whatever by the time it gets to the county they can have something they all agree on. Councilman Nettles said it may be that they all agree on the same trees once they sit down and talk about it, and it may not be. But we are voting to spend the money to allow for the money to be spent not necessarily on the specific trees at this time as I understand it. Mayor Boyd said, "I just ask that they not wait. And again, we are accused of rushing it, but I would like to see the whole landscape change of the courthouse grounds and I believe that some county council members also have that dream also". Mayor Boyd said, "Again, this is something that can go ahead and be done, and then other stuff can be done around it as we progress, but we have got the funds to do that now and if we continue to wait, then, it's another year before you can try to change those trees out and keep waiting and keep waiting. Councilwoman Reed said, "But at this point our only input is being able to pay for the trees". Mayor Boyd said, "We'll pay for the trees, and we are suggesting that the Beautification Board and Tree Board get together and if they want to make any more recommendations or changes then let the County Council know that these are the trees they approve of". Councilwoman Reed said, "I just wanted to be very clear about our role". Councilman Milling asked, "Does council want to make a decision about the type of trees or do we want to just leave that up to the Beautification Board and the Tree Board. Councilman Gardner said, "That's my suggestion". Councilman Milling said we can vote for the $6500 tonight, turn it back over to the tree board and beautification board and John Payne will just send it up to Mr. Stewart. **Councilman Milling made a motion that we authorize Mr. Payne to spend up to $6,500 in connection with providing trees to go on the current courthouse grounds; that $5,000 of this comes from the grant and $1,500 to come from the Tree Board Budget that between now and January 4th that the Tree Board and the Beautification committee meet and decide all the recommendations of trees to be covered by the $6,500 that we are authorizing and that**

those trees be submitted to County Council. Councilman Gardner seconded the motion. **Councilpersons Nettles, Segars, Baccus, Reed and Mayor Boyd voted in favor of the motion.**

Mayor Boyd asked were there any final comments**.**

ADJOURN

Upon motion of Councilman Howard Nettles, seconded by Councilwoman Elaine Reed, the meeting adjourned at 5:48 PM.

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Mayor

ATTEST:

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Clerk & Treasurer