DARLINGTON CITY COUNCIL

SPECIAL CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

FRIDAY JUNE 30, 2023

Present: Mayor Boyd, Councilwoman Elaine Reed, Councilwoman Shelia Baccus, Councilman John Milling, Councilman Bryant Gardner, Councilman John Segars and City Manager John Payne.

Mayor Boyd called the meeting to order at 5:10 pm and opened with prayer.

Motioned to approve meeting agenda by Councilman Gardner, seconded by Councilwoman Reed. All in favor.

<u>Public Hearings</u>

a. **Tax Levy Millage, Ordinance 2023-04**

Mayor Boyd asked if there was anybody who would like to speak because no one had signed up. Ms. Janie Lathan came forward and asked if it was a requirement to sign up at a public meeting. Mayor Boyd told her no that anyone could speak that wanted to, he was just trying to keep it in order. Ms. Janie Lathan said that the public had not been given the right to review and inspect the budget. Mayor Boyd informed Ms. Lathan that they were not on the budget yet and that they were on Part A, Tax Levy Millage Ordinance 2023-04. Ms. Lathan wanted to know if there were separate agendas and times for the other parts. Mayor Boyd informed her no, that they would be doing all three public hearings and then a seconded reading on them. Ms. Lathan wanted to know about the Tax Levy Millage Ordinance. Mr. Payne said that it was the same as last year and they would not have an increase. Ms. Lathan wanted to know why. Mr. Payne said that they did not see a reason to do that. Ms. Lathan said the city has enough

money not to increase the taxes for the citizens. Mr. Payne said yes, not this year. Ms. Lathan then asked about the Water and Sewer rates being increased, and Mr. Payne said no they were not either, but that was a budget issue, and they were not yet on that item. Ms. Lathan asked Mr. Payne when he made the Budget available to the public. Mr. Payne stated that he had not posted it yet because it was not final. Ms. Lathan stressed that by law the Budget should have been made available to the citizens 5 days prior to the public hearing. Mr. Payne said that he does not believe that is correct.

Ms. Ernestine Lyde stated that she did not like the way things were being done. She felt that Mayor and council did not respect the citizens.

Councilwoman Reed suggested we makes copies of the Tax Levy Millage Ordinance 2023-04 and Tax Anticipation Note, Ordinance 2023-05 and pass out to the public so they will have a better understand about the public hearing. Ms. Weatherford made copies and passed them out to all individuals in the public meeting who wanted one.

Public Hearing on Tax Levy Milage, Ordinance 2023-04 closed by the mayor.

b. Tax Anticipation Note, Ordinance 2023-05

Mr. Payne explains that Tax Anticipation Note is an ordinance that allows the city to borrow $650,000 in case of a finial catastrophe. It gives him the ability to keep city hall open in case of an emergency. It is something that the city does every year, he stated. No public comment was made.

Public Hearing on Tax Anticipation Note, Ordinance 2023-05 closed by the Mayor.

c. **Budget Fiscal Year 2023-2024 Ordinance 2023-06**

Ms. Angela McRavin was present and also had concerns about if the city had followed the law in reference to posting the budget. She read aloud SC Code 6-1-80, that council must post notice of the public hearing pertaining to the budget 15 days prior to the meeting in an area newspaper and what the notice must include. Mr. Payne said they had done that, and they had followed the law. He said that they had ran it in the Florence morning news which is delivered locally. He told Ms. McRavin that he would be glad to provide her with a copy of it.

Ms. Gloria Hines stated that she was there to talk about line item 801-272 Special Contracts. She stated that Planet Fitness was coming to town and that they may need to hold off on that line item until Planet Fitness comes, that we may get a better offer, and give the employees a better option.

Mayor Bord said that he had bid on the contract for 10 years and won against the YMCA (60,000) for the bid of $10,000 for the City employees and their families. Since then, the contract fee has dropped to $4950 and the city has added retires, in which he did not go up on fees. He said that he does not make any money off the city. Mayor Boyd said he wanted to make it publicly noted that the contract effect July 1, 2023, would be canceled and that any city employees that wanted to continue could pay the regular rate. Mayor Boyd said that he had spoken with the attorney, and he had not been doing anything unethical regarding him being Mayor and the city upholding a contract made with him prior to him becoming Mayor.

Ms. McRaven said she had a few concerns about why the Fire and Police Department salaries seemed to decrease and some that seemed to increase. She also wanted to know what the overall pay increase was for the city employees. Mr. Payne the city had a wage classification study done and based off that is where he got the raise increases from. He said there was a minimum, mid-point and maximum. He said there was no specific rate, it depended on where your classification fell. He said that police officers had gotten a $6,000 raise mid-way this year and will receive an additional raise based on where their classification fell.

Ms. Lathan wanted to know what the Mayor and Council had put in place so that the City Manager could not give anyone else a $30,000 increase without their full knowledge and approval. Mr. Payne said it was the City Manager's decision and the council did not have the authority to do so under state law.

Ms. McRaven inquired about the fee in lieu of tax on page 2, $600,000. Councilman Gardner said this is revenue for the city from Georgia Pacific.

Ms. Lathan wanted to know why such a significant increase in salaries in the Planning & Beautification Department was there. Mr. Payne said they are adding an administrative assistant to that department. Ms. Lathan said what she is questioning is that citizens have not been afforded the opportunity by law to review this budget five days prior to this public hearing.

Council Baccus said she does not feel like we aren't using our equipment effectively because we keep contracting all our work out. She also pointed out that the city wasted $600,000 on property that we are not even using.

Ms. Lathan wanted to know how the determination is made to raise the water and sewers rate when there was no capital improvement plan from which that fee is derived. Ms. Payne stated that there are several plans that the city needs but that are fixing to do a master plan. He said they need a capital improvement plan, but they have not done it yet. Mr. Payne said the money that is going to that capital account goes into a special bank used for capital projects. Mr. Payne said that getting a capital improvement plan costs a lot of money and they have just not gotten there yet.

Public Hearing on Budget Fiscal Year 2023-2024 Ordinance 2023-06

closed by the mayor.

Unfinished Business

a. **Second Reading Tax Levy Millage Ordinance 2023-04**
   Motioned to approve ordinance by Councilman Milling, seconded by Councilman Gardner. All in favor.

b. **Second Reading Tax Anticipation Note, Ordinance 2023-05**
   Motioned to approve ordinance by Councilman Gardner, seconded by Councilwoman Reed. All in favor.

c. **Second Reading Budget Fiscal Year 2023-2024 Ordinance 2023-06**

   Modifications to the Budget: decrease 801-272, Non-departmental, from $25,000 to $20,000, increase 550-03, Darlington Cemetery from $600 to $800, increase the Beautification 590-273.1 from $7,000 to $10,000 and add $1,400 to the Reserve Fund.

   Motioned to approve ordinance by Councilman Milling, seconded by Councilman Gardner. Councilman Segars in favor. Councilwoman Reed and Councilwoman Baccus not in favor.

New Business

a. **Street Sweeper Repairs – Alex Gainey, Streets and Sanitation Director**

   Mr. Gainey said that it was going to cost $17,332.41 to repair the street sweeper. He stated that the impeller was worn out. Councilman Milling motioned to repair the street sweeper, seconded my Councilman Gardner. All in favor.

Motioned to adjourn meeting at 7:25 pm by Councilman Gardner, seconded by Councilwoman Reed. All in favor.

_____

Mayor

_____

Clerk & Treasurer