CITY OF DARLINGTON
SPECIAL CITY COUNCIL MEETING
Tuesday, December 12, 2023, 6:00 pm
400 Pearl Street
Darlington, SC 29532

The Special City Council meeting was held December 12, 2023, at 6:00 P.M. in the City Courtroom of City Hall at 400 Pearl Street.

Present at the meeting: Mayor Curtis Boyd, Councilpersons John Segars, Shelia Baccus, John Milling, Elaine Reed, Howard Nettles, Bryant Gardner, and City Manager John Payne.

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 PM by Mayor Boyd.

PRAYER

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

APPROVAL OF THE SPECIAL MEETING AGENDA

Councilman Milling made a motion to approve the meeting agenda. The motion was seconded by Councilman Nettles. All in favor.

PUBLIC HEARING

Mayor Boyd Opened the Public Hearing.

Mr. Shawn Odom expressed to council that he hoped that they would not pass the 2nd reading. He said he did not want the complex by his school. He also felt that the meeting was an illegal meeting. He said that they had not notified the public fifteen days prior to the meeting being held. He also said that it was illegal to put a five-minute time frame on the individuals that spoke before the council. He wanted to know where 40 percent of the funding was coming from. Mayor Boyd said that this was not a discussion. He said that he could ask the questions, but they would cover them later in the meeting.

Ms. Janie Lathan said that she would first like to applaud the young man that had just spoke. She thought it was notable that the young folks were involved and participating. She said that in a public hearing citizens should not be censored. She stated that this meeting was not advertised the required 15 days public notice and wanted to know what the rush was to call a special meeting less than a week from the first reading. Ms. Lathan said this money was not the mayor's personal money or a personal corporation. She said that this is the City of Darlington money whom the citizens have entrusted in spending the taxpayers' dollars. She wants to know where all the money is coming from to pay for this facility. She said that she wants to know what happened to the land the council paid $600,000 to develop a sports complex but now wants to spend $5,000,000 on a project on some land that the city doesn't own or won't have 24/7 access too. She stated that whoever was running this special council meeting tonight hoped that they would be able to provide the citizens of Darlington with some transparency.

Ms. Gloria Hines said that Ms. Lathan said everything that she wanted to say. She also wanted to know if the public could go walking on the field anytime if they wanted. Mayor Boyd said yes.

Mr. Jesse AcKeem said as far as the figures go, they did not have any transparency. He said that they should have some accounting before they go any further.

Mr. John Zeigler said that he had been playing and coaching on the fields since 2014. He had always been asking the question why Darlington's fields looked so run down, the concessions are run down and there are zero designated parking areas. He said he was always told that the city didn't want to invest any money in property that was not theirs. He said our current fields are horrible and that the city needs to build these fields now.

Ms. Marsha Smith said that the ballfields have been a passion of hers and she is in support of the fields being built.

Mr. Darien Bryd said these fields are an embarrassment for the City of Darlington the kids need something to be proud of. He stated that these fields are 50-60 years old. He is in support of the fields being built.

Mr. Charles Watson said that he had been living in this town for sixty years. He said the dugouts on Blue Street are at least 60 years old. He stated that he had never been to one of the Council meetings, but he can tell by listening to the people before him why we can never get anything done because it is a political knot. He said he was told back in 1991 that new fields would be built. He said all the small towns around Darlington have nice fields and it is ridiculous that our kids must play on these fields. He stated that you must use a port-a-jon outside the stadium at baseball games. Mr. Watson said that the Council was the reason for the way the fields are now and don't they think it's time for a change? He said instead of fixing the problem with the bathrooms the city buys a $20,000 port-a-jon. He said let's not whine about the $5,000,000 and let's get this facility built, let's untie the political knot.

Ms. Angela McRavin said that her only question is will there be a cap on the maintenance since it will be shared with the school district. Who will spend what and what on. She hopes that the school district will share in the maintenance because they are going to be using these fields as well.

Ms. Lathan tried to address the council and Mayor Boyd told Ms. Lathan that he had already given her five minutes. Ms. Lathan said that at a public hearing you shouldn't be given a time frame.

Motioned to close the Public Hearing by Councilman Gardner. Seconded by Councilman Segars, Councilman Nettles and Councilman Milling in favor. Not in favor Councilwoman Reed and Councilwoman Baccus.

OLD BUSINESS

Second Reading of Ordinance 2023 -10, City of Darlington Public Facilities Corporation Installment Purchase Revenue Bond Series 2023 for Blue Street Ballfield Complex Not to Exceed $3,100,000. This Ordinance includes the following Agreements with the Darlington County School District: Base Lease, Facilities Lease, Ground Lease, Use and Management.

Mr. Payne said that to answer a question that had been asked about the ARP money - the council had voted on a resolution to put these funds in a revenue replacement to give them access to the money for more options than they originally had. He stated that it was perfectly legal to do so. He said that the maximum was $5,000,000 in expenditures, and they could pay on it for 20 years and lease it for 40 years giving them 2x the time to access it. He said that the current interest rate is 5.67%, with an annual estimated payment of $220,645.00. He stated that the down payment is coming from two sources, hospitality tax ($1,600,000) and ARP funds ($800,000) leaving a balance of 1,190,914.63.

Councilwoman Reed stated that she is in 100 percent support of this project. She said we don't measure up to other cities and it is important that we need to be together. She stated she is about the kids here.

Ms. Lathan wanted to know why we could not develop the land that we already have with the $5,000,000. Councilman Gardner stated that it would cost over $24,000,000 to develop that land and the city was lucky to have the school board willing to work with us and redevelop this property.

Mayor Boyd said that when he was elected in 2019 that someone on this council told him that this new ballfield would never happen. He said that it was his goal and in the middle of the night he got a phone number off a piece of property located on Highway 151. He said he then took it to the Council, and everyone voted to get the property. He said the property was still a beautiful piece of land. He explained that the property had been bought with the intention of developing a ballfield and selling some frontage lots of the property. He said things did not work out, but the purchase of property was not a mistake as previously mentioned and that they could sell it. He said dirt does not go bad. He stated that no one had worked harder and fought for new ballfields than him and he would not let the ball drop on it. He said no one on council would let the ball drop on this and they had all been working on it since 2020.

Second Reading of Ordinance 2023 -10, City of Darlington Public Facilities Corporation Installment Purchase Revenue Bond Series 2023 for Blue Street Ballfield Complex Not to Exceed $3,100,000. This Ordinance includes the following Agreements with the Darlington County School District: Base Lease, Facilities Lease, Ground Lease, Use and Management. Motioned to approve by Councilman Gardner, seconded by Councilman Nettles. All in favor.

Motioned by Councilman Gardner to adjourn meeting, seconded by Councilman Nettles. All in favor. Meeting Adjourned at 7:10 p.m.

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Mayor

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Clerk