CITY OF DARLINGTON

REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING

August 14, 2024

6:00 pm

The Regular Meeting of Darlington City Council was held August 14, 2024, 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, Elaine Reed, Angela McRavin, John Milling and Bryant Gardner. Mr. Bill Taylor and Lacie Weatherford.

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

PRAYER

Pastor Ragland Coxe – Pastor of St. Matthews Church

O Lord, our Heavenly Father, whose blessed Son came not to be served but to serve, we ask you to bless all who following in his steps, give themselves to the service of others, especially City Council members, mayor, and do them with wisdom, patience and courage that they may strengthen the weak and raise up those who fall. And being inspired by your love may worthily Minister to the suffering, the friendless and the needy, for the sake of him who lay down his life for us, your son, our savior, Jesus Christ. And for those citizens who inform public opinion, Almighty God, your truth endures from age to age, direct in our time. We pray those who speak, where many listen and write what many read that they may speak your truth to make the heart of this people wise its mind discerning and its will righteous to the honor of Jesus. Christ our Lord. Amen.

Pledge of Allegiance

Led by Mayor Boyd.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Councilman Gardner made a motion to approve the minutes of the July 9, 2024, council meeting. The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Reed. All in favor.

Councilwoman Reed made a motion to approve the minutes of the July 29, 2024, special council meeting. The motion was seconded by Councilman Gardner. All in favor.

Councilman Gardner made a motion to approve the minutes of the July 30, 2024, special council meeting. The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Reed. All in favor.

CITIZENS WISHING TO APPEAR BEFORE COUNCIL

Ms. Carroway passed out some portfolios explaining two items that she would like to discuss. She stated that ". The Terrence F Caraway Memorial run 5K at the Raceway was coming up August 29th. The event has seen significant growth, especially after becoming a part of the Southern 500 Race week activities. But despite overall growth, local participation remains low, which is a concerning trend. I'm seeking your insights and suggestions on how to improve local participation. This year and in the future, how can we better engage our community to ensure that our local residents participate in this meaningful event? And if you look on the second page, after that, you'll see a graph of how it's trending, with more participation being that it was moved to race weekend. However, you also see on the lower graft the participation of local Darlington Florence Society Hill Lamar, we're still at a low. As of today, 80 participants have registered out of the 81 person from Darlington has. Registered although it is August 29th, I would like to know what I can do or what suggestions you can give me to increase participation to support Sergeant Terrence Caraway for what he died for serving people. The second item. Oh, I'm sorry. Let me go back to this 5K. I've talked to local businesses. I've talked to the Chamber, and I do have a meeting rescheduled with the DRC so that they could also assist you. This is just a mere sample of what I would like to introduce to the businesses locally that we can put in the swag. Bags for the runners. That they can come and use their bibs to show that they can get a discount at this local restaurant, which in turn generates revenue here in Darlington. So that is why I need your assistance with this. The second thing I would like to do is to request, since we did not have a hospitality application to complete this year, I am requesting $10,000 for the tenants of Caraway Foundation. You will see during the page from Gilbert Construction what the initial price for the park. Again, please understand this part. They have been generous enough to wait to do any activities on that part based on what I pay them. So as I get grants or get money or get donations, that is what they work towards. And if you'll see on the very last page is the last statement from office. It shows every payment that I've made and on the back of the statement it shows what the balance is. As of current. So out of the $532,000 we've gotten it down to $105,396.40 dollars. So that is why I'm asking for assistance with this because I believe and I know that this memorial will be a point of interest. For here out then to come, because this is all of South Carolina fallen officers. So we want to take any information that you can give me or any questions that you have of me, please ask and I ask that you just look at the information and then in turn give the decision on my proposal. Thank you."

Ms. Janie Lathan read a letter addressing the council:

Good evening, Mayor, Council, Mrs. Pridgen and Mr. Taylor. Thank you for the opportunity to express my views and opinions this evening. This Council agreed to and voted to have the Municipal Association of South Carolina screen all resumes (and I repeat, to screen all resumes), of persons applying for the City Manager's position; and the top 3 qualified candidates would be interviewed by Council. This is the same process this Council agreed to follow (but did not follow) to fill the last City Manager's vacancy. It is my understanding that this Mayor and some of the Council members decided to work outside of this Council's approved process. It was clear to me why they did not want to hire any of the qualified candidates that the Municipal Association of South Carolina deemed qualified for the position. They wanted to hire their friend, someone they liked, someone who the Municipal Association of South Carolina did not recommend to even be interviewed, because he was not qualified for the position. We saw his resume that was posted on the City's website. We knew he was not qualified. Now, we all know how this turned out: Because this Mayor and some of the Council members voted to hire their friend who was unqualified, and at the expense of qualified candidates. In my assessment this was just plain hiring discrimination. It was disastrous. The City employees morale went sharply down under this unqualified City Manager, with employees leaving the City and with him engaging the City in multiple lawsuits. It was disastrous. I do not have the time to outline the numerous and costly mistakes the former unqualified City Manager made. But you know all of them. And, they were done at the City employees and the citizens of Darlington expense. You, most of you allowed this to happen. You should not allow this to happen, again. Please.

I have reviewed the resumes of the 5 candidates you interviewed for the City Manager's position. They are on the City's website, and I encourage every citizen of Darlington to review them, as well. It is my understanding that this Mayor and some of the Council members are doing the same thing now, that they did before: Not hiring someone from the top 3 qualified candidates recommended by the Municipal Association of South Carolina; and attempting to hire someone again, who has never worked as a City Manager or managed a municipal organization of the magnitude that we have in the City of Darlington.

Judge Milling, you will recall that on Saturday, April 27th of this year, I spoke before you and Council and asked for Council's, and particularly your commitment, not to do the same thing that you did before, and that you committed to hiring someone from the qualified list recommended by the Municipal Association of South Carolina. The City of Darlington should not be discriminating against qualified individuals only to hire your friend or someone you like who has never worked a day as a City Manager or managed a municipal organization of the magnitude that we have in the City of Darlington. Our city should not be faced with lawsuits because you discriminated and did not hire the most qualified person for the job. This is a critical hire because our form of government is led by a strong City Manager and not a strong Mayor.

Before I sit down, I want to take this opportunity to thank Mr. Bill Taylor for working as our interim City Manager. From all accounts I have received, you have done an excellent job. Thank you so much, Mr. Taylor.

Councilman Milling stated he wanted to make one comment since Ms. Lathan had named him in particular. " I did not commit to hiring someone from a qualified list recommended by the municipal association. I committed to hiring someone who was qualified. Often times in this process, the municipal association does not do a detailed vetting. We find out things about individuals who are on the initial list from the municipal association that we determine as a Council are not qualified to serve in such a capacity, so, and I will again commit to hiring. So I just want to make it sound clear that we aren't simply rubber stamping something."

Ms. Lathan stated that she understood and thanked him for those comments but the reality and the fact still stands that this Council approved by vote twice, to receive input from the municipal association. Councilman Milling stated that they receive input, and look at the qualified list that they send in and not exact. We look at the qualifications that are given to us, but we don't necessarily agree that the person who has been on the list of possible candidates is the person who is the best candidate, because we have to go through that process. Otherwise we wouldn't interview people.

Ms. Lathan stated that 'All I'm saying is please don't make the same mistake you made last time. You didn't hire any of the qualified candidates that the municipal association sent. You hired someone who was the least qualified and had no experience as a city manager and we've been in a horrific situation ever since then. So all I'm asking you is hire the most qualified person. You have a list from that association."

APPEAL OF REVOCATION OF BUISNESS LICENSE FOR LEO'S PIZZA (116 S. MAIN STREET) – CINQUE PUREFOY, OWNER

Ms. Shelia Jones – Building Inspector

The business license for Leo's Pizza was suspended in accordance with section 22-38 revocation and suspension. Immediate suspension may be imposed if gross and imminent citizen or community safety issues exist at the discretion of the named authorities. Those named authorities being the City Manager, Police Chief, Fire Chief and and the building official. On Monday, the investigating officers of the Police Department came to my office and made me aware of an incident that happened on February 24, 2024. The outside of Leo's pizza or on the backside where the club or drinking establishment is it was a shooting and three people were injured and they also made me aware of other incidents that happened about that area. Involving patrons of the establishment. In February, there was a large fight in the parking lot and a violation notice was sent from information provided by the Police Department, Sheriff's Department, and so for those reasons, the license was

suspended, according to our ordinance, it has to go in front of Council for Council to make a determination whether or not the suspension stays, whether or not it is worth the business license is permanently revoked or whether or not there's another determination like it can open, maybe conditions . But that's up to you all.

I explained to Mr. Cinque Purefoy that it was being suspended until the hearing date. I I gave him, made him aware of the hearing date and then because of hurricane Debby, it had to be rescheduled and so he was made aware of that. Hearing date as well so that he could be here. I explained to him why it was being suspended. I've told him that this would be his time to come and speak to council.

Mr. Cinque Purefoy

Part of what she says is right. I've been asking. I've been told. Hey, you suspended. And I'm asking why? Something happened outside in the parking lot. And they went off initially of what police said someone was shot. No investigation yet. Nobody else been locked up. Nobody's ever been locked up from my establishment as far as I know. As far leaving or being on the grounds or whatever. Now all y'all know where Leo's at right? There's a parking lot there. That parking lot is public property. There's no one I can go out there and say, hey, get off the parking lot because you know what they will tell you. This public you won't leave. I call the police all night long about that. Or. How much is it to do at 11:00 or 12:00 at night in Darlington? They always watch. Never had to call them one time. And if something happened outside, they there before I can even blink my eye. And I have to tell people standing in the parking lot oh they coming. I'm right in the heart. So with that being said, when I was suspended. It happened on Friday, Friday night. Going into Sunday, Saturday, we was closed. Totally closed. Trying to get everybody in the parking lot trying to go. So an incident occurred. Now the fight from the inside, not a drunk patron of mine. Two people fighting. No, it wasn't that. It was an armed robbery outside. Someone tried to take something from someone. Now, as a owner of a restaurant, and if you look on any paperwork as you got, I'm not a bar, I'm not a Speakeasy. And none of that, I'm a restaurant set up just like Outback is, I did it on purpose. It's a restaurant. Now, mind you, I get maybe 150 customers at one time, but that's what every restaurant would love to have to be able to serve. I'm a restaurant that serves alcohol and by any other name, they'll be discrediting what I made. I built this on my own. I built a restaurant that serves alcohol downtown Darlington. I did that. But now you're telling me everything when something happens out that door. But if a patron of mines at Walmart got robbed in the parking lot, yes. You're going to have Walmart come up here. No, you're not. You're not gonna do that. I know you see, they speak the incidences, but you talk about incidences. You never talked to me about. Nobody ever came to me matter of fact, let me back up. Mr. Gardner is been to my business. He's able to come out that chair, come down to Leo's and see what we're talking about and to talk to me person. But when this happened, nobody talked me personally. I got a letter Tuesday, shut my business. How can I pay my light bill at home. This how I paid all my bills. You they really just sent me into the courthouse and took

everything to say, you know, we'll figured out 30 to 45 days. I don't know how many y'all own a business, but 30 to 45 days is a lifetime. I'm trying. I'm open every day, pushing and trying to get it and we talk about all the incidents, but we're not talking about well, hey, let's look at this guy and see what does he do to the community? What does he give back? Yes, I give back. Am I going to sit here and name it all? No. But if I give back to the high school that I started in 96. The people companies that come to you for stuff? Yeah. I give back. I've been to churches outside giving out free pizzas, but nobody talks about. The one incidence is that they say, oh, here I asked her. I said, well, what incidents are we talking about? She says, oh, well, you had three last year. There was a fight in the parking lot. Look, wherever you put people in alcohol and food, I don't care where you put that. It's going to be a problem sometimes. Sometimes I've heard about problems in here. People want to get at each other, no alcohol involved in it. There's no alcohol involved in here, but people sometimes just can't get along and I cannot control it all. But to say that I did it for so long at this point, I've been open for you. That's my first time doing it. Yes, I'm going to make mistakes. Yes, there's learning curves to this because I'm dealing with a certain age groups that everybody else don't want to deal with. You say you got to give them somewhere to go. But then you don't want to go. Don't go. No, don't go downtown. Don't let them go down there and go somewhere else. You can't have both. You can't have both. Am I making $1,000,000 doing it? No I'm making a living. I'm being able to pay my bills but I can't do that. That was stopped abruptly without even asking a question to me. What? Hey, Q, you on the inside? I'm sorry. Call me Q. Hey, Q you on the inside. What happened at night? What was going on? You know, because the person got shot. This is serious. These people live around. Somebody got shot for real? Well, they got let me find out for you. Once I find out that this was one person who is not allowed to be in my bar. He's in the parking lot. I can't stop and police the parking lot. Can't stop him. And I can't watch it all night and watch the inside, too. I can't do it all. It's impossible. Not even close. The police could do it? It's impossible. So would that be going on? He tries to rob somebody for a gun. He tries to take a person's gun from them. Now guns. Hey, great state of South Carolina told his 18 year olds they walk around with guns on go into a business. Do what you can. Do what? For 18-year-olds? Been walking around here with sweatshirts on 100° weather. You think I could stop them? I can't stop from being in a public parking lot. That could be patrolled at 11:00 to 12:00. Just not patrol, not sitting there. I know they can't afford it. They don't have all the police that they need. I know they don't. Mr. Jimmy told me. He told me before I don't have enough to do with, you know, just go out, put them out there. Now she speaks on fire. She says the fire department. I didn't even know I had a fire risk going on. Nobody said nothing to me.

Mr. Purefoy continues to explain he was never given proper notification of any issues with his business. He said he cannot control the parking lot but will do anything he can to help alleviate the problem.

After council discussion with Mr. Purefoy continues, council agrees to allow Mr. Cinque Purefoy to reopen under a 6-month probationary period. He is to stop serving alcohol at 12 and close at 1 am. Motioned by Councilwoman McRavin. Seconded by Councilwoman Baccus. All in favor.

FOR COUNCIL ACTION

A. PROPOSAL FOR PURCHASE AND INSTALLATION OF DIGITAL SIGN – COUNCIL TO VOTE ON EXCERSING EXCLUSION TO SECTION 12-5 OF THE ARTCILE XIII OF THE ZONING ORDIMANCE

Motioned by Councilman Gardner on exercising exclusion on Section 12-5 of the article XIII of the zoning ordinance in purpose of purchase and installation of a digital sign located at the Darlington County Courthouse. Seconded by Councilwoman Reed. All in Favor.

Ms. Shelia said they had only received one bid from Signs Unlimited for $21,000. Mayor Boyd said that the county would reimburse the city 50 percent, $10,500 and be responsible for the electrical work.

Motioned by Councilman Gardner, seconded Councilwoman Reed, Councilman Segars and Mayor Boyd in favor of accepting bid for $21,500 from Signs unlimited. Councilman Milling, Councilwoman Reed and Councilwoman McRavin not in favor. Motioned carried.

Mayor Boyd said they could come back at a later date and discuss who/what would be allowed to post on the digital sign.

B. **REQUEST TO CHANGE NAME OF BANKERS ALLEY – SCOTT SUGGS, COUNTY CLERK OF COURT**

Mr. Scott Suggs, County Clerk of Court asked that they change the name of Bankers Ally to One Judicial Way. He stated that he had already spoken with the bank personnel, and they were in agreement with the change. Motion by Councilman Milling to change the name. Seconded by Councilwomen McRavin. All in favor.

C. **REQUESTS FROM THE UTILITY DEPARTMENT – JONATHAN BOATWRIGHT, OPERATIONS MANAGER**

1. WATER METER REPLACEMENT

After discussion council asked Mr. Boatwright to get more information and come by for discussion.

2. PURCHSE OF TRUCK

After discussion council ask Mr. Boatwright to get more information, check on possible grants and come back for more discussion.

3. APPROVAL OF PURCHASE OF RTK Locator

After Discussion of the purchase in the amount of $11,980.00. Motion by Councilman Gardner to approve. Seconded my Councilman Milling. All in favor.

4. APPROVAL OF ROTOTILLER

Mr. Boatwright said the purpose of this rototiller is to keep the vegetation down in the lagoons at the waste water treatment plant. He explained it would cost more to fix the one they had they had that had broken down. Motion by Councilman Gardner to approve. Seconded my Councilwoman Reed, All in favor.

5. APPROVAL OF PAYMENT OF 2025 DRINKING WATER FEES – SCDHEC $16,711.00

Motion by Councilman Gardner to approve. Seconded my Councilwoman McRavin. All in favor.

6. QUESTION REGARDING WORKERS COMPENSATION REQUIREMEMTS

Mr. Boatwright chose to pass on this topic.

PROPOSAL FOR IMPROVEMENTS TO CARNEGIE LIBRARY BUILDING

Ms. Merry Morgan, City Planner explained to the council that she has an idea concerning the repairs of the Carnegie Library. She said she understood that there was no money available and there was no current grant opportunities. She thought maybe asking the public, private entities and businesses to help in the repair by pledging a $1,000 a year, 5 years in a row. to get Carnegie's up and running and where it needs to be that they will fund that process over that period of five years and that money would come back to the city to do with as it sees fit. But for, you know, economic

development and planning purposes, I do think people would buy in for that and that's furthering the tenant of the master plan. And one of those five main points that came back to you with the, you know, the acceptance of the master plan. She want to know what council thought about that and if they would allow her to try. Ms. Morgan explained that the space would be needed by the Main Street program and the historic preservation things and the other things that we're trying to move forward with the master plan. So being in, in the downtown area is key for the master plan. Having the office there. Councilwoman Reed wanted to know the purpose of having the offices there? Ms. Morgan explained for local economic development, long range planning, Landmarks, Tree board, all the functions of the office of economic development plan. Councilman Gardner stated that up in the sake of saving time, I appreciate all this. I think the motion well, not necessarily a motion, but the consensus is that we'd like to see the information in written form and then we can further this discussion at another time because right now that's not pertinent.

FOR COUNCIL DISCUSSION:

A. IDEAS REGARDING PARADE & SPECIAL EVENTS PERMIT APPLICATION

Mr. Bill Taylor stated that "Soon after I got here, I started seeing Lacey come in my office time and time again about every other three weeks or so bringing me parade permits. After a while I started asking well, how much do we charge these people? What do we get in fees for these parades? She said we don't charge anything. We let these people do whatever, whenever. So I began to meet with the Chief and started looking at what exactly are our costs involved and you know the fire folks are always ready to respond. On these events, special events and parades, the Police Department especially is having to be there to accommodate and crowd control and traffic control. I believe I listed in here what the chief gave us as far as averaging about 54 man hours on most of these parades. There are a lot of other special events that are not. Parades, but that also requires police press. And you know, when we have property or streets that are torn up, cause infrastructure issues, put even more burden on them because we've got to reroute traffic around town, especially if we're trying to get them around in a special event. I started looking around working with other cities and some of the different special event permits and parade permit applications, and we've just kind of prepared something we wanted y'all to look at and get some input. I've shared it with most of the staff. I think Lacey pointed out that we may have some challenges in there. If we're making requirements on all of these individuals to have to sign off on any of these events, but most of these were tied to like if you had open flame, you had the fire Marshall involved. If you had.an event that called for banners being placed, you have the code enforcement officer make sure that those banners are hung properly and within code. So I just wanted to prepare something for you to take a look at. This is not in stone, this is not approved yet. It's not something we're using but I think it

would behoove us to try and recoup at least a nominal fee to help offset some of the costs that we're having to use. So I'm just presenting that for your information."

Councilwoman Baccus wanted to know why she had been seeing black trash bags over the fire hydrants all over town.

Fire Chief Cavanaugh said "That black trash bags on the fire hydrant simply means the fire hydrant will not open. I cannot get water out of it. Now to start this process, I'm just going to give you the whole rundown in 2021 when Mr. Shugart came here and we sent boots on the ground with police officers and firemen all through the South side of town to get information to try to get a grant to fix the hydrants. He was given a list of hydrants 2020 and then once 2021. I gave him the list again in 2022. The fire department was testing hydrants and it was taken by the water department. Three years later, we didn't hear anything. Earlier this year, I was asked by Jonathan to take over the hydrants because they did not have the help to flush them. As we started flushing them, we're noticing problems. We're trying to test them. First real thing came on a month and a half ago. The fire on Dargen Street. Guys pulled up house fully ingulfed, cracked the hydrant. No water. The hydrant wouldn't even turn on. So luckily I'm not going to brag on my guy's. We took care of it, we put fire out. I had called Jonathan at 4:30 that morning and asked him not nicely, but to please look into this, since then, testing we probably black bagged eight or ten of them, and I let the Mayor, know what we were doing and we were getting on it. I have talked to Mr. Charles Shugart. Matter of fact when Bill first got here in his office we had this discussion. Right now I haven't heard anything. I don't know if they're being fixed. I don't think they're being fixed. But that is why. It is frustrating but we'll do what we can. That's a water department issue. It affects your ISO rating and your homeowners insurance with this kind of stuff, which reflects on me. We took them back testing and my guys were starting to test and we're getting good results. That's just the idea of. We need some help to fix these things. This is not no offense, it's not a new pickup truck that needs to be bought. This is fire hydrants to help people out. That's why you're getting the black bags on the hydrants because my guys know, but if Hartsville comes in to help me out and they go to pull up, they notice that black bag, they know it not works. We use to in the old days paint fire hydrants black. That was their key when we started asking people to paint hydrants. We got a lot of cool designs, Penguins and stuff. The black bag just hydrants out of service and needs to be repaired.

My guys have an app on their phone when they pull up that hydrants they can bounce to the next one. It's just confusion for the 1st, 5 or 10 minutes when you expect it to be there and it's not.

Councilwoman Reed want to know how long that this had been going on and the reason she was asking was because Jonathan was in here asking for requests for all of these things here and things like that, but the most important thing to me right now is to fix those hydrants.

Chief Cavanaugh said he continues to do hydrant tests and turn in the lists to Mr. Shugart.

Councilman Gardner asked Chief Cavanaugh to please make this a priority and get with Mr. Shugart to see how much it costs to replace a hydrant and get back with council.

Motioned by Councilman Milling to enter executive session. Seconded by Councilman Gardner. All in favor.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Motioned by Councilwoman McRavin to leave executive session. Seconded by Councilwoman Baccus. All in favor.

Motion to adjourn meeting by Councilman Gardner, seconded by Councilman Milling. Meeting adjourned at 10:00 p.m.

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Curtis C. Boyd

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Lacie Weatherford, secretary