CITY OF DARLINGTON
WORK SESSION
HELD IN THE OLD COUNCIL CHAMBERS
400 PEARL STREET, DARLINGTON, SC
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 2025 – 6:00 PM

Present: Mayor Curtis Boyd, Councilpersons Segars, Baccus, McRavin, Gardner, and Reed. Also present were Hunter Thomas, Sean Odom, James C. Davis, Sheila Bryant, Lee Andrews, Charles Bailey, Johnathan Boatwright, and Gloria Hines. *Councilman John Milling was not present at the meeting.*

Alexis Cooper from TV-15 was present at the meeting as well.

Invocation & Pledge - Mayor Curtis Boyd followed by Pledge of Allegiance

Council Workshop

Mr. Bill Lynch from Asset Technology Group (ATG) was present to give an update and overview of what they do for the City of Darlington. Mr. Lynch said they experienced growth over the last two and a half years. He said they built up to twenty-six people and were stuck with two bathrooms. Mr. Lynch said that was really difficult for the employees so a friend of his had a building in Florence for sale, so they moved. He said it was unfortunate for them to leave Darlington, but they are still supporting the city. He said they met with Ms. Hawkins about two weeks and had sort of a town hall with the rest of the department heads and went through all kinds of issues they may have had and did a cleanup for the City and made some changes that they were unaware of. He said one of the other benefits they will be doing is they will have Charlie who will be coming around twice a month and do walkthroughs and do regular visits as well as the standard things they are doing. Mr. Lynch said it was brought to their attention that there might be a desire to revisit the paperless solution. A long time ago we worked on it with iPads and everything. To where you all wouldn't have to have. Those big stacks of paper. Mr. Lynch said We had already gone through one time where we trained and everything else but there was a mention of that. He said Ms. Lenessa wanted him to come and approach that with you all and see if you guys are interested in that approach. Mayor Boyd said, “I think everybody wants to do that.” Mayor Boyd asked if there’s any update as far as trying to get it so codes and business license can take credit cards. Mr. Lynch said, “We went through that process …. Well, we went through it previously looking at different software programs. As far as codes and credit cards. I think we did talk with the vendor that does your credit card payment solutions previously. He said I think somewhere along the way it may have gotten stuck, but I will revisit that, and we’ll see if we can get that up and running for you.

Concert Series Overview and Approval – Hunter Thomas

Hunter said one of the concerts will be on Saturday April 12, 2025, at new Blue Street Ballfields; Saturday May 10, 2025, at Virgil Wells Stadium and Friday June 13, 2025, on the Square. Hunter said he received quotes for all three bands and the one he presented to them is over

$5,000. He told the council he needs their permission because it is over $5,000 threshold. He told the council they had budgeted him enough money for the concerts. Mayor Boyd asked Hunter if he just needs the council to vote tonight to approve the $5,750 for the band. Hunter said, “Correct and I think I need your permission to sell alcoholic beverages at Virgil Wells. Councilwoman Reed asked, “Why? Are we selling alcohol any other places.” Hunter said, “We’re selling it on the Square as well and we can’t sell it on the other one because it’s school district property. Mayor Boyd asked Lee if the city owns the Virgil Wells stadium and he said, “Yes.” Councilman Gardner said, “We won't be voting on that tonight anyway. We will be bringing it up at our next meeting. Hunter asked if there was a way he could get an answer for the band so that I could sign tomorrow so he can start promoting. Councilman Gardner said, “Usually we aren’t voting on stuff in a work session. We can’t vote on anything in a work session. Former Mayor Gloria Hines said, you have to call a special meeting to do that. If you want to do it before the next city council meeting, you will have to call a special meeting. Mayor Boyd told Hunter we will confirm it next month. I (Ms. Pridgen) said, “Council already voted on the money they were giving him for the bands. Hunter was just coming before you all because one of the bands was over $5,000. Councilman Gardner said, “It’s fine and then we can officially vote it through next month, but she (Ms. Hawkins) can sign on it.”

Streets and Sanitation Budget Overview – Lucas Reed (Out Sick)

Updates

Website Service Request Form Update – Hunter Thomas

Hunter said the form is on our website and citizens are already using it. He said we are getting a lot of messages, but they are from the same people. Hunter said we are getting a lot of spam right now and he’s working with our provider to try and cut down on that. He said we are getting a lot of messages, but they are from the same people. He said there’s two people in particular that’s messaging us more than once, but everything else is going well. Hunter said originally, he had a plan where he was going to categorize it, but a lot of people in the community aren’t sure what they are supposed to be highlighting. He said he thinks it might be best if all of the directors continue to get these messages rather than individually, but that would be Ms. Hawkins’s decision.

Housing Incentives – Sheila Bryant

Ms. Bryant said she asked to put together what the city would get if we gave incentives as far as reimbursing for building permit fees, plan review fees and tap fees. Ms. Jones said if they paid them upfront, I would suggest that if you all went down this road, that you would get from the developer some kind of HUD statement to prove that it sold so that we won’t have thirty vacant houses that they built but …and we’re going to give them all this money back but we are not really getting revenue as far as these services go. Mrs. Bryant provided the council with the development incentive forecasting on a $150,000 house and a $250,000 house showing the annual revenue for the taxes, water, sanitation, Duke franchise & cable franchise. Mrs. Bryant said, “I was asked to do it if they did it for four years, but our revenue wouldn't top out until the seventh year … because I was asked if it was 10 houses a year… but I did some research, and

the National Association of Home Builders say that the average builder builds 6 houses. So, we used six houses a year rather than 10 houses so that would pull everything. For thirty houses it would take seven years for us to top out as far as the annual revenue goes for taxes. Mayor Boyd asked, “You said it’s for 10 houses? Sheila said, “No it’s for 30 houses total: six houses a year for five years. Sheila went over the chart she prepared for revenue for seven years. She said the total revenue for the $150,000 house after year seven would be $204,111.57 for thirty houses. The total revenue for the $250,000 house after year seven would be 273,986.01 for thirty houses. Councilwoman McRavin asked Sheila if she was commissioned to check and see how Florence and other cities incentivize developers. Mrs. Bryant said she was not commissioned to do that. Mrs. Bryant explained how she came up with the numbers on her incentive forecasting sheet. Mayor Boyd said, if one person comes and builds one house and we give one person that one incentive and they build a house, and they prove that they sold it they are going to give $1,876 for that house in a year. Mrs. Bryant said at the end of year two. Mayor Boyd said if we take these other numbers and divide them by 300…. Mrs. Bryant said you can’t divide each of the other numbers by 30 because year two is the full $1,876 times two because you’re only going to finish two houses in the first year. And then I took what was left over water, sanitation, Duke Energy & cable franchise, and added those together and divided them by 12 and how many months would be left over. She said if you look at her spreadsheet, you will see where six other houses were finished and so you take that number whatever the number is one would get finished one month …. Every six months another house would get finished. I took that number and divided it by 12 and whatever months were left over for the year was how much we were going to get for city services. She said that’s how she came up with the prorated rate for every house that was going to be finished that year. Councilwoman Baccus said, “The way you prorated it is the way you if they build a house in June, they’ve got to move in the house in June, because if they don’t you can’t actually calculate it until they move in the house. Mrs. Bryant said, “I will start calculating it for July. She said someone has to move in but at the same time they wouldn’t get reimbursement for it either because that was one of the things that I said at the beginning add an order for them to get reimbursed …they will have to pay for everything up front and then they’ll get reimbursed once they either show us a lease agreement where someone has moved into the house or they show us a HUD statement where it’s been sold. Councilwoman McRavin said, and this is based on a developer building multiple properties and not one person building one house. Councilman Gardner said, I think we would want to incentivize everything. Mayor Boyd said, “My thoughts were …. What I was looking for was a number. If we go out and say build in Darlington between now and a year from now, and five years from now or two years, there won’t be any fees. When they build a house, it may take them a year to sell it, then he gets his money back and so .... again, all of this is approximate.” The goal is to get people to come into our town and build homes. Mayor Boyd said his objective behind this is why I asked …thank you Sheila for working on this, was for the council to …. We’re not going to decide tonight, make a decision and on some form of a plan to incentivize one person or a developer who wants to build a house in Darlington. Councilman Gardner said, "I Would love for us to strike the language for requirements for reimbursement - the lines after “or a lease agreement “. Councilwoman Reed said, I want a home sale as well but what is the opposition about the lease agreement? Because what happened? Councilman Gardner said, I just want people to build homes. I don’t want to incentivize rentals. Mayor Boyd said, what we

don’t want is that we offer an incentive and then because we only have so much footprint in Darlington until we continue to grow and make our footprint bigger. If all of our footprint becomes rental homes, then we are a rental community and we’re looking for homes to be able to be here and people make this their home. Councilwoman Reed asked would we not get our same revenue? Mrs. Bryant said part of what the forecasting that you got for development forecasting was more of the idea of someone having a substantial piece of land and they want to develop it. Councilwoman McRavin said, “You said you would be fine with that for someone building one house, but if you are building a single dwelling, you’re not going to be fixing the curbs and the road. She said she did this based on a developer coming and then providing infrastructure for the City of Darlington, but if we take this into just anybody building a house, I think that’s a little different. Councilwoman McRavin said. do and that’s what we talked about last month. I said we need to develop what we’re going to do. Mrs. Bryant said, “The good thing with the forecasting, this one is specific to developers, but it also provides the numbers to you on an individual level so as a council you all can look at it and decide what incentives you want to give a developer vs a private citizen who wants to build their own home. The Council continued with a lengthy discussion about developers building homes vs an individual wanting to build a home. Councilman Gardner said, "I don't think there’s anything wrong with helping the “little man” build a home and for helping developers build a neighborhood. If somebody just wants to build their forever home in our town and they are just building a single home, I don’t see anything wrong with them getting incentives. Mayor Boyd said, “You can come over here and save $4,000-$5,000. I’m looking at trying to build a building in Florence, but then all of a sudden you’ve got architect fees and if I build a parking lot, then I’ve got to go and put curbing in. It’s all of these extra fees so if you can invite somebody to come into your town and say we’re going to waive the fees, just come and build. Councilwoman Baccus said, this whole project started out about doing developers how did we get to individuals? Mayor Boyd said, because when an individual comes into town and bills a house for $150,000, they are going to bring us $2000 a year. Mrs. Bryant said, “If you incentivize for private citizens, I think there should be an annual cap because then you are going to run into the revenue because the city needs revenue to still function. Councilwoman McRavin said, “If you’re planning to build …these fees, permit fees, plan review fees and tap fees for one house, I don’t think is going to make or break an individual purchasing it, but it’s definitely going to help our budget.” She said you’re already planning to do this, I don’t think $4000 is going to make someone build in Darlington. Mayor Boyd asked how many people are lined up to do it right now. Councilman Gardner said, last year we had four people build homes in the City of Darlington. Continued discussion ... Councilwoman Baccus said, “This incentive had nothing to do with the reason people didn’t build in Darlington. They didn’t build in Darlington because of all of the other things they had to do to come to Darlington. Councilwoman Reed said, “So, I’m not understanding what the opposition is? Councilwoman Reed asked Councilwoman McRavin, “My sister decides to come back home and builds on the property next to her; so, are you saying because she decides to come and build there that she should not be afforded the incentives like the guy that built the apartments in front of us”? Mrs. Bryant said he wouldn’t be offered that because that’s for multifamily, this is specific to single family dwelling. Councilwoman Reed said, take the apartments out because there are other lots over there. Councilwoman McRavin said, it doesn’t matter the street, what I’m saying is the person who built the one house versus the person who

comes in and agrees to build 15 houses. This person who builds one shouldn't be getting the same incentives as the person who builds 15 houses. Councilwoman McRavin said don't have to get bogged down in this I'm just expressing my opinion. Mayor Boyd said we have to get bogged down to a certain point because the objective behind this and the news media can get this back there also …. The objective behind this is to invite people to come to the City of Darlington. Our population is just below 6,000 and it used to be 10,000. We want to invite people to come build in our city whether it's one house or whether it's multiple homes. Councilwoman Reed said, "I'm for it being the same whatever we offer the developer, we offer it to the individual." Continued Discussion until 7:00 PM.

Splashpad Update - Mrs. Sheila Bryant

Mrs. Bryant said this week the chemical bump on the pump house is being constructed. The Parks and Recreation departments will be removing concrete in front of the bathrooms, and we will be ordering signs and miscellaneous equipment.

Upcoming events – Mrs. Bryant said on Monday, February 24th the plumbers will start and are expected to finish March 7th; The electrician will be starting on March 3rd, and they should be completed by March 14th. Once that is done, Spectrum is going to come out and run a dedicated line. Mrs. Bryant said they anticipate testing the system on March 10th and also start the concrete work for the parking lot. Once that is done the fences and the benches will be installed and then the sign installation and miscellaneous equipment will be installed. She says she will have the engineer and pool contractor come out at the beginning of April. On May 7th it is scheduled for Vortex to come out and complete the operator training for city staff. Mrs. Bryant said, "I will have a call in to SCDES to find out what their lead time is so that once we get finished that will give us plenty of time to get the letters that they need so they can schedule an appointment. And sometime in April or the second week in May and when I hear from them, we'll get the SCDES approval so that we can open the splash pad the beginning of spring. Mrs. Bryant listed the financials for the splash pad at …. She said the outstanding balance is $112,954.19 and after we pay that, we will submit all of the invoices for the grant and then we will be reimbursed the percentage.

Ballfields Update - Lee Andrews

Mr. Andrews said he received the following information from the contractor today: On February 14, 2025, they passed final inspection for the high school press box building, which allows it to be occupied this week. On the high school side they will be installing parking, lighting, and working on getting the site ready for final grading with cleanup. Asphalt is scheduled to be placed on Thursday February 20, 2025. On the rec side - this week they are continuing to rough in mechanical, electrical, and plumbing. He said it should be ready for an overhead inspection at the concession stand building on February 25th which will allow them to lay in the ceiling. Once the ceiling is in, they will need about two weeks to trim out the NEP's and get ready for the final inspection which they are shooting for March 4, 2025. The wiring for the scoreboards in this area still needs to be pulled because the breakers for the lights have been on backorder since the beginning of the year. They plan on lighting the area up by March 10th. The tennis courts surface was scheduled to begin on March 3rd, but the weather pushed them to March 10th, and it will take two weeks to complete. The tennis courts will be able to be used on March 24th. Lee

said there's a small amount of sidewalk concrete that needs to be poured from the rec concession to the road that leads to the school. The fencing crew is working throughout the site and will be focusing on the retention pond fencing. The fencing is up around the pond closest to Spring Street. Lee said, "According to the project manager, the scheduled completion date for the tennis courts is March 15, 2025. Lee said the school district is supposed to furnish the dugout benches for every dugout, and the cost comes to approximately $20,000. Lee said the first high school baseball game is on March 10th. He said, On April 12th, going along with Hunter and to coincide with the concert that night, they will have the grand opening of the ballfields. He said the concert started at 7:00 PM so they will do this at 6:00 PM.

Fire Hydrant Update - Charles Bailey / Charles Shugart

Mayor Boyd said they met the other day and went through town and there were eleven fire hydrants that had issues. They found that three of them are fine. A part has been ordered for the one on D Avenue. Mayor Boyd said there were seven ……that don't have fire hydrants, but they were able to find one after we met and put it together in front of Leo's, so we actually have six out of 300 and something total fire hydrants that don't have fire hydrants on them". Mayor Boyd asked Johnathan if they had ordered nine, and Johnathan said they ordered ten. Mayor Boyd said, "They have 10 ordered, but they're going to need only six, so they will have four extras. Mayor Boyd said there's still approximately sixty plus that is not flowing as it should be. Mayor Boyd said he and Mr. Shugart talked with Senator Malloy before he left and were hoping to be able to get some funds, but that fell through because he's gone. We've been talking to Congressman Frye for about a year now and this month was supposed to be the month that we would apply, but when we contacted Congressman Frye's office, they were saying that we needed to fill the paperwork out next month and we didn't get clarity on any of that. They suggested that we talk to Senator Lindsey Graham. Mayor Boyd said, "Charles knew Mr. A.D. Jordan and we spoke with him, and he got us in contact with Senator Graham's office and the lady came out today. He said the lady was extremely nice and very positive and they didn't know whether she could help them or not. He said they are working to see if we can get the additional funds. He said my understanding is we've got funds coming from the COG for part of it, but we are still about $550,000 short to be able to bring the ones that need to be brought up to par so that our rating can be lower. Mayor Boyd said, "It's about a $1.4 million project and we are about $550,000 short so we asked today for that $550,000 and the lady was very positive". Mayor Boyd said, "Charles has already filled out the paperwork online and once they look over it, they will send us the forms back from his office hoping to get all of that filled out and possibly let us know by June of this year if we can get the appropriation of funds to be able to get this completed to where all of the fire hydrants would be brought up to appropriate standard of water flow". Charles Bailey said Johnathan Boatwright gave him an update just before the meeting of some things they did in the past couple of days to get some of these hydrants working. Charles Bailey said, "From the fire department stance, they just want to be compliant and remain compliant so we can keep our ISO rating. He said we've been told for the past two years at the fire conference that they are coming, so we anticipate sooner or later they are going to show up and we won't to be in compliance when they get here so we can keep the ISO rating we have. He said, "We don't want to fall back, we want to remain at the 3 and our goal is to be a 2. Charles said the last time they came we missed having a 2 rating by six points. He said, with the

demolition of the warehouse where the apartments are now, we feel really sure the next time we are classified we will have a 2.

Events Reminders

Tuesday March 4, 2025, Regular City Council Meeting, 6:00 PM
Tuesday March 18, 2025, Council Work Session, 6:00:PM
Statement of economic interest forms due by electronic filing by 12 noon on March 30th.

ADJOURNMENT

Councilman Gardner made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:30 PM Councilwoman, Elaine Reed seconded the motion. Councilpersons McRavin, Baccus, Segars, and Mayor Boyd voted in favor of adjourning the meeting.

_____
Mayor

ATTEST:

_____
Clerk & Treasurer