CITY OF DARLINGTON
REGULAR CITY COUNCIL MEETING HELD IN THE OLD COUNCIL CHAMBERS LOCATED AT
400 PEARL STREET, DARLINGTON, SC
TUESDAY JANUARY 7, 2025 - AT 6:00 PM

PRESENT AT THE MEETING: Mayor Boyd, City Manager, Lenessa Hawkins. Councilpersons, Sheila Baccus, Elaine Reed, Bryant Gardner, Angela McRavin, John Milling, and John Segars. Also present was Ms. Anna DeWitt, Mrs. Rose Pruitt, Mr. Steve Abbott, Street & Sanitation Director Lucas Reed, former Mayor Tony Watkins & his wife Leah Watkins, former Mayor Gloria Hines, former Mayor Ronald Ward, Building & Codes Director Sheila Jones, Mr. Scott Bryant, Mr. Tracy Blakney, Mr. Linwood Epps, Ms. Nita Howard, Mrs. Cheryl DuBose, Mrs. Lacie Weatherford, Mrs. Michelle Law Gordon, Mrs. LaVonda Green, Mr. Hunter Thomas, Mrs. Tasha Bell, Mrs. Erin Weatherford, Mr. Lonnie Eldridge, Ms. Rosa Hudson, Mrs. Tonya Flowers, Ms. Gwen Marcus, Darrell & Lisa Bruce, Daniel & Teresa Bruce, Reginald & Vernesia Bruce, Mrs. Charlotte Fulton, former City Manager Howard Garland, former City Manager Rodney Langley, Mr. Johnny Jacobs, former Police Chief Kelvin Washington, Pastor Linda Bailey and several members from New Jerusalem Apostolic Church, City Attorney Kevin Etheridge, several of my family members were present as well as other visitors.

Mr. Stephen Drew from the News & Press was also present at the meeting.

Invocation was led by Councilman Bryant Gardner followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Councilwoman Angela McRavin made a motion to approve the minutes from the November 12, 2024, Council Meeting. Councilman John Milling seconded the motion. Councilpersons Baccus, Reed, Gardner, Segars and Mayor Boyd voted in favor of the motion.

Councilwoman Elaine Reed made a motion to approve the minutes of the City Council Workshop on November 19, 2024. Councilman John Milling seconded the motion. Councilpersons McRavin, Baccus, Gardner, Segars and Mayor Boyd voted in favor of the motion.

Councilwoman Angela McRavin made a motion to approve the minutes from the December 3, 2024, Regular City Council Meeting. Councilwoman Elaine Reed seconded the motion. Councilpersons Milling, Baccus, Gardner, Segars and Mayor Boyd voted in favor of the motion.

Councilwoman Elaine Reed made a motion to approve the minutes of the City Council Workshop held on December 10, 2024. Councilman Bryant Gardner seconded the motion.

Councilpersons Milling, McRavin, Baccus, Segars and Mayor Boyd voted in favor of the motion.

CITIZENS WISHING TO APPEAR BEFORE COUNCIL ***(5 minutes per person, Maximum of 30 total minutes) Neither personal attacks nor disruptive behavior are permitted****

Ms. Gloria Hines Ms. Hines gave each council member a copy of a letter she wrote addressing the form of government we are currently under and the duties they are to undertake. Ms. Hines then read the letter that she gave to each member. (A copy of her letter will be attached to the minutes)

Mr. Don Blakney said, I was here nine months ago, I was here six months ago; and I was here three months ago for the same situation that I'm bringing up again tonight. He said our streets from here over to Limit Street need to be checked on. He says something needs to be done about it. He said certain parts of the road you pave and certain parts you have dirt and rocks. Mr. Blakney said one more thing I want to bring to you: our streetlights on our street. He said the tree limbs are covering the streetlights. He said the streets are so dark from this side of Edwards Avenue on down and it needs to be addressed. Mr. Blakney said I wanted to bring it to the council and asked if they would please look into that.

Ms. Gwen Marcus said, "The least of them are marginalized - the Blacks, the Browns once again are neglected. I drove down the following streets and noted no leaves or debris are in their yards - Cashua Street, Pearl Street, Spring Street, and West Broad Street. Ms. Marcus said, "What separates all of these streets from where I live is the railroad tracks. North Main from South Main; your neighborhood from my neighborhood. I called the sanitation department last week asking when they are planning to come to my neighborhood and pick up our leaves and debris. I was told there is only one working truck since last year. She said nothing was mentioned in the recent bulletin and they have no idea the schedule. It's painfully obvious we are not on the schedule. Ms. Marcus said millions of dollars come into our city so instead of replacing the truck it was decided 1) a $50 million dollar courthouse 2) a pickleball court 3) a splash slide and future home of a museum for $4 million. Ms. Marcus asked, why didn't streets … or N. Main Street and installing additional lighting and a host of other projects coming down the pipe? So, my question to you is, when are your people planning to pick up the leaves and debris in our neighborhood across the tracks - S. Main Street? Thank you.

NEW BUSINESS

A) Employee Recognition - Mayor Boyd

Mayor Boyd said he invited some people to come today to present a couple of different things. He said I like to try to present things before people die. Mayor Boyd said the picture of the judge on the wall in the back was posted after he had passed away. He said most days we all come to work and whine about the least little thing but what is important is to make sure you have Jesus Christ in your heart. The mayor said while we're here we're supposed to be kind to each other and help each other. And while we're working with each other it is to try to take time to recognize that person for their time and effort that they put in to come to work. Mayor Boyd said,

“So tonight, we’re going to ask Ms. Pridgen to come down. Mayor Boyd said, I have to apologize for a few lies that we’ve told.” He said I’ve been wanting to do this for a long time. He said Mr. Watkins asked me earlier because he noticed the judge's picture on the wall. Mayor Boyd said he had the judge’s picture done in 2020. Mayor Boyd said, “I have invited all the past Mayors, so there’s 41 years of Mayors in here tonight and all of the past City Managers”. The mayor thanked Sheila Jones and everyone that was instrumental in helping him come up with this idea to surprise Ms. Pridgen for 45 years of service. Mayor Boyd said, “She’s not retiring, and she’s not dying. We wanted to recognize and thank you for helping us out for all of the time you’ve been here. Mayor Boyd read the “Recognition of Service” plaque which was presented to her. Ms. Pridgen was also presented with a picture which will be hung somewhere in City Hall. Ms. Pridgen thanked Mayor Boyd and all those involved in making this a special occasion for her. Pridgen said, “It has not been easy, but I thank God for keeping me all of these years.” Mr. Stephen Drew with the News & Press and city employee Mr. Hunter Thomas took pictures of Ms. Pridgen with the former mayors, the former City managers, the current mayor and current city manager, and pictures with family members and friends.

B) Domestic Violence Presentation - Mrs. Tonya Flowers said, “I wanted to present to you all this afternoon … for those of you that don’t know, we just opened our office here in Darlington. The Chamber of Commerce did the ribbon cutting on Friday, January 3, 2025, for our new project that we’re doing. Mrs. Flowers said, “We have been in the community since 2013 and when they started this outreach they started in October 2013 and the reason we started this is because I am a victim and a survivor so it’s very dear to me. She said this is a passion for her and she believes this is something she will die doing. Mrs. Flowers said she lost her mother at the hands of her stepfather through domestic violence and so it’s dear to her. She said they opened the first safe house here in Darlington in 2015. They established the first domestic violence walk here in Darlington which they host every year in October at the courthouse to raise awareness of domestic violence. Mrs. Flowers said when she first started, South Carolina was number one in the nation for women being killed by men and she thanked and praised God for the awareness that they have raised. Mrs. Flowers said they are just delighted and honored for the support and love that’s been shown from Council, from pastors, churches, neighbors, and businesses right here in Darlington that have kept them thus far. Mrs. Flowers said, “As I mentioned, we did a ribbon-cutting on Friday, and it launched a project from our outreach called The A.I.M.E. Project. The A.I.M.E. project is called” Answer the Call; Impart in Others; Mentor Everyone and Excel everybody. She said this involves victims of suicide and bullying. She said it’s just the seventh day of the month and she has two participants already. She said they will be transporting someone tomorrow to get counseling. She said they will be dealing with teens and those that need their assistance. Mrs. Flowers said she thinks the last check that she got Mr. Howard signed off on it for them, so you all know how long that’s been. Mrs. Flowers said they are going to get into the trenches and do the work and she just needs the city to support them. She said she is asking for a donation. She had the honor of receiving a check when Mayor Tony Watkins was in office and when Mayor Hines was in office, so I’m looking forward to getting a check from you guys for a donation. Mrs. Flowers thanked Mayor Boyd for always being there with them. She also thanked Councilpersons Milling, McRavin, Baccus, Reed and Gardner and Segars. She said House of Refuge is onboard and they are located at 101 S. Main St. She told

the council she has laid out the information for them that … she said if you all would donate funds to them, it would go towards them, helping with the operation of their program. Mayor Boyd asked, if somebody needs your assistance is it fine to give that number out? Mrs. Flowers said, yes, give that number out to anybody that needs assistance, day, or night. Mayor Boyd asked, "Do you have any set times that you are there? Mrs. Flowers said we are by appointment. She said if they need to be seen they are doing their intakes by appointment. She said they are a part of the S.C. Victims Assistance Network through the Attorney General's Office, so we don't have funding for it. She said if you all know of anyone that needs their assistance just give her a call. She told the council if they have any questions or if anybody want to stop by the office and see what it looks like, and if you want to get to know the program a little bit more, you are welcome. Just call that number and you are welcome to come see the building.

C)Discussion of Standard Operating Procedures - Councilman Bryant Gardner

Councilman Gardner said, "I think I gave everybody a copy when I got here so I don't want us to do anything tonight I just wanted to present some kind of documentation was kind of what I was thinking that we could do". He said, "In a previous job I had we had standard operating procedures, and what that is, is any time you have a job duty you would write that in there, so that when we have a transition from one employee to another whenever they come into the job they're going to have a clear understanding of what their duties are, especially the essential duties". Councilman Gardner said, all I wanted to do was give you all this tonight and then at our next work session we can discuss it. If you all want to make some changes or anything I can send you all a digital version. He said it was just an idea that I just wanted us to discuss and to ponder on moving forward. Councilwoman Baccus said, "My question would be, this isn't it the city manager's job to deal with the operation of the city and the procedures of the city? She said it seems to me this should have come, if anything, from the city manager." Councilwoman Baccus said, "It's not the council's job to decide standard operating procedures. That's the city manager's job. Councilman Gardner said, "Just for a little clarity, I'm not trying to set up a standard operating procedure. He said the standard operating procedures would really be built by each of the employees, and by the department heads, and by the city manager. Councilman Gardner said this is not something for council to decide what the standard operating procedures are for any employee. The only purpose is just documentation and a permanent record of what these standard operating procedures are. He said it should be a living document that is at the administrative level, not at our level. He said we just never had a standard operating procedure as I'm aware of and so the job duties and the job titles of all of our employees is not permanently written anywhere. He said I just want a record of what the operating procedures are for the variety of roles we have in the administration. Councilwoman Baccus said, "And with that being said, this should have gone to the city manager for her to review it. If this is something you wanted to present, let her look at it and work on it ….and bring back to council what she thought or after she looked at our ordinances and our handbook to make sure we're operating properly … they should've gone to the city manager and then if something needed to be brought to us, it should have come from the city manager. This should never have come to the council. You are overlooking our city manager. That's her job." Councilman Milling said, "I think what we have the responsibility to do is to set policies, and she implements them. All I

think Mr. Gardner is saying is that as a council member, he is submitting to the council the idea that we have, as a policy of the council, which the council sets policies, something relating to standard operating procedures. Obviously, it is Ms. Hawkins who has to take what the council says is going to be a desire or policy and get back to us. Councilman Milling said, “I didn’t think this was coming … I don’t see anything in it that is a “how to.” I just see it as saying, he thinks that a policy for standard operating procedures would be good for the city. And if I understood him correctly,” yes, he expects Ms. Hawkins to be the one to develop the policy. Councilman Milling said, “If we think we need to have a policy that incorporates the standard operating procedures, then we can say yes, and she can develop one. Councilwoman Baccus said, “And I would think in our handbook and our ordinances we probably already have a standard operating policy. Councilman Milling said we may, and she may be able to help us out and say you’ve got this, you just need to blend it together or something. He said she’s got human resource experience, so I’m looking to her for that kind of stuff. Councilwoman Baccus said, “That’s why I said you should have gone to Ms. Hawkins.” Councilman Milling said, “Well, I think it has to start at council if it’s going to be a policy. She can make suggestions to us and say I think you need a policy for such and such, and she may well say I’ve reviewed what you’ve got three months from now because she’s only been on the job not quite thirty days. Councilman Milling said I don’t expect for her to have those kinds of recommendations yet. Councilwoman Baccus said, I think this need to be sent to Ms. Hawkins and let her review it, look at our handbook, look at our ordinances, and then let Ms. Hawkins come back to us. Councilman Milling said, I think that’s what we’re doing. We’re just saying we think this is something that’s needed by the city, bring us what your thoughts are. Councilwoman Reed said, “There are policies and procedures for the departments to operate, or we don’t have any. Ms. Hawkins said, “I have not seen any. She said there’s still other policies that I don’t see either and eventually those will be addressed. Ms. Hawkins said, “But I’m just getting to know my department heads and learning that they don’t have policies.” As Mr. Milling said it’s only been about 30 days. So yes, you would review what policies you have and then say what you don’t have like a fund balance policy. She said I’m not clear on the purchasing policy. It’s in the code, but it needs to be revamped. Ms. Hawkins said, “I’m reviewing the personnel policy, but I do believe in writing down what you do so that someone else can come behind you and do your job with little to no coaching.”

D)First Reading on Ordinance 2025-01 Amendment to the Floodplain Ordinance - Ms. Sheila Jones

Mrs. Jones said, as you are aware, for some time now FEMA and DNR have been working to amend our floodplain maps, so we are here now. The new floodplain maps have gone through all of the procedures that FEMA had to go through, and they will take effect March 25, 2025. Before that happens, we have to make some adjustments that are required through FEMA so that we remain in compliance with our floodplain ordinance. Ms. Jones told the council that they received in their packets the entire amended floodplain ordinance as it will be amended. She said you also have one sheet of the five bullets that require changes with those being: **1)** we had to adopt the new date of March 25, 2025, and that’s in Section 46–32. **2)** We had to include the language in Section 46–72, (5) a: or (2) A conditional letter of Map Revision CLOMR has been approved by FEMA. A letter of Map Revision must be obtained within (6) six months of completion of the proposed development; **3)** The next change is, we must remove Section 46–

72 (5) c “Stream crossings for any purpose (i.e. timber harvesting operations), if temporary shall be permitted in accordance with floodway requirements of subsection (5) and the temporary development provisions of subsection (11). Otherwise, the development shall comply with all applicable flood hazard reduction provisions of division 3”. **4)** The next change was to remove temporary development language in section 46–94 (7). **(5)** And then we had to move the 50 lot 5-acre language that reads: In all areas of special flood hazard where a base flood elevation data are not available, the applicant shall provide a hydrologic and hydraulic engineering analysis that generates base flood elevations for all subdivision proposals and other proposed developments containing at least 50 lots or 5 acres, whichever is less.” We had to remove that from Section 46-72 (12) d to Section 46-73 above (1). Ms. Jones said all the changes were made and it had been submitted to DNR to make sure it was accurate, and I received a letter from them stating so. She said I'm coming to you for the First Reading approval so that we can have Second Reading in February, so we’ll meet the March deadline. Councilman Milling asked, “Is this designed with respect to new construction”? Ms. Jones said, “It includes new construction and existing construction.” Councilman Milling said, “I have a question about page 15 item 4 in Section 46-56 which says the floodplain administrator and inspector shall have a right, upon presenting credentials, to enter on any premises within the jurisdiction of the department at any reasonable hour for purposes of inspection or other enforcement action. Councilman Milling asked, “How would that apply to existing structures”? Ms. Jones said, “The way that it is most applicable is if we had an event and when an event happens, we have to go out and look at all of our properties to see if there was anything. If there was anything that appeared that it could have been affected by the event that we had, then we would have permission to go in to look and see what exactly was damaged. If there was substantial damage, all of those inspections have to be done and reported to FEMA for any substantial damage that’s done to the property. Councilman Milling asked, “Can you give some kind of notice in here to the property owner, because if their property has been affected, they are going to be dealing with a lot of stuff too and for the inspectors just to show up unannounced may be difficult.” Ms. Jones said, “While we do have permission to do this, I can’t just go in. I have the right to do it, but if they don’t want to give me permission to do that, I still have to go through the same protocols that the police department would have to do. I would have to go to a judge. I would have to give them probable cause and then I would have to get an order from the judge.” Councilman Milling said, “You could end up showing up when somebody has had to leave the house, and they wouldn’t even be aware of it.” Ms. Jones said, “No, we do send notice out. Councilman Milling said, “So, there is notice even though it doesn’t mention it.” Ms. Jones said, “Yes Sir. By state law we have to do that.” Councilwoman McRavin said I read something about notification being sent. Do they have to do registered mail or certified”? Ms. Jones said, “We send everything, as a jurisdiction first class mail and we also send it certified so that in the event we have to go to court we can prove to the judge that we did make an attempt to do that, and we have the documentation to prove that. **Councilman Milling made a motion to approve First Reading on Ordinance 2025-01 Amendment to the Floodplain Ordinance for the City of Darlington, SC. Councilwoman Reed seconded the motion. Councilpersons McRavin, Baccus, Gardner, Segars and Mayor Boyd voted in favor of the motion.**

E) Approval of 2025 City Council Workshop Dates

Councilman Gardner said, “I see we added some public forums on here and I just ask that if we’re going to do the public forums we just jump around the community so that we’re just not in one neighborhood or one particular side of town and try to make it as open as we can to all of the community and spread the public forum out to different parts of our town”. Councilwoman McRavin said, “Yes. Our first one was held at Mayo, so that was on the southwest side of town and this time we are going on North Main down to the First Church of God Fellowship Hall located at 620 N. Main St. Councilwoman McRavin invited everyone to come to the forum on Saturday February 1st. She said bring your questions and concerns and they will also do a Meet & Greet for our new City Manager, Ms. Lenessa Hawkins. Councilwoman McRavin told council if they …. City Manager Hawkins said the first work session is next Tuesday, so she asked the council if they have items of their own to present because she doesn’t have but one or two at this point. Councilwoman McRavin said, “We have some things. She said any of these that are labeled as work sessions, can be used for budget work sessions if we need to.” The council discussed what dates in July and August they would rather have the work session. It was decided to have the work session on July 29th & August 19th. **Councilman Gardner made a motion to approve the 2025 City Council Workshop dates. Councilwoman McRavin seconded the motion. Councilpersons Milling, Baccus, Reed, Segars and Mayor Boyd voted in favor of the motion.**

Councilman Gardner said, I wonder if our new city manager wants to have a few words. Councilman Gardner said, “I would love for you to stand up and introduce yourself to the community.” Ms. Hawkins said, “I am delighted to be here with all of you, the council, the citizens to serve you. I hope and pray to serve you with distinction. She said I am from Hartsville, and I have family here in this area. Ms. Hawkins said, if you need me, call me. If you need something done, call my department heads because they are supposed to take care of you and if they do not then call me. But if you would talk to the department head, and if it doesn’t get done, you are welcome to call me. I’ll send them a text and they will let me know the status. Sometimes we can answer you quickly and sometimes we’ve got to say we can’t get to you, but we’ll get to you. Ms. Hawkins said I enjoy working with my department heads, they are very good at what they do. They are committed. I look forward to working with the council and furthering your vision, through the council, of what you want as citizens. She said when you catch somebody doing something good tell me that too. Ms. Hawkins said I need to hear that they are doing well as opposed to when it’s not going well.

Executive Session:

A. Discussion of negotiations incident to proposed contractual arrangements, the receipt of legal advice of legal advice, where the legal advice relates to pending, threatened, or potential claim or the position of the public agency and all the adversary situations. Involving the assertion against the agency of a claim.

B. To receive legal advice, dealing with matters covered by attorney- client privilege, dealing with a contractual agreement.

The council may act following the executive session.

Councilman Bryant Gardner made a motion to go into executive session at 7:03 PM Councilman, John Milling seconded the motion. Councilpersons McRavin, Baccus, Reed, Segars and Mayor Boyd voted in favor of the motion.

Councilman Bryant Gardner made a motion to end the executive session at 8:09 PM. Councilman John Milling seconded the motion. Councilpersons McRavin, Baccus, Reed, Segars and Mayor Boyd voted in favor of the motion.

Reminders

Saturday, January 18, 2025, from 10 AM - 2 PM MUSC and the City of Darlington "Walking with Purpose" Health Fair at A.W. Stanley Gym, 107 Gary St.

Monday, January 20, 2025, M.L. King Jr. Holiday City Offices Closed

Tuesday and Wednesday, January 21 and January 22, 2025, Legislative Action Day – Columbia Metropolitan Convention Center, Columbia, SC

Tuesday February 4, 2025, Regular City Council Meeting 6:00 PM

Adjournment

Councilman John Milling made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:10 PM. Councilman John Segars seconded the motion. Councilpersons McRavin, Baccus, Reed, Gardner and Mayor Boyd voted in favor of adjourning the meeting.

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Mayor

ATTEST:

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Clerk & Treasurer