CITY OF DARLINGTON
REGULAR CITY COUNCIL MEETING HELD IN THE OLD COUNCIL CHAMBERS LOCATED AT
400 PEARL STREET, DARLINGTON, SC
TUESDAY APRIL 1, 2025 - AT 6:00 PM

PRESENT AT THE MEETING:
Mayor Curtis Boyd, City Manager Lenessa Hawkins, Councilpersons Baccus, McRavin, Milling, Gardner, and Reed. Also present was Police Chief Jimmy Davis, Hunter Thomas, Sheila Bryant, Steve Abbott, Jannie Lathan, Gloria Hines, Rosa Hudson, Peggy Sheffield, Bill Hancock, Rose Pruitt, Pamela Johnson, Don Blakney, Amanda Boykin, Mr. Wesley Martin, Crystal Altidor, City Attorney Kevin Etheridge.

Mr. Stephen Drew from the news and press was present at the meeting.

Invocation was by Mayor Boyd followed by the Pledge of Allegiance

APPROVAL OF MINUTES
Councilman Bryant Gardner made a motion to approve the minutes of our March 4, 2025, council meeting. Councilman John Milling seconded the motion. Councilpersons McRavin, Segars, Reed, Baccus and Mayor Boyd voted in favor of the motion.

Councilwoman Angela McRavin made a motion to approve the minutes from the City Council Workshop meeting on March 18, 2025. Councilwoman Elaine Reed seconded the motion. Councilpersons Gardner, Milling, Segars, Baccus and Mayor Boyd voted in favor of the motion.

Recognitions, Reports and Presentations

Presentation on Darlington Economic Development Opportunities – Wesley Martin, Pee Dee RE Developer - Mr. Martin said he has a couple of things he wants to speak to them about tonight, but he will just speak from the heart. He said I was reading over the Darlington Master Plan for development, and those are the notes that he wants to use. Mr. Martin said, “I’m from the Pee Dee area and I’m developing a large project in downtown Florence which I just received a half million-dollar grant for. He said it is a luxury development, but frankly, I grew up in a mobile home park with a single mother and some people would say that I am self-made man, but that is not true. He said #1, I’ve had a lot of blessings from God and # 2 I’ve had a lot of support from my community. He said he is very passionate about the community here in Darlington. He said he has a mobile home park here in Darlington and he is working on some low-income housing tax credit projects here. He said I really want to see the City of Darlington be successful and that is one of the things he’s most focused on right now. Mr. Martin said some of the things that stood out to me about the Darlington Master Plan is Darlington is only as strong as her neighbor is (that’s directly from the Master Plan). I think Darlington has some very

charming neighborhoods and if we are honest, there are some neighborhoods that need a little help. Darlington should strive to provide attainable housing. We don't use the word "affordable." We are going to say "attainable housing" that everybody can get into. We want housing that people can afford, but we want housing that's dignified, housing that a child can come home to and feel good, clean, and wholesome at. Mr. Martin said, "Darlington coming together as a community only happens if gathering places exist. He said one of things he wants to do ….as I said, I'm developing a project in downtown Florence, but I see the Public Square in Darlington has so much potential. Mr. Martin said, "Public Square to me is a beautiful outlay of what a downtown could be. It just needs private investors like me and others to come and revive it. Mr. Martin said #9 on the list is to respect and protect that which is historically or culturally significant. He said the Public Square is historically and culturally significant. He said preservation is essential and demolition of existing buildings is a last resort. That Jewelers Bench that's burned out, I don't want to see it torn down. I want to see it revived, keep the same façade, and the same brick and come in and maybe put a new jewelry store there or a different retail store. Mr. Martin said, "Local businesses are more important than chains. Darlington is the "Pearl of the Pee Dee," and I truly believe that. We need to support the local businesses in Darlington. Darlington doesn't need to try to compete directly with Hartsville, nor with Florence. It needs to have its own identity, so we need to support the locals in this community and have a vested interest in this community. Mr. Martin said, "A community brand - Mr. Martin said, "Since 1980 the population in Darlington has been a continuous decline. We have to attract new investors and new residents to Darlington. He said he spoke briefly with the mayor, who I recently became acquainted with, and he has a plan to help developers like me with tap fees, with permits, etc. Mr. Martin said, "I think it's a great plan. I told you the City of Florence gave me a half million-dollar grant. Darlington can't do that, but what Darlington can do is make it easier for developers like me by giving us breaks on things like tap fees. He said something else is a "tax abatement." I've heard of people coming in and reviving property in Darlington and immediately the property gets reassessed and the property tax bill skyrockets. As a developer, I'd like to come in and redevelop a piece of property in Downtown Darlington and have the value be increased. But rather than the tax bill immediately getting hit on day one, I would like to see it gradually rise to the reassessed value. What you need to do to get more money is you need more residents, and you need more businesses, so we have to encourage that. So, rather than throwing out money, just make it easy for the money in private hands to come in and invest in your community. Mr. Martin said, "Darlington is the County Seat, and I think the brightest days of Darlington are ahead. He said, "You have young people and people of all ages, color and creeds who want to come and invest in Darlington, but we just need help from the council, and we especially need help from the community."

Presentation on Cotton Mill Memorial – Peggy Sheffield

Mrs. Peggy Sheffield said she is representing the Old Cotton Mill. She said most of you all are familiar with what she has been working on for many years and she is pretty much almost the last one to try to see that this project is finished. Mrs. Sheffield said before things get too farther along, I was told by my mayor, that one of the things that I need to do was come before you and see if you are interested ….it has always been our plans in the beginning of this project, that one day we would be gone and there'd be nobody to keep the park up. She said we planned for

the park to have the least maintenance as possible. She said they also had in their plans to come before you all and ask that when we finish this project if you are interested in accepting this private property. Mrs. Sheffield said, “I have a few more things I want to do before finishing this project and the next step is to have power run for lights. She said she has always talked with Duke power, and they have agreed to run the power underground. She said when you talk about power that also means a meter base and that doesn’t come cheap. She said that maybe something you can help me with or that maybe something that has to be put off until …if and when you decide you will accept the property or not. Mrs. Sheffield said, “I guess the main thing before I get too much further involved as far as expense, I would need to know where I stand and where you are stand if you're interested in accepting the property at some point later down as I finish it.” Mayor Boyd asked, “What else do you have left to do down there. You got the brick down there. Are you going to put a fence around it or something? …. Mrs. Sheffield said, “Yes. A brick wall like what is done at the Veterans Memorial uptown. A small wall around (50 x 50). She said, “I have had bricks there for a year now and I have been held up by getting this power because …in the beginning I didn’t plan on lights, but then it was brought to my attention …well, why don’t you have lights. It will be so nice shining on the memorial itself, front and back. Mrs. Sheffield said, “And it would, and I agreed, but to do that now we have to run that pipe under that pad and the person that was going to do that for me has not done it. And I hated to go above his head and get somebody else, but I’ve come to the point I can’t wait any longer. Mrs. Sheffield said, “I want that finished and then get the brick wall up, the lights and landscaping. She said those are possibilities. The main thing before I get too involved expense wise …. and I have a limited budget and most of that is going to involve using expenses for the fence and for the lights. She said I didn’t come to you for money this time and the reason I didn’t is because the rules are so stipulated for tourism, and I felt that I don’t have that much tourism. Mrs. Shefield said, “If I have to come to you for money again, I will come to you, the council, and I would put it to you like this – that is not only my heritage, but also Darlington's heritage. And its history.” She said it’s more of history for Darlington. She said it’s only a small portion of our history, but it’s an important part. That cotton mill was so important to so many people in its day and it would be a shame if we didn’t keep the history there. Councilman Milling asked, “How much does a meter base cost? Mrs. Sheffield said, “I really don’t know.” Councilman Milling asked, “Are you looking to have water there or just electricity.” Mrs. Sheffield said, “Electricity for now, but water may be a necessity. For instance, when you go to lay the brick … but I feel like most brick layers come with their water tanks, so that may not be a problem, but the electricity would need an electrical base. Councilwoman McRavin, “Asked would solar lights be possible.” Mrs. Sheffield said, “Solar lights might be possible for one light, maybe two. The lights at the Veterans Memorial are very nice so I was thinking of using that same type of light, one on each side. I think the small lantern lights on the fence of each column would be very attractive. Mayor Boyd said, “Solar panels would work ok. Mrs. Sheffield said, “It would not. And that particular area needs good lights. Councilman Gardner said, “I did some research on solar lights, and I would suggest that you do to because they’ve come a long way. So that would be a long-term fix that would keep it cheap. As far as the city taking it over eventually … I think once the time comes, as long as it’s at the stage where it is now, I don’t see a problem with that, but that would be something that we would have to talk about as a council. Mrs. Sheffield said, “The main upkeep is the grass, but the back of the lot needs attention. There are holes in the road

area, and it's constantly traveled through there and it's just unsightly and that's something that needs to be looked at. Mrs. Sheffield said, "I would appreciate your thoughts and encouragement on that very much. Mayor Boyd said keep us posted on that and we'll discuss it with the council.

Proclamation for Sexual Awareness Month – Pee Dee Coalition – Pamela Johnson & Crystal Altidor

Councilwoman Angela McRavin read the proclamation for Sexual Awareness Month. The Council, Mayor and the City of Darlington proclaimed April 2025 as Sexual Assault Awareness Month throughout the Pee Dee Region and encourages all citizens to work together to prevent sexual assault and ensure a life free from harm for the residents. Ms. Crystal Altidor said their office is located at 105 Orange Street and she is the Victim's Advocate for Darlington County. Ms. Altidor said this past year there was a total of 433,000 rape victims according to (RAIN) which is a rape, abuse, incest national network. Pee Dee Coalition has served about 783 of those victims that include sexual assault and domestic violence for the Pee Dee Region. We just had a theme this month – *"Together we act, United we change*." We're calling on community members to help us with preventative measures with sexual assault and domestic violence. And that is just putting emphasis on keeping our communities safe for women and men to be able to go around without being fearful.

Ms. Pam Johnson said she is the Volunteer & Community Education Coordinator for Darlington County. Ms. Johnson said today is "*Wear Teal Day*," but I know it's almost the end of the day, but we're asking people to wear teal in observant of "Sexual Awareness Month." Ms. Johnson said On April 31st, we will have *"Denim Day*". We're asking everyone to wear denim in honor of an 18-year-old victim that was sexually assaulted. The judge overruled the hearing saying that her jeans were too tight and that she had to help the offender take her jeans off, so they threw the case out. The next day, a woman's group got together, wore the tightest jeans they could get and marched around the courthouse. And ever since then, it has been considered *Denim Day*. Ms. Johnson said if you can, wear denim on April 31st and send pictures. Ms. Johnson said they finally have someone manning their office. Mayor Boyd said, "No matter what a woman wears, says or does, as long as she says "no." Ms. Johnson and both Mayor Boyd said, "No, means No." Mayor Boyd said, "In our little town, we've already had two young people to die from suicide from being bullied. Ms. Johnson said, "It takes a community to stop sexual assault. Mayor Boyd said, "A lot of people are afraid to stand up and talk. They are afraid their attacker will come after their family and so forth or threaten and belittle them, so stand up if you see somebody going through that. He said a lot of people don't stand up and say anything about it. So, I encourage everybody to do that and if you're sitting in this room or if you're on YouTube don't do that and make sure you put Jesus Christ in your heart because that's the problem that you have right there." Ms. Johnson said, "And if you are afraid to report this to law enforcement, you can reach out to one of us, because anything you say to us stays with us. Ms. Johnson said if anybody is interested, they both are certified to teach self-defense classes.

FY 2024 Audit Presentation – The Brittingham Group – William Hancock

Mr. Hancock said on pages 1 through 3 renders a clean opinion to the City of Darlington for fiscal year end June 30, 2024. Mr. Hancock said this year was a little different. It's not every

year that the city has a single audit meaning the city has spent more than $750,000 worth of federal money. On page 48 they talk about internal controls. He said they didn't poke around into every single transaction and daily report, but the systems that they observed and the tests that they did on our different processes, and they didn't find any areas they felt that we needed to change on your internal control system. Page 49 talks about compliance and other matters. He said you all are required to be under all kinds of compliance matters, and I define those as rules and regulations and laws put upon you by an outside source – federal government, state government, DHEC, PEBA, etc. so we checked to make sure that you made your payroll tax deposits in the right amount and on time. We checked to make sure that you sent your retirement money and the right amount on time. We checked to make sure that DHEC hasn't been fining you for non-compliance with your water delivery or your wastewater treatment. We checked with your attorneys to make sure that you aren't under any lawsuits that the coverage that you have through insurance would not pay the majority of. Mr. Hancock said, "we didn't find any instances of what we would call non-compliance. Mr. Hancock said on page 10 is the statement of revenue & expenditure. He said for the entire year, not to include proceeds for sales of assets or transfers from other funds, we had a $259,000 surplus on an $8.5 million spending budget. On page 12 is the statement of revenues, expenses, and changes in position of proprietary funds, which we have two – the water & sewer fund and the storm water fund. He said the storm water fund is going to be basically self-sustaining. It's set up where the revenue is generated as it's used. The number I want to draw your attention to is operating income of $7,570 on a $3281,000 revenue fund. Mr. Hancock said, "Here's what we need to ask ourselves. What state our water and wastewater system is in and do we need to pad the surpluses so we can repair the system as it is or extend the system to a developer that might come to town that might want to put in 120 houses on a 200-acre tract of land right outside of town and get annexed and then use your utilities. Mr. Hancock said, "When we have a small surplus like this and we've had losses in the past, the way to address that is, ….and we've talked about this before. We engage a rate study consultant, and they'll take into account what your current operating and maintenance costs are, your future development plans and the debt service that goes along with financing those capital projects. I have recommended this to the city before and I'm recommending again that if we don't have a rate study consultant engaged, it would be a good idea to do so. He said you might be doing everything right, but until you have an expert take a look at it, you just never know. But all that he presented, this might be one of the most important issues he could speak to. But in my mind if you can't send water out and bring wastewater back, he's not going to be able to build anything. Councilwoman Reed asked, "I want to know why you don't give an opinion on the effectiveness of our internal controls. Mr. Hancock said, "That's a whole different ball of wax. We are giving an opinion on whether or not we feel like the financial statements are correct in terms of material respects. We're not experts on effectiveness, nor are we experts on efficiency. But we can tell you whether or not an internal control system is working.

Freedom Fest Request – Chamber of Commerce – Amanda Boykin

Ms. Boykin said she is currently the Chairman of the Board for the Greater Darlington Chamber of Commerce. Ms. Boykin said Ms. Jackie Anderson, who used to work for Darlington County Council on Aging, is filling in for them as the interim executive director while they search for a

permanent solution for that position. Ms. Boykin said on behalf of directors, and Ms. Jackie Anderson, she is here to ask for the money again to pay for the fireworks display for this year's 12th annual Freedom Fest. She said Freedom Fest is their Independence Day Celebration that's held every year the Saturday before July 4th. She said previous generous contributions have enabled us for the past three years to provide free rides, live entertainment, giveaways, and the largest fireworks display in our surrounding area. They also have food, retail, and information vendors that come to our event each year. This year, with the help from Mayor Boyd and Fire Chief Cavanaugh, we were able to keep the festival downtown in the Square again, so we are excited about that. Ms. Boykins said to ensure that everybody has a great view of the 15-minute display, Pyrostar will be using larger shells to project the fireworks well above the tree line. In the past few years, you have given us $12,500 and that does cover the cost of the fireworks. This year that cost has increased to $15,250. (she included a copy of the invoice in council packets) Ms. Boykin said you will see in your packet where we have already paid the half deposit for that contract for those fireworks this year. Ms. Boykin went on the give council an overview of last year's event. Ms. Boykin said they had approximately 7,000 attendees at Freedom Fest last year and they gave away T-shirts, had carnival rides, a petting zoo and four inflatable houses for the smaller kids and everything was completely free. She said the event is very profitable for the vendors as well. She said they do ask the businesses downtown on the Square to stay open because the event is on a Saturday evening, but they don't always do that. For this year's event, in addition to the rides, the petting zoo, and the bouncy houses, we are planning for at least 7,500 in attendance, so we are driving that marketing to get people to come from surrounding areas. We are going to give away 1,000 shirts instead of 750. We're trying to secure at least 40 individual vendors. And they will have bigger and better raffle prizes. This would not be a successful community event without the City of Darlington's contribution, and we recognize that, so that's why we come and beg for funds every year. Councilwoman McRavin asked, "Beyond vendors, are there any other major sponsors that you've had? Ms. Boykin said, "Genesis Healthcare gave $12,000 last year, so Genesis Healthcare sponsored the rides. We are praying that they are going to do that again this year. Other than that, it's usually several $1,000 and $2,500 sponsors that we get funds from. We get donations from SPC Credit Union, Care South Carolina, & Wilson Senior Care. She said Georgia Pacific usually gives them a contribution every year and we use it because it is such a huge event. She said it's about a $40,000 event that we're putting on for the communities and it's free. Ms. Boykin said, "The Chamber is a 501 C 6 nonprofit organization, and we only made $3,000 off of a $40,000 event, so we don't rely on it. Ms. Boykin said we decided three years ago that we wanted to make this event free for our communities. We knew that we were going to have to go away thinking it was going to put money in our pockets. Ms. Boykin said they did apply for H-tax money from the County as well. Councilman Milling asked, "How much money do we have in the H-tax account. I told him about $198,000 and we have an upcoming payment in June. Councilman Gardner wanted a rough estimate of how much is collected each month. I told him it varies, but this past month it was right at $30,000. Ms. Hawkins said, "And we also have the splash pad expenses and the June payment coming up. Councilman Milling said, "So if we didn't bring anything in, we've got roughly $40,000 above that next payment of $156,000". I said, (Pridgen), "Like Ms. Lenessa said, "You know we've got that payment for the splash pad, and we have to put that money up before we get the reimbursement money back from the state and that would be 80%,

I think they send back. Councilwoman McRavin asked, “Is this something that you have to have an answer on tonight? Ms. Boykin said, “You normally do vote when we ask, but if you're telling me that I need to wait, then I will wait. The council discussed H-tax funds and if we would be able to make a donation to the Chamber for the fireworks since we have to pay for the splash pad. Councilwoman Baccus said, “So, we’re at $677,000 now on that splash pad. Are we at the end? Are we still going to have to pay more on that splash pad? Ms. Hawkins said she didn’t know the answer to that. I (Pridgen) said, “I think when Sheila gave you all the update, didn't she say that was the end of it”? Mayor Boyd said, “At the end of the year we will get $50,000 something back from Senator Chaplin. Councilwoman McRavin said, “I think we need to take time to crunch some numbers. Councilman Milling said, “I think we need to take this as information right now and then once we get our finances straight…. Ms. Boykin said, “Can you give me a timeline when I can expect an answer? Councilman Gardner said, “We should be able to get all of those answers at our work session, shouldn't we? Councilman Milling said, “Hopefully by the end of month. Councilman Gardner said, “We will hopefully have you an answer then. I don't think we can vote at the work session, but we will be able to vote it through at that next following first Tuesday.” Ms. Boykin said, “And I would also ask if you to consider that if you can't do the $15,000, then any amount that you can do will help”.

CITIZENS WISHING TO APPEAR BEFORE COUNCIL ***(5 minutes per person, Maximum of thirty (30) total minutes) Neither personal attacks nor disruptive behavior are permitted**
Please sign in to be heard at this time.)

Ms. Jannie Lathan (Copy of her letter below)

Good evening, Mayor, Council, Ms. Hawkins, and Ms. Pridgen. Thank you for the opportunity to speak before you this evening. I noticed on the agenda an item to discuss Fitness World Gym membership. For many years now, Fitness World Gym, which is owned by the City’s Mayor, has been given a contract by the City for City employees to attend his gym. The previous City Manager was asked to present an assessment of just how many City employees were actually using the mayor’s gym. This assessment was never provided by the previous City Manager. Nonetheless, a contract was awarded to the mayor’s gym for $4,950, just $50 short of the City Manager’s authorized approval limit. I know other citizens like myself, will find it interesting that whatever the number of city employees using the mayor’s gym just coincidently and mathematically equal to just $50 shot of the previous City Manager’s authorized approval limit. Now, I know someone may say that the previous Manager put the contract out for bids, and that he may not have received any Bids or that he may have spoken to the Manager at Planet Fitness, and they did not want to submit a bid … or any other rationale one may wish to provide. But still certain facts remain. It is my understanding that the majority of city employees do not use the mayor’s gym. In fact, it is my understanding that employees are paying for their own gym membership and are using Planet Fitness, because they offer more amenities than Fitness World Gym. Therefore, I am requesting our City Manager and Council to complete a Benefit Cost Analysis before any more of our public funds are awarded for gym membership. Several Economist has concluded we could be in a Recession by the end of the year. This, in addition to sound Fiscal decision-making processes should govern your decision for expenditure of all taxpayers’ dollars and expenditure of all public funds. Also, I just learned that the city never had

a contract in place with Fitness World Gym. Is this true? If this is the case, I would like to know why the City would accept and pay an invoice from Fitness World Gym based on what the business owner told them and not have the terms and conditions spelled out in a written contract. This would be fiscally irresponsible, and to my knowledge we do not do this for any other for-profit business in our city. What happens if one of our city employees is injured at the gym that the mayor owns? Is there anything in writing that protects our employees or the city since the city is paying for this and not our employees? Again, I am requesting that you make a sound fiscal decision with the expenditure on our tax dollars and public funds. Thank you**.**

Unfinished Business

Discussion of Incentive for Housing Developers - Mayor Boyd

Mayor Boyd said I've asked a couple of times to see if you all would come up with some other things so my suggestion is you can try to put something together between now and the next work session, which will be in two weeks. My proposal is for Hunter to publicize to the public that whether you build one house or whether you hire a developer to come and build multiple houses, as long as the house is up for sale and HUD …. just like Sheila Bryant explained last time, that at the end of the house being built you have to show that the house is not for rent, but it's being sold and it's put back in and stays there that we offer from the city no tap fees, no water fees, no sewer fees, no permit fees for a two year period as an incentive to publicize to try to build houses inside the city of Darlington". Mayor Boyd said it would take about a year or a year and a half to recoup what you have lost if somebody did build. According to Mrs. Bryant from the codes department, we've only built six houses last year. The goal would be to see if we can increase that. We've got to get our city to grow, so that's my suggestion. I would like to see if we could try to have something together for the next workshop to discuss it and put it together and then hopefully vote for it in May. Councilwoman Reed said, "I thought we had outlined, and you had outlined ….and I think Angie had emphasized that as long as it's consistent. Councilman Gardner said, "We did. I think I brought it up. I just wanted to make sure we talk about it in public for the citizens of Darlington before we actually went and voted on something. Mayor Boyd said, "We can actually put it in writing, so I'll try to have something written up and we can critique it at the next workshop. Councilman Gardner said, "Just so the public knows what we've been discussing is that we would essentially suspend fees. There's a couple of different things that would happen whenever you build a new home. You're going to have a tap fee for water and sewer, and property inspection fees. There's a couple of different costs that are incurred by the developers or by people who want to build in our community and our thinking is to try and incentivize growth around here and the way to do that would be by cutting those fees. We are thinking of doing it for a short term or a two-year period to see how it works, and we can come back and revisit the conversation. If it is something that the council is interested in doing at some level which it seems like we are, it will be flat across the board. If you build one home as a single person building their first home or if you're a developer that wants to come in and build 100 homes, everybody gets the opportunity to get that incentive. He said I hope that they move forward with it. Mayor Boyd said, "they would have to write it out and make sure it's detailed and correct with the lawyer, and they would have to pay their fees and then once it is accomplished, then they will get their fees back. Councilman Gardner said, "You

will pay all of your fees upfront as long as you build a home, and the home is the primary residence and not a rental home nor a secondary home then you will get all of your money credited back to you. Councilwoman Reed said, “And to go along with that, make sure that we approve the ordinances that was absolutely necessary that affects developers. Councilwoman McRavin said, “I want to incentivize people, but I just ask that we do it in order and then we finish the zoning ordinance because you can put these and say you going to do these incentives, but if they have a lot that’s too small to build on that incentive does not matter. We just need to do this in proper order, and we need to finish the zoning ordinance. I really want us to get that completed and pushed through before we start worrying about the incentive because the incentive might not make a whole lot of sense. One thing we learned last week in those training classes in Columbia is these incentives are supposed to be done by ordinance for whatever zone. You must write an ordinance for any incentives that you do for housing. I just want to make sure we’re doing it in proper order. It would be wise to do an incentive, but we first have to straighten out the ordinance because if he has property on the Southside of Darlington and he has a 40-foot lot, he’s going to be holding it. You’ve had an incentive that you say is going to be in effect for two years, but it will take you another six months; he has lost time, and we still aren’t getting what we should be getting out of it. That’s all I’m saying.” (Several council members speaking at the same time)

Action to Approve Applied Building Sciences to Proceed - Mayor Boyd

Mayor Boyd said, “This is for the Southwest Darlington project for the lawyers to make sure that our case is solid, and if there are any issues they will provide an outline for us. **Councilman Gardner made a motion to approve Applied Building Sciences to proceed. Councilman Milling seconded the motion. Councilpersons Baccus, McRavin, Segars, Reed and Mayor Boyd voted in favor of the motion.**

Discussion of Utility Rates for Outside Users - Mayor Boyd

Mayor Boyd said, “We have people that are not residents of the City of Darlington that water has in times past and currently for some places that are actually being built now, that their rates …. they chose not to be annexed into the city or in times past …. I think the water runs all the way out to Citi Trends, which can’t be annexed into the city, but there are companies and residents that are not inside the city limits …. some could be and some could not be annexed in. Some have the choice, but they just choose not to be annexed in that are charged a rate different …… (Mayor said he got the rates from Charlotte. (He said this just for discussion so he would like everybody to try to have some idea of what they want to talk about at the workshop that’s coming up in two weeks. He said currently the sewer rate for inside the city limits is $15.28 and the sewer rate outside the city limits is $41.14 per unit. Mayor Boyd said my suggestion is that those rates should be increased for the outside residents, not the city residents. He said the water rate is $13.37 per unit and outside of the city is $38.02. Councilman Milling asked, “Do we not have a situation where if they are outside of the city limits, they can get their water from Darlington County Water & Sewer Authority.” Mayor Boyd said, “There are some areas that have county water, and city sewer. Some of these residents and businesses are surrounded by the city, but they choose not to be annexed, therefore they are charged more. Mayor Boyd said, “To me, they should annex in or pay a higher rate, which they are paying a higher rate. But I just

think the rate needs to be looked at. Councilman Milling said, “I would look at the rates. I would not be in favor of any new construction not in the city receiving city services.” Mayor Boyd said, that was my question. I don’t know if we can deny them and say you’ve got to be annexed in or you’re not going to get our services or if we’re required …. Councilman Milling said, “And if we got the opportunity to donut on annexation, I’d consider …. City attorney Kevin Etheridge said, it’s almost impossible …. Mr. Etheridge said there’s a 25% elector petition …. Councilman Milling said, “But if the city surrounds a piece of property, we can do it.” City Attorney Etheridge said, “Absolutely, but I don’t know how many of those are going to be germane to this conversation. Councilman Gardner said, “One thing I would ask of the city attorney is to find out if we have new construction that’s coming in that borders the city, but yet they choose not to annex, can we deny service”? City Attorney Etheridge said, “I think that’s a much easier response because you know Tractor Supply is where things are going right next to it, so I’ll find that out. (City Attorney and Council discussing donut annexation)

Mayor Boyd left the meeting prior to discussion of Fitness World Gym Membership

Discussion of Fitness World Gym Membership

Mayor Pro Tem Segars said last year when Mr. Payne was here, we tried to get three bids on The gym membership. The “Y” did not give a bid, and we asked Fitness World, but they did not bid on it. (Segars said Fitness World, but he meant Planet Fitness) Councilman Segars said Mr. Payne said he hand delivered a request to Planet Fitness to get them to bid on it and they did not, so we only had the one bid and that was for employees of the city to be able to use a gym. The preface on that is if people are in better health, then our insurance premiums will go down. My understanding is that our insurance rates are actually discounted because of gym memberships. So, my first question will be that we look into whether our health membership rates will go up if we did not do gym memberships and my secondary interest is that before we vote on this that we ask the city manager to go and ask for bids. Since the “Y” is closed now I guess our only other option would be Planet Fitness. Councilman Gardner said, “My request would be to go ask for bids - ask both Fitness World and Planet Fitness to give us bids and then see if there will be any negligible consequences to our premiums from a health insurance standpoint if they cancel gym memberships for employees. Councilman Milling said, “If somehow possible I’d like to see what type of participation rate we have with city employees to see who is benefiting from it. Councilwoman Baccus said, “I would like to see who’s participating, the cost and is it more cost efficient to pay for those individuals individually for participating or paying this $4,950. (Council continued to discuss the gym membership and what would be best for the city and the employees) Councilwoman McRavin said, “Is it possible to do a reimbursement? She said whatever gym they choose; we just reimburse them for the fee. Ms. Hawkins said, “Currently Fitness World has a listing that I do have, however I saw one person on there that is no longer employed with the city. I’m going to have HR go through the list and tell me who is who. The second point is that there are family members who will get the benefit in addition to the employee, so if you have a spouse or dependent child, they can attend the gym also. There are other people on that list that are attending or using the gym. Ms. Hawkins said, “I learned that you have a gym at the recreation department” so I was wondering why that

wasn't being used. I don't know if that was just for our citizens and not for city employees or how that's been in the past. So, I just want to put that out there that it is available. Ms. Hawkins said, "I'll be more than glad to check into what you all have asked. I just wanted you all to have that information for your consideration." Councilman Segars said, "When you are looking into that look at Baldwin Gym to see what facilities are there other than just walking around the basketball court.

Resolution/Fair Housing Month April 2025

Mayor Boyd read the Fair Housing Resolution Proclaiming April as Fair Housing Month.

Boards & Commission Appointments - Mrs. Sheila Bryant

Mrs. Sheila Bryant said they have a couple of vacancies on the Beautification Board. She said she received two applications: one from Letha Thomas Martin and Roxie F. Gregg.

Councilwoman Baccus made a motion to appoint Ms. Letha Thomas Martin to the Beautification Board. Councilwoman Elaine Reed seconded the motion. Councilpersons Gardner, McRavin, Segars, Milling and Mayor Boyd voted in favor of the motion.

Councilwoman Baccus made a motion to appoint Ms. Roxie F. Gregg to the Beautification Board. Councilwoman Elaine Reed seconded the motion. Councilpersons McRavin, Milling, Gardner, Segars and Mayor Boyd voted in favor of the motion.

City Manager's Report - City Manager Hawkins

Ms. Hawkins said they are discussing the concert series and the opening ceremony for the Blue Street Complex on April 12th, and we are going to have a live band. She said she would like to see everybody participate. She said I'm sure everybody noticed that on Sunday and Monday the Food Network was with us. She said, "I'm grateful that we got that media attention. I believe Mr. Thomas mentioned there might be some other incentive package we might need to work on in the future and that's going to be great things for the city. I also wanted to say that I was able to attend my first Darlington Joint Council meeting yesterday. Ms. Hawkins said she's in contact with Golden Shovel. They are an economic development team that I became aware of when I took the institute with the South Carolina Economic Development Association. I've come to the realization that we will hold open the Planner and the Economic Development position. We will see if we can partner with the COG to do our planning. But I think not knowing what I don't know that we need to hold that position open so that the general fund will be under budget, so that we can plan to purchase some items if we are not able to get that from our delegation. Ms. Hawkins said on Thursday April 3rd there will be the ribbon-cutting for Starbucks.

Councilman Gardner said on reminders and announcements if we can just make sure we're reaching out to the departments and if anything that's going on in the public make sure they are listed under "reminders" on the agenda.

Reminders / Announcements

The NASCAR parade is this Saturday at 6 PM. And the race is this weekend also.

April 12, 2025, at 6 PM is the ribbon cutting and the first concert series at the Blue Street ballfields. Mayor Boyd said, so that the public knows, we do have benches coming. He said the school district has provided benches for the dugouts.

Tuesday, April 15, 2025, the City Council Work Session at 6:00 PM.
Mayor Boyd also said pay your taxes on Tuesday, April 15th.

Tuesday May 6, 2025, Regular City Council meeting 6:00 PM Tuesday

Tuesday June 3, 2025, Regular City Council Meeting, 6:00 PM

Adjournment

Upon motion of Councilman Gardner, seconded by Councilman Milling, the meeting adjourned at 7:45 PM. All approved the motion to adjourn the meeting.

_____
Mayor

ATTEST:

_____
Clerk & Treasurer