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

PRESENT AT THE MEETING:
Mayor Curtis Boyd, City Manager Lenessa Hawkins, Councilpersons Baccus, Segars, McRavin, Milling, Gardner, and Reed. Also present was Hunter Thomas, Steve Abbott, Gloria Hines, Rosa Hudson, Rose Pruitt, Don Blakney, Sean Odom, City Attorney Kevin Etheridge, and others.

Mr. Stephan 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
Councilwoman Elaine Reed made a motion to approve the minutes of our regular city council meeting on April 1, 2025. Councilwoman Angela McRavin seconded the motion. Councilpersons Milling, Segars, Gardner, Baccus and Mayor Boyd voted in favor of the motion.

Councilman Bryant Gardner made a motion to approve the minutes from the City Council Workshop meeting on April 15, 2025. Councilman Gardner said he would like to know how many hours it took to transcribe those minutes and his suggestion would be to reach out to the Municipal Association about best practices. He said he thinks we are supposed to be talking about the meat of the business and not necessarily every word. He said this is something he would like for us to get educated on. **Councilman John Milling seconded the motion. Councilpersons McRavin, Segars, Reed, Baccus and Mayor Boyd voted in favor of the motion.**

Recognitions, Reports and Presentations None

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.)
Mr. Jim Litchard said he believes back in October there was an ordinance passed about abandoned houses to start finding things. He hasn't seen any progress on abandoned houses. Mr. Litchard said the fire hydrants look really nice. He said he used to do fire stuff a long time ago and normally the fire hydrants are color-coded based upon water flow. He said he is sure Darlington knows every hydrant upside down, but if there was a major fire like we've seen disasters over the last year everywhere, and folks from a long way away are coming in, they aren't going to know what a dragon fire hydrant does. It's a life safety issue for them to know

how many gallons per minute each hydrant is going to do. Mr. Litchard said subject to whoever is talking in the fire department, I think this might be a good way to go and let them change it over on their annual maintenance plan. Mr. Litchard said you all appointed him to be on the planning commission a couple of months ago, but the Planning Commission hasn't met since January 2025. He said I don't know if they met then because the last minutes posted online was in 2022. If you want folks to volunteer and help out, I don't know who or what group is in charge of that, but it needs to be a little bit more than, "hey there's going to be a meeting tomorrow." Mr. Litchard said, "Online it says Wednesday at the Sanitation Department, so I show up on Wednesday and I'm ready to go, but I'm the only one there. I was told we haven't done that for months. He said it's a little bit depressing.

Mr. Don Blakney said he's coming in reference to a fire hydrant that's in his back yard that has not been touched. He said it's color-coded, and it doesn't have anything on it. Mr. Blakney asked, "Our infrastructure as far as our streets and roads, are they included in our budget for this year, next year or any time coming up? Councilman Gardner said, "the majority of our streets are owned by DOT. It would really depend on what street you are talking about. He said the pump right down the street from his house on Southern Pine Street has been there for a while. Mr. Blakney said, I was just trying to find out about that situation and see if anybody is aware of what's going on or how much longer it's going to take to try and figure that out. Mayor Boyd said she can look it up and give you a call back. Ms. Hawkins said, "It's Limit Street and from what I understand, that pump station is the only above ground pump station. We have requested appropriations to repair that pump station and get it below ground operational. The manhole that the temporary pump is leading into pump down that pump station so that we don't have any spillage of the effluent. Ms. Hawkins said I can find out how long it will be and get back to you.

Sean Odom said, had citizens call me yesterday. Saying that a certain person was coming to their homes asking them to sign some kind of paper to change the form of government of our city to a strong mayor, weak council. He said I do not think that needs to happen here. We do not need one person to control our money. Especially if the person, that in my opinion, I wouldn't trust with a penny. And another thing. I think the way that our city looks, it looks like we're totally broke because we spend most of our money in my opinion, in wasteless things like the water park out here.

UNIFINISHED BUSINESS

Discussion for Incentive for Housing Developers – Mayor Boyd

Mayor Boyd said, we discussed this at last week's meeting about if a homeowner comes in and wants to build a house, they are going to have to have a contractor to build their one home and if a contractor wants to come build a home and sell it or if wants to come build forty homes. …. Once they sell them all, it has to be a home that's not up for rental properties. Mayor Boyd said we're trying to make sure this is clarified because we want to start this in October of this year and go for two years. We will have Hunter to promote this to get the word out, so people know about it. Hopefully to encourage one home dweller or a developer to come into the city and build multiple homes. Mayor Boyd said when they pay the fees it will go into the general fund and will

be earmarked so when they finish the home, proper documentation has been provided to us showing that it was a sold home and not a rental home, then the contractor would get the fees back as an incentive. Councilman Milling said, “I have no problem with the concept. We might want to have that language just to be sure of that. I intended to have this as a primary residence, but nobody's bought it in a month or a year, so I want my reimbursement. Councilman Milling said, “In order to qualify for reimbursement, they don’t get to ask for the money back until the tax assessor has given them that rate as a primary residence. He said we might want to put something in there where they are the ones making the decision. Councilman Milling said, “I would love for this to become a large pot of money that we end up reimbursing but I would also suggest as you did that it be earmarked, but that it not necessarily go into the general fund, but into a savings account and there be clear language that we get to keep any interest earnings off the savings account. Mayor Boyd said, “Like Mrs. Bryant said, that when the HUD statement was finished …. I don’t know if that clarifies or not, but as you said with the tax assessor, showing that it’s 4%, that language could be put in there. Councilman Milling said, “It's in the contractor’s inventory for a year or 18 months, then they are not going to get anything even though they may have closed their construction package, but they haven't closed with the new purchase. Mayor Boyd asked Councilman Gardner if he said something earlier. He said, it's going at the same thing, so just simple language of the second paragraph first line – “*Any new home built within the city of Darlington and registered as a primary residence and not intended for rental property use.”* He said to make sure we have the appropriate language or whether we need authorization from the county to authenticate it’s the primary residence. That’s the only thing I want to protect the city from. Councilman Gardner said, “Do we want to vote? Because we can change the language between now and the next meeting. Or do you want to wait and vote on the first reading when we get the language changed? Councilman Milling said, “I guess this would take the form of an ordinance, so we need to get a title to it and have a first reading and a second reading.” Mayor Boyd asked Kevin Etheridge to help with this, and we’ll have this on the agenda for the next workshop meeting.

Discussion on Fitness World Gym Membership – City Manager Hawkins

(Mayor Boyd signed conflict of Interest form and left the meeting)

Ms. Hawkins said there were several things you all asked me to do concerning Fitness World Gym membership, one of which was to see how many employees are actually using the gym. She said there are currently 38. Ms. Hawkins said HR went over the list and identified the current employees that were on the list. She said she also called Lee Andrews to see what we had available. And he said he had a lot of pre-used equipment. But nothing would compare to what Fitness World Gyms offers. I called Planet Fitness today and they do not, as Ms. Pridgen has said multiple times, do group rates or group payments. With Planet Fitness, initially you would have to come in at $49 plus $1 enrollment and $15.00 a month and that would be in the door at $230. Ms. Hawkins said the other thing you asked me to find out was did it improve the premiums for our medical insurance. She said unfortunately, it does not. If we wanted out insurance carrier to give us a product that would take into account a wellness incentive, then we would have to go back to them for them to quote a price for that. Ms. Hawkins said, “With that said, and in my opinion and my recommendation is that Fitness World Gyms is a positive, beneficial benefit that the city does offer. She said HR did tell her that we need to do a better job

of saying that this is available and then we need to clarify what the rules are. Is it just for the people in your household that are additional … for the fact that Fitness World Gyms not only gives you the equipment, tanning, sauna, fitness classes and the like. They were similarly structured to Planet Fitness, but you have to go to their "Black Card" which is $24.99 a month to get these options, and you can go to any Planet Fitness vs their classic. The other item was you can go to any area Fitness World and use their facility as well. Ms. Hawkins said, for those reasons. I believe it is a great benefit. If we were to get to 100 people …. The only thing I would ask, since it's already available, is to extend it to part-time people. I think the more people you use the better benefit you will get because once you reach 100 people at $4,950, you're down to $49.50 per year and you can have dependents in your home also that can enjoy the gym. Ms. Hawkins said, if you said you still had some unreadiness. I do believe that you should authorize or agree with me to pay Fitness World Gyms from March until June because they have been seeing people since March when it was requested to be renewed and then that was get us on track with July 1st. Councilwoman McRavin and Councilman Gardner had questions about the numbers Ms. Hawkins presented for the gym membership. **Councilman Gardner made a motion to approve the Fitness World Gym membership for $4,950 annually plus the catch up you said we need to do.** Ms. Hawkins said he would go back to March because that's when you did it in 2024. **Councilman Milling said, "Can we amend your motion to make it for sixteen months. I think 16 months would take us to June 30, 2026. Councilman Gardner said, "I would like to amend my motion as Councilman Milling suggested." Councilman Milling seconded the motion. Councilpersons McRavin, Reed, Baccus, and Segars voted in favor of the motion.** Ms. Hawkins said there is an agreement that Fitness World sent for us to sign.

NEW BUSINESS

First Reading on Ordinance No. 2025-02 (2025-2026 Budgets in Title Only)

Councilman Gardner made a motion to approve First Reading on Ordinance No. 2025-02 (2025-2026 fiscal year budget in Title Only). Councilman Milling seconded the motion. Councilpersons McRavin, Reed, Baccus, Segars and Mayor Boyd voted in favor of the motion.

Discuss and Approve Recommendation to contract with Brightly – Ms. Hawkins

Ms. Hawkins said a couple of weeks ago she got a call and an e-mail from a company called Brightly Software. She says she gets a lot of calls and emails from vendors, so she decided to call one day while Mr. Reed was in her office and come to find out this is something that we need. I strongly recommend that you allow us to get this software. Because #1 the software is mobile. You can do it on a telephone and #2 because the department heads can push work out to the field and don't have to have the person come in. They can type it out, push it out to all of your phones and you get to know what you've got to do for the day. This is updated in real time. It will track our assets, facilities, cars, rolling stock, water hydrants, asset management, etc. Not only that, but this software will allow for something that I was going to ask Mr. Morris and Mr. Boatwright to do, which is the cost out a job. They will be able to cost that out because they will have the ability to put every single thing that they use into the software which is in the cloud and then be able to pull those pieces. Whenever you do that, it is tied to your GIS, and you can see

the line on your desktop. There is some confusion about where some of our infrastructure assets are in the ground and this way we can track that. It'll show you a bird's eye view like a Google Maps and you can see the street. She says streets can use it for fleet management because right now we're not tracking that. Ms. Hawkins said, “Someone asked me earlier if other department can use it. Yes, but right now I would like for you to … The reason I want you to recommend this is so that we can do…. Nicholson Business Systems has one, but we're not using it. About the work order system. It was in use, but not now. I did check into your iPads, and they are a little bit too old, but we can use cellphones. We do have cellphones out in the field so all we have to do is download an app, connect with the right credentials. Ms. Hawkins said she got together with Mr. Morris, Mr. Reed, Mr. Boatwright, and Mr. Thomas and the four of them did the demo. Ms. Hawkins said it was phenomenal in my opinion, and it is less than $10,000 and about $8,000 a year and it only goes up 3%. Miss Hawkins said if we decide we don't want to do business with Brightly anymore, they will give you back your data, which is really important. Because when you know what's there for sure, that helps everybody complete their job better. There is a component on there to do much like we're doing now online, but the director is a little skittish of using that right away so we are going to put the information in, and they will help us load whatever we have. If we have Excel worksheets or GIS overlays, they will put that into the software for us. They will come and train us, and they’ll probably be virtual. If we wanted them to come personally…. but I think we can handle any of the “Teams or Zoom” meetings. But I think it's going to be great. And I hope that you will approve for us to get it. Councilman Gardner asked about pictures. Ms. Hawkins said you can upload pictures to it, paper, and forms from what I understand. Mayor Boyd asked, “We have a resident, or somebody tagged something like they do on the website now, it goes to a spreadsheet, so would this integrate with that or be separate to where they could come into this automatically? Ms. Hawkins said, right now, the directors would like for that side not to be able to open up. That's the only drawback. Miss Hawkins said the initial investment is $9,858.46. That includes $3,825.18 for an additional 6 months of the first term from 7/1/2025 to 12/31/2025. Councilwoman Baccus asked Ms. Hawkins to give the number again. Ms. Hawkins said the Asset Essentials Enterprise System is $7,587.99. Included is analytics, AE safety, Asset Essential Inventory and different modules are in the software. The total for the cloud services is $3,762. And the total for the professional services which is implementation and consulting this first year is $6,095.65 for a total of $9,858.46 and we would split that between the water/sewer and streets and sanitation. Councilman Segars asked does this software have any interaction with what Asset Technology does. Ms. Hawkins said, “No,” but as she was coming into the building, she saw Charlie & Mr. Bill Moody and she asked them about the specifications of the iPads. His only drawback with the iPads is we might be able to use them for two years, but at one point Apple will not service it anymore nor will you allow you to upgrade it. So eventually you won’t be able to use it, but your cell phones will be able to keep up more. Councilman Milling asked, Ms. Hawkins if she was provided any references for this company that you could contact and find out any people who are currently using it? Ms. Hawkins said the school district is using it. She said she asked Lucas Reed to reach out to the school district because he knows some people that work for the district, and they can tell us what their experience is. Councilman Milling said, I would like to be sure that the company that we're dealing with can deliver what they promised they can deliver and so that's the reason I was asking about checking with other

people who are currently using it. Ms. Hawkins said, and I did say to them that if Mr. Boatwright, Mr. Reed, and Mr. Morris wasn't impressed, then there would be no recommendation. Ms. Hawkins went on to explain other benefits of the software down the road. Council members asked Ms. Hawkins questions and discussed data input about the software. Councilwoman McRavin asked, “So, what's the total dollar amount that you need right now? Ms. Hawkins said, $9,858. And this is from July 1st, 2025, until June 30th, 2026. There's probably going to be about 3 months of implementation before we get all of the data in and get everyone trained to use the app and update it as we go. Mayor Boyd asked, “Are they where they would come give us a presentation? Ms. Hawkins said, “They did offer to do that. Would you like one? I’ll see what they can do.” Ms. Hawkins told the council she will try to get them a zoom meeting or a teams meeting. Councilwoman McRavin asked are we at a point where we want to vote on this now or do you want more information. Mayor Boyd said hopefully she can present it to us at the workshop and then we can decide. Councilman Gardner asked, if we are having a special meeting at our workshop. He said the reason I’m asking is we could postpone it and everybody wins. Councilwoman Baccus asked, “When do you need it? Ms. Hawkins said I'm going to have a phone call tomorrow, but I will tell them you would like to see the demo.

Boards & Commission Appointments - None

Ms. Hawkins said there is an opening on the Historical Commission Board and there is also an opening on the Beautification Board.

City Manager’s Report - City Manager Hawkins

Ms. Hawkins said she wants to invite everyone to the concert series on Saturday. She said the concrete for the splash pad has been laid and she has the invoice in hand for it. I told her the invoice for the concrete was already paid. We did get with Safe Built for our CBO building official services. She said she also checked with CC& I. after speaking to LLR last week and I do have a contract for them. I do have a recommendation to go with Safe Built. She said they responded very quickly to us, and we have the option of having their proprietary permitting system available to us as long as we are in contract with them. Since that was not added to the agenda, I would like to give you a copy of it for your review and if you would give me officially the ability to continue to do business with them until you agree on either CC&I or Safe Built. Safe Built is now being used by Darlington County when they get kind of overloaded. The amount per hour is $105 and the hourly rate for CC&I is $90, but I do believe that Safe Built would be the choice. She said, “I don’t know a whole lot about CC&I, but they are recommended by LLR. This would be on an as needed basis. They would work with Ms. Howard, they schedule, they talk, and they help her to make sure that we can stop work like we did today. We had a stop work order go out today because people were not committed. The Fire Department personnel went over there and issued a stop work order today. They will be getting their permits and paying their fees tomorrow. Mayor Boyd said, “The ordinance that we have currently states that the fire department can go out and do the inspections now. He said the way the ordinance reads are that if the codes department is out, and they are right now, the fire department, the chief and the assistant chief has the ability to go out and do the inspection. Ms. Hawkins said, “I don’t believe they can do an inspection what they would do is help our former building official with items like a

stop work order. I don't think they can officially do an inspection. Councilwoman McRavin asked, don't they have to have a certification in order to do that? Ms. Hawkins said that or either be on the provisional CBO. We name someone to go and start that two-year process. They can be the provisional CBO. She said, "I reached out to four different folks to assist, and I did get one gentleman who quoted $150.00 per inspection, but I thought that was a little bit too steep for what we need them to do". Mayor Boyd said, "If you do $150.00 per inspection, and you do $105.00 an hour, a lot of the inspections could be less than an hour and a lot of inspections could be more than an hour. He asked, if we go with Safe Built, are we looking to use them permanently or will it be until we can find a codes person? Ms. Hawkins said, "I think we need to have it how the county is using it. Not that they have to go anywhere. They understand we're going to be looking for a CBO. Mayor Boyd asked questions about violations concerning grass and overgrown lots. Councilman Gardner said, "I don't think that has to be done by them. I think that we can do that in house with Charles, Chief and Ms. Howard. Councilman Gardner said you mentioned something about putting this on the agenda, but you are empowered up to $5,000. He said "I appreciate you bringing it to us and if you feel like you're going towards that budget, and before you hire somebody else, I guess bring it to us then. Councilman Segars said, I'd like for you to contact Hartsville and see what kind of pitfalls they have experienced with a service like this. Ms. Hawkins said she has Daniel Moore on her list to call, and I'll reach out to him. Ms. McRavin said. And just for clarity, these services that you are talking about are to get us through this time frame where we don't have the codes enforcement officer right now. So that we can continue. … but the investment can continue, and progress is not hindered by us not having a code enforcement. That this is a temporary service that we're looking into and nothing that you're planning to do long term and not replace it. Is that correct? Ms. Hawkins said, "That is correct. Mayor Boyd said, "That's what I was asking. I thought you said you were looking to keep these people that's why I was asking if it was temporary or are we looking to replace the department head…. Ms. Hawkins said, "Even when … Let me restate what I'm trying to say. Even when either someone is promoted to CBO for The City of Darlington, provisionally or otherwise or has the credentials CBO and can come in here on day one and be our CBO, I would like to keep them in a contractual arrangement that we can call them if we have high periods of activity because that is how Darlington County uses them. That is how Darlington County Administrator, Mr. Charles Stewart, explained to me that they have them on retainer and if something comes up that they need additional support they just call them and they are ready to go. Ms. Hawkins said, "That is my suggestion."

Reminders / Announcements

Saturday May 10, 2025, at 7:00 PM is the Concert Series at Wells Stadium
Tuesday May 20, 2025, at 6:00 PM is the City Council workshop/ Special Meeting
Monday May 26, 2025, City Offices will be closed for Memorial Day.
Monday Morning May 26, 2025, at 10:00, here will be a Memorial Day service on Public Square

Upon motion of Councilman Gardner, seconded by Councilwoman Reed the meeting, the meeting adjourned at 7:15 PM. All approved the motion to adjourn the meeting.

Mayor

ATTEST:

Clerk & Treasurer