CITY OF DARLINGTON
SPECIAL MEETING/ BUDGET WORK SESSION
HELD IN THE COURTROOM
400 PEARL STREET, DARLINGTON, SC
TUESDAY, JUNE 17, 2025 – 6:00 PM

Invocation - Mayor Curtis Boyd

Pledge of Allegiance

For Council Discussion First reading of an Ordinance Number 20 24–06 of the City of Darlington, South Carolina to Amend Article XII Legal Status of the Zoning Ordinance of the City of Darlington South Carolina to add Section 12–5 Exclusions; and Other Matters Related Thereto - Ms. Merry Morgan Smith, Economic Development Director.
Ms. Merry Morgan read aloud ordinance No. 2024-06. Ms. Merry Morgan said she has been advised that the provision, as it is written, would allow the council to except a council project only from zoning regulations where they may not be appropriate variance criteria to exempt from those provisions, the zoning ordinance. She says that you are a public body, and you can decide what is in the best interest of the city. She said this goes along those lines that if you wish to change the zoning ordinance you have the power to do this. Rather than having to do that when you need some flexibility in a city project, this would give you that. She said the project that you have in mind, the cooperative arrangement with the county could be accomplished under this. Ms. Merry said we would have to schedule a second reading and a hearing that would finish this out. Councilman Milling said, “I think the concerns that were voiced the last time this was presented was that it had the appearance that council was in a position to waive requirements that others could not waive, which was bad optics saying we don’t have to follow the same rules that we have imposed on you”. Ms. Merry Morgan said, “I can see how you could read it that way. On the other hand, the council undertakes projects of size and magnitude and dollar amount that sometimes you might need some flexibility on. For instance, if the city had a performing arts center and code would require a certain number of parking spaces based on the seats in the auditorium and that was not physically possible at the site where are you building the building, but there’s a parking lot across the street, you could exempt yourself from having a parking requirement on site because you have available parking. Where a citizen could do the same thing by asking for a variance. Councilman Milling asked, “Would that example meet the requirements to be granted a variance? Ms. Merry Morgan said, “Yours would not with this specific example. Or do you mean my example? Councilman Milling said the example that you gave? Ms. Merry said, “We would not have any other performing arts centers that have the same problem so it would be something you could accomplish through establishing those criteria for the variance.” Ms. Merry said, “If you have any other specific questions you’d like answered, I’m happy to ensure that the Land Use Law attorney answers those in writing or is available at your next meeting by telephone for the hearing.” Councilwoman McRavin said, “We are a credible group of government officials ever 30 years from now, and you have some unscrupulous people in office who could very well take

advantage of this open-ended clause that I don't have to abide by anything that's already been set in stone and that's where …. Ms. Merry Morgan said, "It does narrow it down a little bit so that you should have to take into things where it is practical to do so. I see how you ... the worst-case scenario is what you might think of but again that would mean everyone would have to agree, and that would not happen for something that was not in the public good because the public would tell you so. It is not an open book to do whatever you please, it is to accomplish a project that's important outside of what might normally be allowed." Ms. Merry said "The whole zoning code is the same thing; a list of rules that we need to follow, but sometimes it doesn't quite match what needs to happen, an accommodation has to be made." **Councilman John Milling made a motion to approve first reading. Councilwoman Angela McRavin seconded the motion. Councilpersons Baccus and Mayor Boyd voted in favor of the motion.**

Pricing for Fencing and Gravel at Splash Pad - Mr. Lee Andrews, Recreation Director said out of the $154,000 that we are paying to Webb's Irrigation and Playground Equipment we still owe $61,075. Mr. Andrews said there is also a change order for $19,873 to move the sewage line that runs underneath where the splash pad sits. They moved the sewer line around the pad because they did not want to have to tear the pad up to get to the sewer line. And install water in both buildings where they could use both buildings. He said this is just an update so that the council will know where they are on the project. Mr. Andrews said he is asking the council tonight for $4,900 to sod the area around the splash pad so that they don't have a muddy mess. He said it is twenty feet out around the splash pad itself. Mr. Andrews said that he has three quotes for fencing with the lowest quote from Davis Exterior Inc. at $14,000. This will be a 5-foot black vinyl chain link fence. There were also bids from Scott's Fence & IronWorks LLC for $14,695 and 4 In The Fire Fencing gave a quote of $15,620. Mr. Andrews said he received two quotes for gravel in the parking area; one bid was from Industrial Paving, Inc. for $13,920 to grade and prepare existing area and spread 3 inches of stabilized aggregate base and roll with a steel roller; and a bid from Bess Logistics, LLC for $4,725 for 92 tons of fine slag and just grade the parking area. Mr. Andrews said his last insert is from Play & Park Structures for benches and swings for the splash pad and around it for seating for parents and adults - 5 - 6' benches and 4 - 6' swings. The cost of the benches is $1701 per bench. The cost of the swing is $1,595 per swing for a total of $14,140.75 and after adding the freight and tax, the total comes to $16,451.54. Councilwoman McRavin asked, "Are we just talking about the small parking lot facing Roses or are you also talking about behind the Stonehouse"? Mr. Andrews said, "Behind the Stone House, and the parking lot in front of Roses. Councilman Milling asked, "Do we need it rolled and packed? Do we know how many inches ninety-two tons gives us"? Mr. Andrews said, "I cannot tell you how many inches ninety-two tons gives you. Mr. Andrews said, The Director and I said we probably need it rolled and packed, but it was me doing it out of my pocket and this is us trying to keep the cost low. He said to spray it, put that down and keep spraying it." Councilwoman McRavin asked about the two tennis courts. Mr. Andrews said that has not been decided as far as if the tennis courts are coming up or if they are going to remain tennis courts or if they are going to become pickleball courts. He said it has been discussed that that would be parking in the future, but that has not been decided. Councilwoman McRavin said, "Since the tennis courts have not been resurfaced, why would we resurface those two tennis

courts if the intent is to demolish them. Why would we pay to roll it if we are going to end up surfacing"? Mayor Boyd asked, "The two tennis courts we are talking about possibly taking. They were already resurfaced right.? Mr. Andrews said, "No they have not been finished because tennis season started. So now they are coming back to finish it before tennis season. The problem is we don't have tennis courts anywhere else as of yet for high school and the school district went in half with us on those tennis courts to get them redone. Councilwoman McRavin asked, "When does tennis season begin and Mr. Andrews said in September. Councilwoman McRavin said, "So they won't have that much of the ballfield …. the ballfields will be done, but you're saying the tennis courts that they are intending to put out there won't be completed." Mr. Andrews said, "I don't know the answer to that question." Mayor Boyd said they gave us a completion date of January 2025, but I don't know whether that was with the tennis courts. Mayor Boyd said the tennis courts have already been paid to be redone. Mr. Andrews said, "They were in the process of redoing them. They ran into some problems with some water issues underneath the courts so at Christmas time they just shut it down and said they would get to it in the spring. They never got to it in the spring and tennis was supposed to start so I told them to get it playable for tennis season. They have been back one time and worked on the two courts behind the Stone House, but they haven't done anything to the four courts as of yet." Mr. Andrews said they are supposed to come in and entirely do the surface of both courts. Councilwoman McRavin said, "That's a conversation that we should have with the school district because now I know and it's my understanding there was no boys team because they didn't have enough interest, so they don't need all of those courts. And if they aren't going to use all of those courts, why are we paying to resurface them if we're talking about coming back anyway to take them up"? Mr. Andrews said, "I understand that, but they will need them for the girl's tennis this fall if nothing is finished." Councilwoman McRavin said, "They can use the four courts up front for that." Mr. Andrews said, "Normally they play on six, but they could." Mayor Boyd asked, "Have they already been paid to do the work"? Mr. Andrews said they haven't been paid at all yet. Mayor Boyd asked if we signed a contract to do it. Mr. Andrews said, "Yes, we signed a contract with them to do it all, but they haven't finished anything yet. Mr. Andrews said, I understand exactly what she's saying, and we can have that conversation with them and see. Councilwoman McRavin said, "I just think it's a conversation worth having because I would hate for us to spend $10,000 to lay something down and then six months later, we going to take it up just to make it a parking lot because we will need that additional parking for the splash pad". Councilman Milling said, "Seems like if the school district could utilize four courts for their program and we don't care to have the other two done, it would make sense for the school district and for the city to refinish 4 courts instead of 6 courts, but I don't know whether the tennis coach and the administration at the school district would agree to just having four courts available for the girls". Mr. Andrews said, "That's an easy conversation to have with the school district and the contractors." Councilman Milling asked, "Has anybody talked to a sod farmer to see how the sod would hold up with the young people running back-and-forth and dripping water on it." Mr. Andrews said, "The gentleman that's putting the splash pad in has put a splash pad in Dillon and others in Florence County and … Councilman Milling asked how does the grass look a year later? Mr. Andrews said, "I haven't seen it, but I can make phone call." Councilman Milling said, "I don't want to plant grass and then have a mud pie." Mr. Andrews said, "We can set that to the side because the main thing is getting the parking lot and fencing

done. Mayor Boyd said, “You’ve got to come up with something otherwise you …. Mr. Andrews said, “What I can do is get a price on Bermuda grass and call Dillon tomorrow and find out exactly what they have down around their splash pad.” **Councilman Milling made a motion to approve Davis Exterior, Inc. in the sum of $14,000 for a black aluminum chain-link fence, municipal grade. Councilwoman Baccus seconded the motion. Councilpersons McRavin and Mayor Boyd voted in favor of the motion.**

Councilman Milling made a motion to approve the proposal by Bess Logistics, LLC to grade and deliver 92 tons of slag for the parking area. Councilwoman Angela McRavin seconded the motion. Councilwoman Baccus and Mayor Boyd voted in favor of the motion.

Councilwoman McRavin made a motion to approve $16,451.54 to Play & Park Structures for the installation of 5 - 6’ benches and 4 - 6’ swings at the splash pad. Councilman John Milling seconded the motion. Councilwoman Baccus and Mayor Boyd voted for the motion.

Councilman John Milling made a motion to approve the change order for Webb’s Irrigation and Playground Equipment in the amount of $19,873 as provided by the invoice of May 21, 2024, Councilwoman Angela McRavin seconded the motion. Councilwoman Baccus and Mayor Boyd voted in favor of the change order. The council asked about the invoice for the sod. Mr. Andrews said, “I thought you wanted me to check on the Bermuda grass. Mayor Boyd said if the sod is appropriate and under $5,000, he has the approval to go ahead with that so that he doesn’t have to come back to us. Councilwoman McRavin said, “There is another cost or expenditure I think we’ll end up having and we probably need to address is an attendant for the splash pad. It is a concern that you are going to have kids in bathing suits in an open area, whereas if a parent brings multiple kids, the bathroom is tucked away in a little corner, and you might not be able to see. Heaven forbids if a sex offender is around, and something happens and now we are liable. I don’t feel it is or would be wise for us to open this without having an attendant.” Mr. Andrews said, I would like to get your guidance on the hours that the splash pad would be open. He said he has already received phone calls from daycares and schools asking if they can come and can they rent it out. He said, “The answer has been, I’ll get back to you because what I don’t want to do is crowd it out with rentals and the general public don’t get to use it.” Mr. Andrews said, “I can foresee it being slammed the first summer and then as the newness wears off, it will taper off some, but it will always be used.” He said I can foresee it being from 10 AM to 7 PM every day or if you want to go from 10 AM to dark which would put the time more around 8:30 to 9:00 PM during the summertime. Mayor Boyd asked Mr. Andrews to check and see what Dillon, Florence and surrounding areas are doing and bring it back to the council. Councilman Milling said as well as what they are doing about an attendant. Mr. Andrews said, ok.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Pursuant to SC Code 30–4–70 (a) and (b) as follows: a. discussion of employment, appointment, compensation, promotion, demotion, discipline, or release of an employee, or appointment to a public body, and

b. Discussion of negotiation, incident to proposed contractual arrangement, discussion of a proposed sale or purchase of property, receipt of legal advice, settlement of legal claims or discussions of the public agency's position in adversary situations.
The council may act following Executive Session.

Councilman John Milling made a motion to go into executive session at 6:38 PM. Councilwoman Angela McRavin seconded the motion. Councilwoman Baccus and Mayor Boyd voted in favor of the motion.

Councilman Gardner arrived at 6:49 PM.

Upon motion of Councilwoman Angela McRavin, seconded by Councilman John Milling, executive Session ended at 6:56 PM.

Adjournment from the special meeting

BUDGET WORK SESSION

Fire Department - Pat Cavanaugh said the biggest thing he wants them to consider is an increase in salaries. He increased line item 215 by $200; line item 227 was increased by $500 for SCBA expenses; he increased the line item for uniforms & employee training. Chief Cavanaugh said normally they keep $10,000 in line item 390 for radios and equipment but with the 800 switch-over that they did, he got twelve radios for staff, but he needs to get the rest of the radios, so he increased that line item to $98,000. Chief Cavanaugh said he has been to the State Capital and met with Senator Malloy and Representative Williams and they are working to get us the funding. He said if they can get that money that is funding that he will not have to seek. Chief Cavanaugh said he has two old vehicles in his department, a 1997 Chevrolet Suburban and a 2006 Chevrolet Avalanche that they need to upgrade. He said he is estimating that he can get two vehicles for approximately $40,000 each. He said they could get good used ones through the federal surplus. He said if the radios do not come through that would be a good way to help take care of that. Chief Cavanaugh said in line item 389 fire truck payback. He said we pay approximately $42,000 a year for the two fire trucks that we have. At the time we signed the contract for the 2016 fire truck it was a 3% interest loan, but it was for 16 years. He said we still have nine payments left on that and the final payment will be in 2033. The tower truck that they bought from Vermont, Howard got it financed through capital retirement and capital interest. He said we normally pay $65,946 a year but I called Carolina Bank and the last payment coming up is July 1st and it is only $34,678 with the interest. Chief Cavanaugh said with the excess money they will have once the fire truck is paid off there are a couple of things they can do. If the council permits, he can give raises to his guys. If you all think we can get raises, then I can take that excess money and start putting it on a loan for the two fire trucks and reduce the loan from nine years to five years. He said some time or another we are going to have to look at getting a new fire station. Chief Cavanaugh said when they were working on the road out front and every time they would vibrate the road outside, they got cracks in the walls

and the floor cracked. Chief Cavanaugh said when Howard was here, he brought an engineer in when they were doing all this work and he looked at the building and he told Howard, and he told the council at that time that you have two choices; 1) fix the building or 2) get them out of there. He said we may be looking at $3.5 million for a new building. He said we will try to find whatever grants we can find and do whatever we can to get funding. Councilman Milling asked Chief Cavanaugh if the 10% increase in salaries he proposes would be different amounts for different employees. Chief Cavanaugh said, it will be across the board. Councilwoman McRavin said I remember you had to come in for money for repairs for one of the trucks. She said what she is leaning toward is maybe part of those funds need to be set aside so that if there is a truck that goes down and you need a motor, you'll have funds for that. Chief Cavanaugh said that is why I keep that in there. He said he has not had a motor blown and he will be under his budget, but he keeps that in there just in case. He said the reason I had to come before you all at that time was because the repairs were over $5,000 and I had to get approval from the council even though it was in the budget. Mayor Boyd asked, "So you guys can't make us any money to help us out"? Chief Cavanaugh said, "We do; $90,000 comes in every year for the district. But other than that, it is hard to generate funds." Mayor Boyd said, "They can to a certain point while they are out. They can make sure that everybody has paid for their business license. When you walk in the door then you all have the authority to say something about it." Chief Cavanaugh said unless they have certain classes, they just cannot walk in and inspect their business. He said right now there is only him and Charles and he has a third. Last year he sent two more so there are five now when there were only two. Mayor Boyd said, "If they can pull a hose, they can walk into my building and see that I don't have a business license. They can come back to you and say you might want to check there because they don't have a business license in place. I don't have the authority on the credentials to do the inspections, but the whole team together can make sure that everybody in the City of Darlington is paying their business license and not sliding by like we had before when we found one that was over $18,000 for five years. Somewhere somebody should have caught it. Mayor Boyd said, "They all want raises, and they all need raises. They need more than 10%, but again we all have to work together to see what we can do to make sure everybody is paying.

Streets, Sanitation & Garage Departments- Lucas Reed

Lucas Reed said they are proposing quite a bit of an increase across the board for all three departments. He said this year he is factoring in temporary employees in all three departments. He is increasing auto operating expenses and employee training. Lucas said Kendrick in the garage department has never had an opportunity to get additional training since he has been with the city. He said vehicles have changed and they now have more electronics and more computers in them than when he first started so we need to be able to send him off to get recertified and updated with the new technology on the vehicles. He has $65,000 budgeted for a vehicle because it is fitting for the city mechanic to have a service vehicle with a crane, air compressor and auxiliary fuel tank. We need a tire machine and that way we can start installing new tires on vehicles instead of having to take it to an outside source. Lucas said they went to the technology center at the school for a career program and discovered that the auto tech class is in the process of buying a new tire machine, and they might be willing to sell one of their other units to the city for a very low cost. He is asking for a Port-a Cooler misting fan for the back of

the shop because it gets extremely hot in the area where Kendrick works. They are also asking for two part-time employees who will be student summer workers that are juniors or seniors in high school and are taking auto tech classes. This will give them some hands-on experience. Councilwoman Baccus asked Lucas how much he thinks we paid for tires being changed. Lucas said he does not have an idea how much was spent but he can get with the other departments and try and get those numbers. Councilwoman Baccus asked, where do we have most of the tires changed? Lucas said, for regular passenger vehicles I think it is Singletary's and for the commercial trucks I am not sure where they have gone in the past. He said from past experience from his previous employment he's looking at no longer buying brand new tires for the garbage truck and cherry picker. Those tires are expensive, and they are constantly getting nails in them from going to the landfill. It will be much more feasible to start using retreads and recaps for the rear tires. The front steer tires will get brand new tires every time because it is illegal to put a retread, or recap or even a patch on steer tire on a commercial vehicle. Councilwoman Baccus asked Lucas on average how many tires he had to replace monthly. Lucas said, I have not seen any from my three departments. He said when they had to do inspections and servicing on police vehicles, they had to send two vehicles to get tires, and he is unsure of the cost of those. Councilwoman McRavin asked Lucas if they service the entire fleet of the city. Lucas said, "Yes, oil changes, and any mechanical issues down to rebuilding or replacing the entire engine. Lucas said they service the police, street and sanitation, water and sewer vehicles and the regular vehicles in the fire department. McRavin asked about the maintenance plan for the vehicles. Lucas said there has been a huge lack of that, but he and Kendrick are in the process of writing one up and starting everything over from scratch. They will start getting vehicles in and doing a full service on it and require them to bring the vehicle back in after so many miles for the next scheduled service. Lucas said they can order tires from state purchasing which will be much cheaper. Mayor Boyd said, "I agree with all of that, but the problem I have with that is who's going to do it". Mayor asked if Kendrick would do that too and Lucas said, No. Mayor Boyd said, "I agree with you 100% that it would be cost effective, but at the same time we need to look at how much is being spent out. If we spend $200,000 or more on an outside company to do the work, then you could hire two more guys and pay them $75,000 a year. Councilwoman Baccus asked Lucas if he had a chance to service the vac truck. Lucas said, "We have not seen the vac truck over in our building yet." Councilwoman Baccus asked, "Is the vac truck being serviced at all." Lucas said he was not sure. He said he was not aware that the vac truck was not operational. He said that the vac truck no longer falls under the street and sanitation department, it falls under the water department. Councilwoman Baccus said, "Technically, it was bought for street and sanitation." Lucas said I cannot answer anything about the vac truck because it was removed from the building and pushed under sewer, water, and stormwater." Councilwoman Baccus asked, "Mr. Taylor, that vac truck, when we originally purchased that vac truck it was purchased to service the streets to make sure those storm drains were clean, so the water would flow if it's raining and flooding. We need to get back to using that vac truck to do at least what it was purchased to do and if they are not servicing it, that sounds like it is going to be a problem." Councilman Gardner said, "I'm sure it's getting serviced, but this is not in his department. This is street and sanitation. That was with the Stormwater/ Water & Sewer Department." Councilwoman Baccus said, "But it came out of the street and sanitation department when we purchased it. Lucas went over the street department

budget. Councilman Milling asked Lucas how many employees he has in the street department. Lucas said he has seven full-time and two temporary workers. He went over the increases in line item 217-auto operating expenses, an increase in 226-maintenance and service contract, an increase in 264-employee training; an increase in line item 274-sweeper expense. Lucas said he is budgeting for that because nothing was not budgeted before. There is an increase in line item 279 to buy a dump trailer to haul materials such as rock, gravel, sand, asphalt, etc. It would be used in the sanitation department as well. Lucas said he included $65,000 in the budget for a landscaping truck. Line item 388 was increased to $10,000. Councilwoman Baccus asked Mr. Taylor, if the street is cut by the water department and if our hot box can patch that spot, should that be billed under the water department or the street and sanitation department. Mr. Bill said, “I am not sure how you all are allocating those.” Mr. Shugart said, “Yes, the water department does pay for that. Ordinarily the street department would fix it and if it is too large for the street department, then we will hire a contractor to fix it. Either way the water or sewer department will pay for it. Councilwoman Baccus said, “We haven’t been using that hotbox. We have been paying Evans Construction or somebody.” Lucas said, “I contacted the company that actually sold the hotbox to the city and the regional manager is going to be coming in very soon to look over everything and give everyone there a lesson in operations. He said what he wants to do is move any funds that they have budgeted in the water department to the street department and that way everything will fall under the street department. Councilwoman Baccus asked about line item 425-streetscape improvements where he budgeted $12,000. Lucas could not answer so I told him I would run a detailed report and email explanation to the Council. Lucas budgeted $15,000-$30,000 for a skid steer which will be used for cleanup of concrete asphalt and other materials associated with paving grading, etc. Lucas went over Department 640- sanitation department. He is asking for an increase in salaries. Adding $1,000 in line item 210-printing and office supplies because there has never been anything budgeted for office supplies in department 640. He added $500 for line item 231-small hand tools, $1,500 was added for line item 264-employee training; $75,000 in line item 380-automobile expense to purchase a skid steer and dump truck; Lucas budgeted $400,000 for a commercial garbage truck. Right now, capital waste is charging us roughly $385,000 a year whereas we can buy a brand-new commercial garbage truck for $400,000. Councilman Milling said, we don’t have the containers. Lucas said, yes sir we would also have to purchase the containers. We would be able to purchase them through capital waste. Councilman Milling asked Lucas if he has a figure included that if we bought a trash truck as to what it would cost to buy the containers. Lucas said, “No sir, I'm still working on those figures.” He said I would anticipate roughly an additional $150,000 for containers. Councilwoman McRavin said, “But you have to have additional employees I would imagine. Lucas said, “No ma’am, our driver that’s currently doing commercial trash would take that over so he would be doing that as well as the roll carts.” Line item 385-machines and equipment was increased to $15,000 to cover the increase on servicing parts; $4,000 was added to line item 386 miscellaneous equipment. Mayor Boyd asked Lucas if he looked at the comparison of what it would take to have consolidated waste to do all the residential per can. Lucas said, “No sir. Not yet. I was more focused on getting this done since this was thrown into my lap the day I walked in.

REMINDERS

Next Budget work session will be Tuesday May 28, 2024, 6:00 PM

First Reading on Budget at the June 4, 2024, meeting, 6:00 PM

Juneteenth Holiday – June 19, 2024, City Offices will be Closed.

Public Hearing & Final Reading on Budget June 18, 2024, 6:00 PM

MASC Annual Meeting will be July 18 – 21 at the Hyatt Regency in Greenville, SC. If you plan to attend, please bring your registration form to us no later than Friday June 14th.

ADJOURNMENT

Councilman John Milling made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:29 PM. Councilman Bryant Gardner seconded the motion. Councilpersons McRavin, Baccus, Reed, and Mayor Boyd voted in favor of the motion.

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Mayor

ATTEST:

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Clerk & Treasurer