

BUDGET WORKSESSION  
DARLINGTON COUNTY COUNCIL  
DARLINGTON, SC

May 10, 2010

A budget worksession to discuss the General Fund Budget (Ordinance No. 10-3) was held this 10<sup>th</sup> day of May 2010, at 7 p.m., at the Darlington County Courthouse Annex/EMS Building, 1625 Harry Byrd Highway, Darlington, South Carolina.

NOTICE OF MEETING

In compliance with the Freedom of Information Act, a copy of the meeting notice, giving the date, time, and place of the meeting was mailed in advance to the local newspapers (the News and Press, the Messenger, and the Morning News), persons requesting notification, and posted on the bulletin board at the entrance to the County Administrator's Office.

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT

Vice Chairwoman Anne C. Warr, Chaplain Dannie Douglas, Jr., Mr. Wesley Blackwell, and Mr. Alex "Buz" Shaw.

COUNCIL MEMBERS ABSENT

Chairman Billy Baldwin, Mr. Marvin Le Flowers, Mrs. Wilhelmina P. Johnson, and Ms. Mozella "Pennie" Nicholson (arrived as the meeting was being adjourned).

ALSO PRESENT

County Administrator Phyllis Griffiths, County Attorney James C. Cox, Jr., Clerk to Council J. JaNet Bishop, and others.

REPORTERS PRESENT

Mr. Jim Faile of the Messenger.

Call To Order / Invocation

Vice Chair Anne Warr called the meeting to order at 7 p.m. and Mr. Douglas presented the invocation.

County Attorney Jim Cox pointed out that since a quorum of Council was not present, a consensus or vote could not be taken. This meeting was for discussion only.

Mr. Shaw said it would be difficult to ask County Administrator Phyllis Griffiths to look for money, plus he did not want to raise taxes to fund the Animal Shelter because not everyone may have a pet. Therefore, it would not be right to make someone pay who does not have an interest in pets. Mr. Shaw said the county has a lot of money in the Animal Shelter and has received very good gifts from companies. He also said there were a lot of questions and whether money could be found. If Council found money for one thing, then others would ask Council to find money for them, too. Mr. Shaw commended the efforts of

the Humane Society. He stated that he did not know the right answer, but he did not want to lose friends, members of the county, nor the Humane Society.

Mr. Douglas asked whether the Humane Society had matched the money that was given as donations. Mrs. Griffiths indicated that she had not received a financial statement from the Humane Society. However, Mr. Blackwell said the money was matched 4 to 1. The Humane Society gave \$4 to the county's \$1. Mr. Douglas said the individuals had some good ideas, but he did not want to raise taxes.

Mr. Blackwell commended the Humane Society for raising \$4 to every \$1 the county had appropriated. He explained that each year, the county carries over money from previous years such as for the South Darlington Watershed Project, the Highway 340 Industrial Park Project, etc. Mr. Blackwell said about \$400,000 was carried over from last year for projects that were not finished, but would be done in next year. Mr. Blackwell also explained that in each budget year, the county normally budgets from the fund balance or the reserve fund. This year, there was about \$550,000 in the fund balance. Therefore, he suggested that Council increase the budget by \$42,000 from the fund balance. Mr. Blackwell said this would not cause a tax increase because Council would be using reserve funds.

Mrs. Warr explained that the county was capped and could not raise taxes. She talked about the economy and additional cuts from the state. Mrs. Warr said Council was trying to work the budget so that everyone could operate. The Sheriff's Department provides safety for the county and did not get nearly what was requested. Also, other county departments were cut so that employees would not be laid off.

In reference to the fund balance/reserve and capital fund that Mr. Blackwell referred to, Mrs. Warr explained that the county is required to maintain a certain amount in these accounts just in case the revenue does not come in. If the revenue does not come in, then the county would have enough funds to operate for six months. If Council uses these funds, the county may not have the necessary funds if the revenue does not come in. Mrs. Warr stated that she would hope that Council would look at the figures closely and shift something around to help in some way. She pointed out that information containing the Animal Shelter contracts and other information was placed at Council's desk tonight in response to Councilwoman Wilhelmina Johnson's request. However, Council members did not have the opportunity to review the information and Mrs. Johnson was not present at the meeting. Mrs. Warr said she could not promise that Council could do anything with the economic condition in the county and next year appearing to be worse. She commended the volunteers.

Mr. Shaw said Council needed to look at the big picture that was not good. He stated that he would hate to know that Council used money from the capital fund balance and shorted other people where help was needed for drugs, Roads and Bridges, the Sheriff's Department, etc. He said everyone had to cut back. Mr. Shaw also indicated that he had spoken with Mrs. Griffiths and Mr. Blackwell regarding this matter. He said Council could not punish one group to satisfy another.

Mr. Douglas stated that if Council gives to the Humane Society, Council would have to give more to the Sheriff, too. He also mentioned that Council had turned down some people.

Mr. Blackwell agreed that Council was in hard times regarding funding. However, he pleaded with Council to take \$42,000 from the fund balance. He said this would also help the Sheriff because part of his responsibility was to go out and see about the dogs along with Mr. Randy Evans. Mr. Blackwell said it also was a part of Mr. Evans' responsibility to help pick up the dogs. His plea was that Council would understand the benefits of the \$42,000 taken from the fund balance, and then be concerned about other people who may come up as time goes on.

Mrs. Warr wanted everyone to realize that the county had a lot of state and federal mandates that must be obeyed or funding would be cut off completely. She hopes that Council could work something out. Mrs. Warr then talked about the unemployment rate in the county being at 13 percent and the amount of funding (\$17 million) the Workforce Investment Group will be cut. The state was in bad financial condition, which passes on to the county.

Mr. Shaw asked Ms. Kirven about the Humane Society getting together and cutting some things. He said the county was out of money, and Council needed the Humane Society to help the county just as the Humane Society wants the county to help them.

Someone from the audience spoke out about the Humane Society being forgotten for the past ten years; the animals being a part of the county; the volunteers raising 4 percent of the funds when no other county department, such as the Sheriff's Department, was raising funds; and suggested that some of the other departments provide some funding. The individual also spoke about the Animal Shelter being singled out; the Animal Shelter contract needing to be relooked; and it should not be up to the Humane Society to raise the money because this (the Animal Shelter) was a county project.

Mrs. Warr stated that this was based upon the contract. She thanked the individual for her comments and pointed out that citizens were not supposed to make comments during the worksession.

There being no further comments, Mrs. Warr declared the meeting adjourned at 7:22 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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Mrs. J. JaNet Bishop, Clerk to Council

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Mr. Billy Baldwin, Chairman  
Darlington County Council

Approved at meeting of June 7, 2010.