

DINNER MEETING
DARLINGTON COUNTY'S MUNICIPAL COUNCILS,
COUNTY COUNCIL, BOARD OF EDUCATION, &
LEGISLATIVE DELEGATION
DARLINGTON, SOUTH CAROLINA

June 30, 2014

The City of Hartsville hosted a dinner meeting of Darlington County's Municipal Councils, County Council, Board of Education, and Legislative Delegation on June 30, 2014, at 6 p.m., at Duke Energy Center For Innovation, 145 West Carolina Avenue, Hartsville, South Carolina.

NOTICE OF MEETING

In compliance with the Freedom of Information Act, a copy of the agenda, giving the date, time, and place of the meeting was posted on the bulletin board in the County Administrator's Office and mailed in advance to Darlington County's Municipal Mayors/Managers/Clerks, Darlington County School District Superintendent, Darlington County Board of Education Chairman, Darlington County Legislative Delegation, Darlington County Council members, and the local newspapers.

COUNTY COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT

Chairman Wesley Blackwell, Vice Chairwoman Mozella Nicholson, Chaplain Dannie Douglas, Jr., Mr. Robbin Brock, Mrs. Wilhelmina P. Johnson, Mr. Bobby Hudson, Mr. Robert L. Kilgo, Jr..

COUNTY COUNCIL MEMBERS ABSENT

Mr. Marvin Le Flowers.

OTHERS ABSENT

County Administrator Dale Surrett and County Attorney James C. Cox, Jr.

ALSO PRESENT

Clerk to Council J. JaNet Bishop, County Auditor Rosa Hudson, Tax Assessor Kyle Johnson, Society Hill Mayor Tommy Bradshaw, Society Hill Council Members Denise Douglas and Deborah Harrell, City of Darlington Mayor Tony Watkins, City of Darlington Administrator Howard Garland, City of Darlington Council Members John Segars, Dyan Cohen, Coleman Cannon, Sr., and James Cooper, III, Darlington County School District Superintendent Eddie Ingram, Darlington County Board Of Education Members Joyce Thomas, Warren Jeffords, and Connell Delanie, Hartsville Mayor Mel Pennington, Hartsville Council Members Johnny Andrews, Adlena Graham, Bernice Wilson, Teresa Mack, Charles Govan, and Billy Shirley, Hartsville City Manager Natalie Zeigler, Hartsville Staff Members, Sherron Skipper, Teresa Benjamin, Phil Gardner, and Russell Cox, Hartsville Police Chief James Hudson, Hartsville Police Officers John Specht, Robert McIntyre, and Brandon Huggins, Hartsville Fire Chief Jeff Burr, Senator Gerald Malloy, Representative Jay Lucas,

County Transportation Committee (CTC) Member Roosevelt Wallace, and Duke Energy Center For Innovation Director Ben Chastin.

REPORTERS PRESENT

None.

Welcome / Invocation

Mayor Pro Tem Johnny Andrews welcomed everyone to the meeting. Police Chief James Hudson presented the invocation.

Discussion From The Floor

Duke Energy Center For Innovation

Mr. Ben Chastin, Director, talked about the Duke Energy Center for Innovation, a partnership with Clemson University, the City of Hartsville, Byerly Foundation, and Duke Energy Foundation. The Center provides support and mentorship to create technology companies (small impact companies and jobs) in Hartsville and surrounding areas. This pilot program came from an eight-year study from Clemson to create high impact technology incubators in rural South Carolina. Mr. Chastin explained that when individuals come to Duke Energy Center with an idea, the Center take the idea, if it is market feasible, from idea stage to commercialization. He talked about individuals/businesses the Center has helped and was currently helping. Mr. Chastin talked about initiatives to reach high school and college level students through competitions based in technology. The winners will be awarded funds to be used as capital to develop their prototype, etc. Then they will be paired with a mentorship. Mr. Chastin also talked about Duke Energy Center's partners and agritech. He pointed out that Duke Energy Center does not seek projects; individuals bring projects to the Center. He invited everyone to look around the facility and visit the business next door.

Reassessment

Tax Assessor Kyle Johnson reported that the Tax Assessor is tasked every five years with sending out Reassessment Notices as was done on May 5, 2014. He explained that the Assessor's values in the Reassessment Notices could be too high or too low. Therefore, the reassessment notice provides an opportunity for taxpayers to notify the Tax Assessor's Office of any problems and provides an opportunity for the Tax Assessor's Office to back up its data. Reassessment ends with the appeals process (August 5, 2014) wherein individuals can appeal their values. Mr. Johnson indicated that the county increased property values about seven percent overall. However, not every property value was increased. Some remained the same and some increased by fifteen percent. He talked about the market value, the taxable value, and the multiplier of four percent for primary legal residence and agriculture property, six percent for anything else, and ten and one half percent for industrial property. Mr. Johnson also explained that the Assessor's Office will look at deteriorated property, if requested. However, the staff will not go inside property for safety reasons. The more information the property owner provides, the better. He briefly described the appeals process.

Items From The Floor

Mayor Pennington reported that the 30 year Cargill Project was completed, complemented by a hotel being built (Hampton Inn), the Kimbrell's Project (a boutique hotel and restaurant), and other new downtown businesses. He also talked about a new retail incubation project that will be the first of its kind in the State. Mayor Pennington stated that in working with Senator Malloy, they have come up with an idea to create a dialog for everyone to solve problems and do meaningful work in the municipalities and in the county.

Senator Gerald Malloy talked about being cooperative, collaborative, and conducting worksessions in an effort to share ideas, etc. with each entity. He briefly talked about building a courthouse, the county receiving funds for the I-20/340 Industrial Park, the South Darlington Watershed Project, and county's General Obligation Bond. Senator Malloy commended the work of the Water and Sewer Authority and the County Transportation Committee (CTC).

Senator Malloy reported that a letter was sent out in June regarding a meeting to share information about projects, grants, the courthouse project, etc. He hopes that these meeting would begin in August. He talked about the State's budget, local government funds, improvements for the schools, the county's population decreasing and most of the State's money going to Charleston and Greenville, the number of Darlington County representatives who are outside the county, the paving of College Avenue, and the county having funds in the budget from Pee Dee Electric Cooperative for the I-20/340 Industrial Park Project.

Representative Jay Lucas talked about the State budget, upcoming road projects, and the I-20/340 Industrial Park Project. He thanked everyone for his/her efforts.

Senator Malloy talked about Representative Lucas's efforts to support Darlington County. He also provided information regarding the fire district in Florence, which ended with no tax consequence to Darlington County.

Mayor Pennington talked about the importance of Representative Jay Lucas and Senator Malloy serving on the Screening Committee, the roundabout planned for Hartsville, and wanting everyone to get together to talk about real issues and how to collectively solve problems, but not over dinner.

Senator Malloy presented information about the expansion for four-year-old kindergarten. Darlington County School District Superintendent Eddie Ingram reported that the expansion of the four-year-old kindergarten program resulted in 250 additional four-year-olds being educated compared to two years ago.

Darlington City Administrator Howard Garland talked about "donut holes" and enclaves within the City of Darlington. He suggested that Hartsville and the City of Darlington compile information regarding the economic impact of enclaves in an effort to make a change in annexation legislation.

Economic Development Director Frank Willis thanked the legislative delegation for \$750,000 for the I-20/340 Industrial Park. He talked about the need for getting the I-20/340 Industrial Park and a spec building built. He pointed out that Darlington County was the only county in the Pee Dee area without a spec building.

Mayor Pennington mentioned the county's budget process being different this year. He said the more officials communicate with each other, the better it will be for everyone since they were using one collective pocketbook.

County Council Chairman Wesley Blackwell mentioned that the county had to force its budget by \$1.3 million from the Capital Fund Balance. He indicated that he was in favor of communicating and worksessions in addition to the dinner meetings. Chairman Blackwell announced that this would be his last year and 20th year serving on Darlington County Council.

Senator Malloy stated that he would address the recreation issue.

Society Hill Mayor Tommy Bradshaw reported that Society Hill had eliminated their full-time Clerk/Treasurer position, created a part-time clerk and a part-time accounts receivable clerk, and outsourced other work in an effort to save at least \$35,000 per year and create a separation of duties. Society Hill also included \$50,000 in its budget to pay assessments to the State.

Mayor Pennington announced that the School Board would host the next dinner meeting.

Darlington City Administrator Howard Garland reported that the City was bidding out its health insurance and would be self-insured this year, which would create a savings of \$190,000 to \$230,000. He talked about possible projects the City could do with the savings.

Senator Malloy mentioned Butler Heritage Week activities in Hartsville.

There being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 7:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

J. JaNet Bishop
Clerk to Council

Wesley Blackwell, Chairman
Darlington County Council

Approved at meeting of August 18, 2014.