

PLANNING RETREAT
DARLINGTON COUNTY COUNCIL
DARLINGTON COUNTY, SC

October 23-25, 2014

A Planning Retreat of the Darlington County Council was held October 23-25, 2014, at Ocean Creek Resort, 10600 North Kings Highway, Myrtle Beach, South Carolina.

NOTICE OF MEETING

In compliance with the Freedom of Information Act, a copy of the agenda giving the dates, times, and place of the Planning Retreat was sent to the local newspapers and posted on the bulletin board in the County Administrator's Office.

Thursday, October 23, 2014

Council Members Present

Chairman Wesley Blackwell, Mr. Robbin Brock, and Mr. Bobby Hudson, and Mr. Robert L. Kilgo, Jr.

Council Members Absent

Vice Chair Mozella "Pennie" Nicholson, Mr. Dannie Douglas, Jr., Mr. Marvin Le Flowers, and Mrs. Wilhelmina P. Johnson.

Also Present

Interim County Administrator Thomas W. Edwards, Jr. and Clerk to Council J. JaNet Bishop.

Summary

Interim County Administrator Thomas Edwards presented an overview of the county's current budget and financial situation. He recommended that Council have one budget ordinance listing all the funds and the total amount of the budget in the body of the budget ordinance.

Mr. Edwards explained that the General Fund Budget was based upon \$25 million. It was later discovered that an error amounting to \$169,000 had occurred due to something being left out or not added. Subsequent to the budget approval, changes were made to the General Fund Budget, which made it increase to approximately \$25,900,000 from approximately \$25,700,000. This created a further deficit. In July, the General Fund budget had a deficit of \$418,000 and included a DHEC Rain Tax revenue of \$250,000 with no expenditures, the South Darlington Watershed Project revenue of \$750,000, and Capital Fund balance of \$1,225,000, equating to a deficit of \$2,643,000.

Mr. Edwards pointed out that the budget ordinance states that any funds left at the end of the fiscal year goes into the Capital Fund to purchase capital items. Therefore, capital funds were being used to balance the budget.

Mr. Edwards presented a copy of Georgetown County's budget ordinance, which listed all appropriation amounts, comparisons for several years, the fund balance, the projected fund balance, increases for salaries, etc. and suggested that Darlington County Council adopt this budget ordinance format. He talked about the need for standard operating procedures for the budget process.

Chairman Blackwell talked about reduction in State aid to counties.

Mr. Edwards talked about the fund balance, the need for Council to receive periodic financial reports, the need for a new computer system, and the revised estimates for the budget. He suggested that an expert develop a cost benefit analysis for the Detention Center and Prison Farm.

Chairman Blackwell asked each Council member to review their packet of employment applications for the County Administrator position and select seven applicants.

Friday, October 24, 2014

Council Members Present

Chairman Wesley Blackwell, Mr. Robbin Brock, Mr. Bobby Hudson, Mrs. Wilhelmina P. Johnson, and Mr. Robert L. Kilgo, Jr.

Council Members Absent

Vice Chair Mozella "Pennies" Nicholson, Mr. Dannie Douglas, Jr., and Mr. Marvin Le Flowers.

Also Present

Interim County Administrator Thomas W. Edwards, Jr., Clerk to Council J. JaNet Bishop, and South Carolina Association of Counties Representative Anna Berger.

Ms. Anna Berger, of South Carolina Association of Counties, talked about the legislative powers of Council and the executive responsibility of the County Administrator. She also reviewed Council's job description, the policy role of County Council, programs and services offered by the South Carolina Association of Counties, and legislative issues. A handout containing FY14/15 County allocation estimates for local government funds was provided to Council members.

Mr. Edwards recapped the budget information, pointing out that the staff had reduced the budget by approximately 808,000, which reduced the projected deficit. The proposed budget included \$150,000 for contingencies and \$150,000 to hire a new county administrator and to pay the interim and former county administrators.

Mr. Edwards suggested that Council establish a policy to keep a certain amount of funds in the fund balance account (currently, there exists no reference to a Fund Balance); develop a two-year plan to eliminate the deficit or come up with alternate revenue sources;

establish a capital equipment replacement plan and place the funds in a line item in the budget; establish a Capital Improvement Plan for improving buildings; develop a detailed master plan for economic development and for marketing the I-20/340 Industrial Park; and establish standard operating procedures for the Economic Development Director to use in economic development negotiations.

Council scheduled a special meeting for Monday, November 10, 2014, at 5:30 p.m., in the meeting room of Darlington Library, to follow up on the retreat. Alternate dates would be November 12th, 13th, or 14th.

Mr. Edwards and Council reviewed the list of issues and concerns presented by the County Administrator. After discussions, it was the consensus of Council to give future consideration to the following items: a balanced budget, IT/computer software upgrade, internal control/auditing process, solid waste disposal, recreation, wage and classification review, potential revenue options/revenue enhancement, economic development master plan and funding sources, and stormwater fees. Mr. Edwards suggested that the external auditor do more internal auditing or structure the Finance Department to perform internal auditing on a part time basis; a study to prioritize solid waste; and review of the organizational structure to reduce the number of people reporting directly to the county administrator.

Saturday, October 24, 2014

Council Members Present

Chairman Wesley Blackwell, Mr. Robbin Brock, and Mr. Bobby Hudson.

Council Members Absent

Vice Chair Mozella "Pennies" Nicholson, Mr. Dannie Douglas, Jr., Mr. Marvin Le Flowers, Mrs. Wilhelmina P. Johnson, and Mr. Robert L. Kilgo, Jr.

Also Present

Interim County Administrator Thomas W. Edwards and Clerk to Council J. JaNet Bishop.

Council members talked about alternate means of revenue, the Revenue Enhancement Committee report, and revenue projections. It was suggested that Council come up with a plan for the new County Administrator to work to solve the financial problems over the next few years.

The Planning Retreat was adjourned at 11 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

J. JaNet Bishop, Clerk to Council

Wesley H. Blackwell, Chairman
Darlington County Council

Approved at meeting of December 1, 2014.