

BUDGET WORKSESSION  
DARLINGTON COUNTY COUNCIL  
DARLINGTON, SC

April 10, 2024

A Budget Worksession of the County Council of Darlington County was held this 10<sup>th</sup> day of April 2024, at 9:30 a.m., at Pee Dee Regional Council of Governments Conference Center, 2314 Pisgah Road, Florence, South Carolina.

NOTICE OF MEETING

In compliance with the Freedom of Information Act, a copy of the agenda providing the date, time, and place of the meeting was emailed to the local newspapers, persons requesting notification, and posted on the county's website and on the bulletin board in the lobby of the courthouse.

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT

Chairman Bobby Hudson, Vice-Chairman Marvin Le Flowers, Chaplain Dannie Douglas, Jr., Mr. Michael Kirk Askins, Mr. David Coker, Mr. Albert Davis, III., Mrs. Angie Stone Godbold, and Ms. Joyce W. Thomas.

ALSO PRESENT

County Administrator Marion Charles Stewart, III, Clerk to Council J. JaNet Bishop, Central Communications Director Michelle Hall, Codes Enforcement Director Terri Cribb, Emergency Management Director Molly Odom, Finance Director Sherman Dibble, Human Resources Director Ginger Winburn, Assistant to the County Administrator Stephanie Shaw, Major David Young, and Sheriff James Hudson.

REPORTERS PRESENT

None

Summary

Chairman Hudson called the worksession to order at 9:30 a.m.

Mr. Stewart confirmed that each Council member had received a booklet containing the County Administrator's Proposed FY24/25 budget. He began the worksession by reviewing the fund balance policy, current and proposed General Fund operating expenditures, current and proposed minimal unassigned fund balances, and the General Fund balance breakdown from FY14-FY23 for assigned funds, committed funds, nonspendable funds, restricted funds, and unassigned funds. It was noted that the county is allowed to incur general obligation (general purpose) bonded indebtedness in an amount not exceeding eight percent of the assessed value of all taxable property in the county. Based on the taxable assessed property valuation net of exemptions of \$263,770,717, the legal debt limit is \$21,101,657 with a legal debt margin of \$21,101,657 as of June 30, 2023. The County would have no problem meeting the fund balance obligation and had a healthy debt limit

available. The Summary of Audit Results showed that the county had an unmodified, clean audit with no significant deficiencies.

Highlights of changes in the proposed budget included numerous variations in insurance premium line items; numerous variations in departmental budgets based on professional services, annual software maintenance contracts, cyclic needs, and changes in departmental obligations; no mandatory employer retirement contribution increase; four new positions forward-facing serving the public (one each for the Treasurer's Office, Auditor's Office, Assessor's Office, and Development Services/Codes/Planning); increases for Coroner autopsies, Animal Shelter contract, Detention Center food service, legal services (county attorney and outside legal services), a skilled position level for building maintenance, employer contributions for retiree insurance, and capital requests; and a decrease in funds to the rescue squads.

The Administrator's proposed budget also included a three percent cost of living adjustment for employees which is less than the CPI increase of 4.12%. If the three percent cost of living adjustment is approved, only seventy-one percent of the cost-of-living increases of the CPI will have been given over the last eleven years. A graph was presented showing employee cost of living/bonuses received from FY07/08 through FY23/24.

The proposed budget contains no tax increase. However, the millage will change due to reassessment which will be determined later. A comparison of the county's FY24 General Fund millage with that of surrounding counties was presented. Darlington County's millage rate was just above Kershaw County but lower than Chesterfield, Marlboro, Florence, Lee, and Laurens counties.

Mr. Stewart then reviewed the percentage change for each fund in the Notice of Public Hearing that will appear in the newspapers. It was noted that most of the percentage increases are due to capital expenses and not operational changes.

From the budget book that was distributed to each Council member, Mr. Stewart provided an overview of the revenues, expenses, funds for Pee Dee Regional Transportation Authority (non-departmental), capital project requests, departmental position description list, and the reduction in direct assistance to rescue squads.

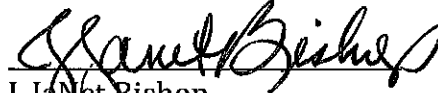
Mr. Stewart and Council talked about the number of ambulance runs for each of the four rescue squads during the last five years. Society Hill Rescue Squad ran only one call in five years (in 2020) excluding their crash truck. Therefore, funds to Society Hill Rescue Squad were moved to medical supplies. The other rescue squads run their ambulance when the county ambulances are tied up. The rescue squads normally use the funds received from the county to pay their ambulance insurance and/or medical malpractice liability insurance.

The Administrator's proposed budget, budget presentation, and Notice of Public Hearing are posted on the county website on the Finance Department webpage.

Council briefly discussed several line items in the proposed budget and the office space vacated by Farm Services in the Mozingo Building. Available space and space needs will be addressed once the new courthouse is occupied. It was noted that the staff will meet with the Humane Society to discuss the proposed changes to the animal shelter contract which will be considered with the budget.

There being no other comments, the worksession was adjourned at 10:36 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,



J. Janet Bishop  
Clerk to Council



Bobby Hudson, Chairman  
Darlington County Council

Approved at meeting of May 6, 2024.