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## April 12, 2018, Council Work Session

Savannah City Government

SUMMARY/FINAL MINUTES

COUNCIL WORK SESSION & CITY MANAGER'S BRIEFING

April 12, 2018 – 10:00 a.m.

**Present: Mayor Eddie DeLoach, Presiding**

**Aldermen: Carol Bell, Julian Miller, Brian Foster, Tony Thomas, Van Johnson, II, Bill Durrence, John Hall, Estella Shabazz (arrived at 10:20 a.m.)**

**Rob Hernandez, City Manager**

**Brooks Stillwell, City Attorney**

**William Shearouse, Assistant City Attorney**

**Jennifer Herman, Deputy City Attorney**

Mayor DeLoach called the meeting to order.

City Manager Hernandez briefly reviewed the agenda.

### **Workshop Agenda Items**

#### **[1. Introduction of New Hires](#)**

The new hires were introduced by City Manager Hernandez.

He stated there are some new hires in the Budget Department that were not present at the meeting.

Ashley Simpson was promoted to Revenue Director from her previous position of Assistant Budget Director, which she held from 2014 until 2018.

Jeff Grant, Human Resources Director, was formerly the Human Resources Director with the City of Statesboro.

Kevin Milton, Code Compliance Director, has been with the City for about a month and a half. Prior to coming to the City of Savannah he served in the U.S. Army.

#### **[2. Savannah Bananas](#)**

Jesse Cole, Fans First Entertainment and Savannah Bananas team owner, appeared to provide Council with updates on the Savannah Bananas team. He briefly introduced Jared Orton, President, who was also present.

Mr. Cole stated it's been 2 ½ years since they came to Savannah and so much has happened. He stated he wants to keep Council updated and aware and presented them with a short video presentation.

Mr. Cole stated what's about to happen this season has never happened in professional or minor league baseball or in college baseball. The season is about to be sold out before it starts. There are currently three games available in June. He thanked the community for its support.

He continued stating they went from 4 full time employees to 15 year round, full-time employees, and almost 200 part time employees. In 2 years over \$150,000 has been raised for local non-profits.

Mr. Cole stated they absolutely love Grayson Stadium and have fallen in love with the park. He stated professional baseball has played for 90 years and has 70 games. They have 27 games, and between those and the extra events, they will draw more people at the ballpark than any team in the history of Grayson Stadium this year. Between concerts and games there will be approximately 150,000-200,000 people at the ballpark this year. He stated they have invested in partnerships to increase parking.

He stated Team USA reached out to them and the first ever international game will be hosted at the ballpark this summer. Team USA will be playing Team Japan and that game is also almost sold out. They are currently in negotiations for next year to bring an All Star event to Savannah. It is a 3 day event that is nationally televised and would draw thousands of people. Additionally, another big update is that a production company reached out to them and they have signed paperwork to potentially shoot a 13 episode, television show and documentary at Grayson Stadium.

He continued asking the 100 year anniversary of Grayson Stadium is in 2026, and they want to invest in the stadium so it can last another 100 years and continuously grow. They believe Grayson Stadium is the centerpiece for the community, and plan to utilize it year round. They don't want a new stadium, the character and history is unbelievable, but they would like to get help as they continue to make Grayson nicer and better. There will be shows that will be put on and things will be seen that have never before been seen. There will probably be many questions asked, but they are looking to grow in the future.

He concluded stating what do the next 10 to 20 years look like? How can we make the ballpark look better? He stated the reality is the ballpark is tired, bathrooms need to be updated and there are parking issues, and there are limitations. But they hope as they move into the future that the City can be hand in hand with them in this. He stated if a national television show is televised here and the All Star even comes what will the ballpark look like as we are showing it to the world?

Mr. Cole stated they are currently in the middle of their 5 year lease, currently in the 3<sup>rd</sup> year, and they would like to extend it.

Alderman Miller stated he is really impressed with what Mr. Cole has done, and some of the ideas he's had for the stadium, which were not outrageous. He stated they were subtle improvements, and asked where are we with those?

Mr. Cole replied they worked with the City last year in building a stadium club, which has become a very nice place that is rented year round. New seats were purchased to continue adding to the capacity. There have been no serious upgrades to the ballpark at this point and nothing pending.

Alderman Johnson stated every time he goes to the stadium it's been an experience. He stated he's seen things that he has never before seen at a sporting event and it just adds to the unique nature, and people are talking about it all over the country. He continued stating for those that are here the question is asked Sand Gnats, who? He stated there was a time when people thought Savannah would never be a baseball city again, and they were wrong. He continued stating he does think the "old girl" using the term in terms of the stadium is in need of desperate repair. Now with the extended capacity there are issues of aesthetics and issues of safety.

Mr. Cole stated they came in to prove that they cared about the community. The name of the company is Fans First Entertainment and everything done is for the fans. He stated you must love your customers and employees more than you love your product. He concluded stating he hopes the ballpark can be on the radar, especially with all the national attention that is coming.

Alderman Johnson asked Mr. Cole if serious conversations have been held about what it would take to get us where we need to be?

Mr. Cole replied preliminary conversations have been held, but nothing serious at this point.

Alderman Thomas congratulated Mr. Cole on the success of the Savannah Bananas. He also recognized Joe Shearouse, who recently retired from the City of Savannah as the Leisure Services Bureau Chief. He stated Mr. Shearouse took it upon himself as a mission to seek out and find a baseball team for Savannah. He continued stating he would be interested in looking at a proposal from Mr. Cole on what he believes would be helpful to the stadium. The City Manager could then get with Council to discuss how they could possibly help

Alderman Bell also thanked Mr. Cole for believing in Savannah and all that he has done since coming to Savannah. She agreed that conversations need to be held about public/private partnerships in terms of how the City can assist with upgrades to the facility. She concluded by expressing her concerns about the aging infrastructures across the City.

Mr. Cole stated opening day for the Savannah Bananas is May 31<sup>st</sup>. The City will have a night. He concluded by thanking Council for giving not only him and his wife purpose but his entire staff of young people that enjoy coming to work everyday.

### 3. Legislative Wrap-up

Marci Rubensohn, Connect South, stated overall she believes Savannah had a very successful legislative session. She stated overall it all went relatively smoothly. Over 1,000 House Bills, over 500 Senate Bills, and over 2,000 House and Senate Resolutions were introduced over this term.

Quick highlights from a general municipal perspective:

- QBE was funded fully for the first time in 16 years.
- A reduction in state income taxes from 6% to 5.75% for the first year.
- One of most controversial issues related to the income tax reduction was the spat between the National Rifle Association (NRA) and Delta.
- Texting while driving ban, which prohibits drivers from using their phones while driving or stopped at a stop light.
- Brunch bill passed which allows the City to hold a local referendum to allow restaurants to serve drinks at 11 am (if the City is interested it can be placed on the next Special Election ballot).
- Increased local control over the use of fireworks. The sale cannot be limited but the time and days that residents can use them can be.

Ms. Rubensohn stated all of this is subject to the Governor's signature. He will be working over the next month or so to decide whether to sign or veto this legislation. She believes May 8<sup>th</sup> is his deadline.

She continued stating there was a lot of discussion about the deployment of small cells which is equipment in the right of way that enhances communication services. AT&T and Verizon want to put this equipment up in the right of way as quickly as possible but at the expense of the City's local right of way and aesthetics in the community. That legislation did not pass in its current form, but will be back. Local legislators Senator Ben Watson and Representative Ron Stephens were very instrumental in getting an amendment to the bill to exempt the purview of the legislation from the Historic District.

She stated the City proposals went well, and the City had a pretty good year. There were a lot of discussions surrounding the renaming of the Talmadge Bridge, and there was a lot of opposition to it as well. Proposals floated around the Capitol to rename it the Juliette Gordon Low Bridge, and the Savannah Bridge. However, ultimately the legislature was not ready to do a bridge naming. According to historical records the bridge was never officially named therefore it was characterized as a bridge naming not renaming, but there was too much opposition to remove the Talmadge name away from the bridge.

Alderman Bell asked if it was never officially named, what is there to prevent us from taking the name down and putting up what Council wants.

Alderman Thomas replied it's a State highway and it's not the City's sign.

Ms. Rubensohn replied it was a Department of Transportation (DOT) resolution that named the bridge, it didn't go through the General Assembly. Whatever regulations there are on naming it would have to be done by the State.

Aldermen Bell and Miller stated a sign can be put up on the City's property. Ms. Rubensohn stated you can put the sign up but they may take it down.

City Manager Hernandez stated we can only put a sign up in our right of way.

Alderman Hall replied let's do it.

Ms. Rubensohn continued stating there were a couple of gun bills that the Council had placed on the legislative agenda: one to deal with confiscated weapons; and another dealing with guns in the St. Patrick's Day festival zone. Both didn't get any traction at the Capitol.

Alderman Johnson stated it was interesting to him that the City created enhanced festival zones for the Vice President that extended from City Hall to Oglethorpe in which no weapons were allowed, because it was important. But it's not important for our residents that live right outside that zone. He stated this seems ironic to him that a fuss was made for one circumstance for safety reasons and yet whatever happens to them, it's okay.

Ms. Rubensohn continued stating there was a gun bill that did pass, that made it a felony to knowingly transfer a firearm to someone who is a known felon. She stated that was the first gun limiting piece of legislation that she saw at the Capitol in the past 6 to 8 years. She stated it was added to Savannah's legislative

agenda, and was introduced by Jesse Petrea who represents a portion of the City. She continued stating that was a movement in the direction that would make Savannah more comfortable with all the gun issues that are floating around today. She stated she's characterizing it as baby steps for Savannah on gun issues.

She stated also added to the agenda midway through the session was a piece of legislation to allow Atlanta to use a real estate broker when disposing of surplus municipal property. She stated under the current law, you can only use sealed bid or an auctioneer. The legislation did pass and it's currently on the Governor's desk waiting for his signature. If he does sign it, it will go into effect July 1.

Ms. Rubensohn stated Savannah was designated as an Information Technology Corridor in that study report, and meetings were held with various stakeholders to take the findings and get some momentum behind them. Legislation was passed to officially name the City of Savannah an IT corridor. The hope is to keep those discussions moving forward to perhaps make Savannah eligible for Federal and State funding moving forward.

Mayor DeLoach asked Ms. Rubensohn who this can be discussed with from the State Capitol so Council can better understand it and what can be done going forward to better facilitate it.

Bret Bell, Assistant to the City Manager, replied he and Manny Dominguez, Office of Business Opportunity Director, have been meeting as part of a larger group in the City to help define what an IT corridor is in Savannah. The meetings are organized by the Creative Coast.

Ms. Rubensohn continued stating another priority the City had was ensuring they still had the ability to add fees to property tax bills. She stated they were able to make sure that legislation did not come out of the Senate finance committee and did not move forward this year.

Alderman Thomas asked City Manager Hernandez if a citizen or an organization decides not to pay the fire fee portion of their bill what is the outcome.

City Manager Hernandez replied eventually we will have to go to court in order to collect. It is his understanding that the City cannot put a lien on the property as you can for failure to pay property tax. City Attorney Stillwell confirmed his statement.

Alderman Thomas stated so you will take the individual or entity to court for collection of the fee? City Manager Hernandez replied yes.

Alderman Shabazz asked with the fire fee being added on to the property tax bill, what if a citizen or property owner pays the property tax and cannot afford to pay the fire fee, how will that work?

City Manager Hernandez replied there is an internal team putting together the policies and procedures in implementing the fire fee and that's something that is being looked at. He stated he can't answer that question right now. Perhaps when Mr. Maxwell comes in later he can answer the question.

Attorney Stillwell replied the proposal is that there will be some language on the bill about how to go about doing that. If you elect to just pay the property tax then the amount paid will go towards that, but if no election is made then the amount paid will first be applied to the fire fee and then to the property tax.

Alderman Thomas stated he thinks that needs to be explained to the public as there is a difference in that. He stated if property taxes aren't paid their property can be sold on the courthouse steps. You can't sell someone's property for an unpaid fee. He continued stating he thinks that needs to be made clear so citizens that don't understand exactly what's going on pay their property taxes first and not the fee if they are in financial trouble.

Alderman Shabazz reiterated what was stated by Attorney Stillwell as to what is paid first. She stated she doesn't think it is fair. Attorney Stillwell replied that is only the case if an election is not made. Alderman Thomas stated he has an issue with that and if citizens make a payment and if anything is short it should be the fire fee and not their property taxes. He stated the City is not in the business of taking people's property and that's what this would do under that language.

Mayor DeLoach agreed with Aldermen Thomas and Shabazz stating it should go to property taxes first.

Alderman Thomas stated he is receiving a lot of calls from citizens about the loopholes in applying for these credits. He stated they don't understand the terminology and he has reached out to the City Manager about the City entry into properties as people are up in arms about that. He stated the City needs to be clearer about how to do this and make it simpler as it is very confusing.

City Manager Hernandez replied stating they appreciate all the feedback received from the public and as a result the application process has been streamlined, and the right of entry has been eliminated. He stated the new application should be online and if it is not it will be soon.

Alderman Hall asked City Manager Hernandez to supply Council with a hard copy of the application today.

Alderman Thomas agreed and stated he has seniors who don't even understand this, and suggested sending City staff out to senior centers across the community to assist them with the completion of the application process.

Alderman Shabazz invited the public out on April 30, 2018, to a Town Hall meeting she will be hosting at the Liberty City Center, at 6:30 p.m. The purpose of the meeting will be to discuss the application process for fire fee discounts. She stated citizens will be able to apply on site. It is open for everyone to attend.

Ms. Rubensohn continued with her report stating the Federal Opportunity Zones list was released yesterday. The list was sent to the Mayor and City Manager. Seven sites from Savannah were selected.

Alderman Thomas asked City Manager Hernandez to provide Council with the list and asked what an opportunity zone is and what it encompasses.

Ms. Rubensohn replied it provides certain types of incentives that can be provided for existing businesses or new businesses that are located there based on the number of jobs that are created. There were several parcels in Savannah that were right for new development.

City Manager Hernandez stated it's a federal tax credit program that targets census tracts with high proportions of poverty, and it essentially mirrors the opportunity zones we already have.

Alderman Shabazz stated with the high land mass of the 5<sup>th</sup> district and the high poverty percentage that exist it's being left out of the conversations of any of this. She stated she is very interested in receiving more information in reference to the Federal Opportunity Zone.

Ms. Rubensohn stated the last time she was here one of the agenda items before her was the new abandoned shopping cart ordinance. The retail association had some language that they were going to pop on another bill to preempt the Savannah ordinance. She stated they reached out to the Mayor and City Manager's office to get direction and make them aware and were asked to kill the amendment. The bill was subsequently pulled. However, on the last day they did an amendment on the Senate floor to preempt the ordinance and it passed. It then went back to the House but then was held up by the Senate and was never called up for a vote.

Alderman Foster stated Home Depot was behind that and those discussions need to be continued.

Alderman Miller stated years were spent trying to get the attention of the retailers and the City was unsuccessful but now the City has their attention. He stated the ordinance goes into effect in June, and it's important that the City puts all of its attention in it because he believes it will come up next time. But once the problem is solved it won't matter.

Alderman Johnson stated the issue for him was in talking to some of our representatives they have a fundamental misunderstanding of what our law actually is. He stated the City may need to go on offense to ensure they really understand. They took it as though they would be charged regardless and that's not what the law states. Therefore we need to take the time to ensure they understand what it is all about.

Alderman Miller disagreed, stating he had personal conversations with a Home Depot representative and he understood exactly what it was. Many of the carts from Home Depot are across the street and all they have to do is retrieve them and he told them they won't do it because it's a liability issue with the employees.

Alderman Johnson stated whatever the issue is we need to make sure it is clear on record even for the other legislators so if it is misrepresented they need have the facts and the correct information from us.

Ms. Rubensohn continued stating they worked hard to keep the short term vacation rental (STVR) ordinance Savannah enacted from being preempted. Nothing moved with that. However, a study committee was created. Work will be done over the summer for Savannah to take the lead on discussions.

Alderman Miller asked Ms. Rubensohn to keep her eye on that for the community as it is immensely important. Alderman Durrence stated two of our local delegation are members of the committee.

Ms. Rubensohn finalized her report stating another committee is the rights of way study committee that came out of the small cells discussion. She stated there will be a holistic study from both the Senate and House.

#### [4. Public Safety Update](#)

[Savannah Police April 2018 City Council.pdf](#)

Assistant Chief Robert Gavin presented a PowerPoint presentation on behalf of Chief Revenew who was in Atlanta, meeting with the Governor as part of a public safety committee he serves on.

Assistant Chief Gavin began with the Crime Analysis COMPSTAT for the week ending 4/7/2018.

He stated there are increases in many of the categories. However, violent crime is down 8% against last year and 21% against 2016. Additionally there is a decrease in property crimes of 20% and overall Part 1 crimes are down 18%. He stated we are continuing that downward trend. These things are not celebrated but we do want to keep going and keep focusing on bringing these numbers down. He stated there are hotspots and officers will continue to aggressively work them and go after the issues.

Assistant Chief Gavin continued with a breakdown of 2017 vs 2018 Part 1 crimes for the first 4 months of the year.

He then reviewed the Berkshire recommendations that are currently in progress. He briefly highlighted one that he felt was important, which was to modify the shift rotation policies. He stated there are currently two committees going to determine which schedule is best, some require more equipment and some require less. Additionally, there are also issues with court that have to be looked at. A new shift schedule will go out to the department in May and it will be a big change in operation. He stated all recommendations that are currently in progress have an officer assigned to it. He then reviewed the Berkshire recommendations that have been completed which included a reduction in civilian staffing due to technology upgrades, rotating callout responsibilities among lieutenants, and modification in the K-9 officer schedules which were rotated based upon need. Assistant Chief Gavin also stated the mounted unit is now fully staffed.

Alderman Miller asked how many is fully staffed? Assistant Chief Gavin replied 6 riders and a supervisor. There are 9 horses but two will be going out to pasture due to age and the wear and tear on the horses.

Alderman Johnson stated the Berkshire report also recommended that the Captain position be put back into civil service, and asked where we are with that. Assistant Chief Gavin replied it's been done.

Alderman Johnson then asked if majors and above are still the only appointed positions. Assistant Chief Gavin replied yes.

Assistant Chief Gavin continued the review of the completed Berkshire recommendations stating they have modified the traffic enforcement schedules, and they have a full complement in the traffic unit now. He stated they have already moved into the Great Dane building and they are moving around and should be visible in many of the hotspots. The responsibilities of the traffic lieutenant have been expanded, they also organize the K-9 unit and mounted patrol. He stated they are continuing to aggressively recruit and have recently put more funding in advertising to get it back up and going. They are looking locally and regionally, the focus now is bringing the searches in closer for people who live here, have grown up here and know the City, to have them join the Police department. He continued stating they are at service levels and modified staffing. MOU's were sent out earlier in the year to surrounding municipalities advising them that if they were going to use the City of Savannah's services, they will ensure everyone gets what they need and is safe but notified them that would be a financial obligation. He stated they are moving forward and it is the department's hope to get more of the Berkshire results up to date and going.

Assistant Chief Gavin moved on to the ShotSpotter portion of the presentation stating there were 1,013 ShotSpotter calls for service in 2017. He stated 70 calls were linked to a National Integrated Ballistic Information Network (NIBIN) hit. There were 55 unique NIBIN hits as of last week that were linked to a 2017 ShotSpotter call (this includes NIBIN hits in 2017 and YTD 2018). The incidents were linked to various crimes including numerous aggravated assaults, 1 burglary and 6 homicides. In 3 homicides, the ShotSpotter call is the link to the firearm.

City Manager Hernandez stated there is an item on today's agenda about renewing ShotSpotter for another year.

Alderman Johnson stated part of the City's ability is to deploy forces into an area where there is a ShotSpotter alert. He asked is the current staffing allowed officers to be able to deploy adequately.

Assistant Chief Gavin replied yes, when a call comes in, it's coming in from people that hear them. That gives officers coordinates, and it puts them within 20 yards of where the shot was heard.

Alderman Foster asked what happens if a shot is heard and it is in unincorporated County, would we respond? Assistant Chief Gavin replied yes it is still dispatched and would go out as a ShotSpotter call.

Alderman Hall asked if it is in the unincorporated area of Chatham County would the City handle it or would it be turned over to the County Police? Assistant Chief Gavin replied Savannah Police Department is no longer responding to those calls but would still be dispatched to it.

Alderman Miller stated but we don't have any ShotSpotters in the unincorporated areas.

Alderman Johnson asked do we have enough adequate coverage of ShotSpotter locations in the City to ensure that we are able to respond.

City Manager Hernandez replied right now we are not citywide, we are concentrated in the specific areas where we have had large incidents of gun fire in the past. He stated the issue is in some areas fiber optic technology is needed and that is a part of the limitations we have in some areas of the city. He concluded stating certainly we need to look at expanding the ShotSpotter if that's what we would like to do.

Assistant Chief Gavin continued the presentation discussing the homicide clearance rate. He stated the National average is 58% and the City is at 117%. He stated the percentage is high because it includes 2018 arrests that were made in connection with 2015 and 2017 homicide cases.

He then reviewed traffic fatalities stating in 2017 there were a total of 3, 1 involved DUI and all 3 involved pedestrians. In 2018, so far there have been 6, 2 involved DUI and 2 involved pedestrians. He provided Council with the total homicides and vehicle fatalities by district year to date.

Alderman Hall asked about the status of homicides that have been solved in District 3. Assistant Chief Gavin replied 3 have been solved, and 1 is still under investigation.

City Manager Hernandez asked for a staffing update.

Assistant Chief Gavin replied currently the department is fully staffed with 538 officers. Full staff is 536. There are 2.25 people and they are the Cold Case Unit. He stated there are some pending resignations. There are currently 16 people in the academy, and in the process of building the June class. He stated they will continue to aggressively go after quality, competent applicants.

Alderman Johnson asked City Manager Hernandez if he continued to authorize the department to be ahead of attrition curve?

City Manager Hernandez replied yes and stated one of the budget items that will be approved today is to allow him to move funds to that account because the police department has been over staffed until this point. He stated projections are being exceeded. He stated the 16 in the academy are all over hires. He continued stating what will be done next year in the budget is ensure there is a bucket position that are trainees, so the numbers are reflective in the actual headcount.

Alderman Thomas asked how many of 536/538 are not on active duty or out sick?

Assistant Chief Gavin replied at any time we have 12-20 that may be out on different forms of leave.

Alderman Thomas asked if that's happening are the slots filled with other officers from other areas, in order to keep the ranks filled? Assistant Chief Gavin replied shifts go out with the proper people and if they need to be adjusted they leave it up to the lieutenants.

Alderman Thomas asked that the presentation be emailed to Council.

Assistant Chief Gavin continued the presentation stating the Traffic Unit is now in the Great Dane building to include the HEAT unit. They have been working out of there as of April 1<sup>st</sup>. There is still some work to be done in the building.

City Manager Hernandez stated a formal opening ceremony will be scheduled once all work is completed.

Assistant Chief Gavin reviewed the technology portion of the presentation. He stated AVL (Automatic Vehicle Location) is up and running, it was implemented in 2017. Drones are in progress, staff is looking at getting them in by summer 2018. Some of the uses will be for crash documentation, search and rescue, and tactical operations. He stated the Mobile Office Work Platform work began the week of April 2. It allows violent crime detectives to begin reporting in the field. The goal is to have it in operation by the second quarter of 2018.

He stated some of the proposed enhancements they are looking forward to include the records management system, digital case file management system and real time crime center (RTCC). He then briefly reviewed youth and community outreach programs.

Alderman Miller stated the responses being received from the community are tremendous. Reports that use to be lengthy are now shorter and the blame is being shifted from the officers. He stated the important thing is to avoid complacency. He then asked if any of the MOU's that went out came back?

Assistant Chief Gavin replied some are for repayment, and others are for mutual aid. They have gotten responses on mutual aid, but he will have to check on those for repayment.

Alderman Miller then stated he's been receiving a lot of positive comments on the traffic cars in the neighborhoods, especially on the Truman. He stated Council voted to provide more motorcycles, so traffic cars wouldn't be so visible, and asked are they being used because he hasn't been seeing them.

Assistant Chief Gavin replied motorcycles are being used, and a lot of people were moved to the Traffic Unit, many of which still have to go through training.

Alderman Miller inquired about crime charts stating he was unable to pull them up this morning and wanted to know how close staff is to getting them back up. City Manager Hernandez replied he is unsure if it's that particular site or system wide, as the City is almost completely back up.

Alderman Hall stated it's good that something is being done about speeders on the Truman Parkway but what is going to be done about speeders in the neighborhoods as that has been an ongoing problem. City Manager Hernandez stated there have been conversations with the police department which is why there was an increase in the Traffic Unit. They are prioritizing and working the hotspots and he believes Council should feel confident in knowing they will get to the neighborhoods.

Alderman Miller stated he has been seeing them in his district.

City Manager Hernandez ask Council members to pass on complaints.

Alderman Thomas asked if roads have to be radar permitted. Assistant Chief Gavin replied the radar permitting was updated. He stated enforcement is done by the use of the radar.

Alderman Bell asked Assistant Chief Gavin to convey to the officers the success they have had in the neighborhoods in forming relationships.

Alderman Shabazz requested a copy of permitted streets for radars from City Manager Hernandez.

Alderman Miller stated traffic enforcement is only part of the speeding situation, and requested to hear from traffic calming at the next meeting.

Alderman Johnson requested a copy of the beats in his district. Mayor DeLoach asked that it be given to everyone.

Alderman Shabazz thanked staff for the trial traffic calming efforts on Meding Street.

## [5. Savannah Gardens, Final Phase](#)

### [Savannah Gardens Workshop Presentation.pdf](#)

Martin Fretty, Housing Director, stated they have been working over the last several months with CHSA, who is the master developer of Savannah Gardens, to determine how to bring it to a positive end.

He stated they have been working with Mercy Housing, who has been the master developer of rental property, and they will be submitting another tax credit application that will result in 80-85 dwellings of which 20% will be unrestricted. The total estimated cost is \$17 million for development.

Public informational meetings were held on March 2 & 9 and again on April 2 to gain public input.

Mr. Fretty then gave a brief update of the progress of the project stating a public hearing for amendment #1 to Savannah Gardens Urban Redevelopment Plan, with a resolution to approve transferring a small parcel at the east end of Savannah Gardens park to the Land Bank Authority for development by Mercy Housing if the tax credits are approved, and a resolution authorizing CHSA, Inc. to make a \$500,000 Savannah Affordable Housing Fund loan to Mercy Housing if tax credits are approved with a resolution of support will all be on upcoming City Council agendas.

Mayor DeLoach asked Mr. Fretty if Mercy built the other part. Mr. Fretty replied yes.

Alderman Hall asked Mr. Fretty to explain the CHSA loan to us. Mr. Fretty replied the Savannah Affordable Housing Fund is supported by the City along with various organizations and banks who have contributed to it. Funds are administered by CHSA with Council's approval to make loans to help fund affordable housing development projects. In order for Mercy Housing to be competitive in the tax credit application round and score points which is very valuable they need



a financial commitment from the City. He stated they are able to do this through CHSA. He concluded stating it is a repayable loan with a 3% interest rate and the fund will be making money on the loan over a period of time.

Mr. Fretty then reviewed the changes to Savannah Gardens PUD and the Urban Redevelopment Plan. He stated there was an increase in the number of dwellings, mixed uses, and an increase in the acreage.

Alderman Foster asked how many additional units are in the amendment. Mr. Fretty replied 50.

## 6. NewZo Update

### [NewZO-April 12 Workshop.pdf](#)

Bridget Lidy, Director of Planning and Urban Design, and Marcus Lotson, Director of Development Services with the Metropolitan Planning Commission, appeared to present Council with updates on the NewZO.

Mr. Lotson stated the purpose is because the current ordinance is outdated and is from 1960. Additionally there are too many zoning districts, it doesn't recognize current developments patterns, it's not user-friendly, and there are incompatibilities due to improper zoning.

The NewZO will match development standards to development patterns, better organize sections for ease of use, it will accommodate different types of development, reduce the number of variance requests, and it will create more predictable processes and outcomes. He then briefly reviewed the ordinance chapters stating there are 13 total chapters in the zoning ordinance. He stated they will be new in name but not new in how they function.

Ms. Lidy stated a lot of the work over the past year, such as the hotel overlay, the density piece, and the alcohol overlay district will be in the NewZO.

Alderman Johnson asked will there be a definition for convenience store? Mr. Lotson replied there will be an entire list of definitions that will cover the range of uses that staff knows exists.

Mr. Lotson continued stating the map will be streamlined, making it simpler and bringing the districts together.

Alderman Johnson stated one of his concerns is heavy industrial uses around residential neighborhoods, and asked will this clean that up? Mr. Lotson replied one of the things staff looked at was incompatibility, they are looking to do their best to minimize the impacts of industrial classifications. Buffers and setbacks have also been intensified buffers, and in some cases if the use goes away they won't be permitted to come back.

Ms. Lidy reviewed the public comment period, stating over 300 meetings have already taken place. Upcoming public meetings will be Tuesday, May 8 from 6:00 p.m.-8:00 p.m. and Wednesday, May 23 from 6:00 p.m.-8:00 p.m. There will also be open houses every Tuesday from 10:00 am. -1:00 p.m. and Thursday from 5:00 p.m.-8:00 p.m. from May 1-May 30. Additionally, individual meetings can be held as requested.

Alderman Miller stated we are having open houses and public meetings on what exactly? Do we have a document? Ms. Lidy replied the document is currently being finalized for public release.

Alderman Miller expressed his concern stating Council has been told staff has been working on the document for the past 3 years and asked when they will have it. Ms. Lidy replied the document will be released on May 1.

Alderman Shabazz asked can Council see something first before it is released to the public?

Ms. Lidy stated moving forward in May 2018 draft 4 of the NewZO will be released and the public review and comment period will begin. From June-July staff will compile the information received and make revisions to draft 4 of the NewZO. It will then be released again in August 2018 for public review. In September 2018 it will be reviewed by the Planning Commission for consideration and a recommendation. In October 2018 it will come before the Mayor and Aldermen for a Public Hearing. January 2019 is the anticipated effective date. She stated the months of November and December can be used to work with individuals if they have questions about how this will impact their properties or developments and more opportunities to do open houses.

Mr. Lotson stated City staff and MPC staff have been working collaboratively for the last several months to get to this point. He stated they believe by releasing the draft and having the public comment periods, they can continue to work on things before it comes to Council for official action.

Alderman Miller stated we don't know how it will affect things until the people who are going to be affected have an opportunity to look at it and believes January might be aggressive.

Alderman Bell agreed stating that's her concern. She sees that comments from the public are anticipated and the plan is to incorporate those into the revisions, but the issue is the public doesn't always feel like they have been heard.

Alderman Miller stated the public may not be ready to move forward in three months as they may have other projects going on.

Mr. Lotson replied they understand it's an aggressive timeline but with the City Manager's direction the public comment period can be extended if necessary.

Alderman Johnson stated he would like executive summaries prepared for each district, if possible, summarizing the impact by neighborhood. He stated if Council understands themselves then they could be ambassadors and explain it in a technical way better.

Alderman Foster stated we need to stick to this timeline. It has been far too long. This is a timeline that can be implemented and has to be and this Council needs to make sure it is. He stated he understands that everyone will not be happy.

Alderman Shabazz agreed stating this is good.

## [7. FY 17 Annual Report and Financial Update](#)

[2017 Annual Report.pdf](#)

[FY17 Closeout Update Presentation.pdf](#)

City Manager Hernandez stated the City Charter requires the City Manager to provide Council with an annual report outlining the activities and financial condition of the City of Savannah. He stated staff will provide a brief presentation and highlight where 2017 ended from a financial perspective and remind Council and the public of all the good things that were accomplished in 2017. He stated the presentation will be given by Bret Bell, Michelle Gavin, David Maxell, and Ashley Simpson.

Michelle Gavin, Office of Public Communications Director, stated the report highlights not only the new things the City took on, but also the essential services staff provided to the residents and visitors. She informed Council that the report was prepared in house by Bret Bell, herself, David Maxwell, and Carol Miller.

She stated the presentation is broken down by the strategic plan. It begins with Good Government and the creation of a new Strategic Plan and with that came the adoption and implementation of the restructuring plan for City government. Additionally a new brand was launched and a lot done to engage the community more. The adoption of the Parking Matters Plan and Launch of the Park Smart App were also a part of Good Government.

Ms. Gavin then moved to the Public Safety portion of the presentation. She began with highlights from Savannah Fire. She stated they responded to almost 8,000 incidents, 927 of which were fires. They received International Accreditation, completed the Fire Training Center construction, and broke ground on the new Sweetwater Fire Station, just to name a few.

The Savannah Police department is nationally and state accredited. They have 536 sworn police officers, 18 new police officers were budgeted in 2017, 23 new officers have been budgeted in 2018, and 25 new public safety surveillance cameras were installed. Additionally, in 2017 the year ended with a 6% reduction in Part 1 Crimes, 7% reduction in Violent Crimes, and a 30% drop in homicides, just to name a few. She continued stating the transition to the Savannah Police Department and new facilities were also a big part of 2017.

Ms. Gavin then moved on to Neighborhood Revitalization highlighting the development of the Streetscape Plan, Savannah Shines and Blight Tax Implementation, and construction of 5 new entry way signs erected throughout Savannah neighborhoods which were SPLOST funded. Alcohol Density and Hotel Overlay districts were also a part of the revitalization section. A great deal of work was put into the Short Term Vacation Rental (STVR) ordinance and construction began on the new Cultural Arts Center.

The Infrastructure portion of the presentation was presented by Bret Bell, Deputy Assistant to the City Manager. He stated a lot of this is about new stuff but they wanted to highlight some of the day to day projects that are going on as this is where a bulk of funding goes.

He stated over 3,500 miles of right of way lanes were mowed in the Streets Maintenance division. In Traffic Engineering over 6,700 traffic signs were repaired. The Greenscapes division is new and combined our Park and Tree and all of the rights of way departments which were spread out across the City organization. The Stormwater division cleaned over 3,500 inlets. Additionally, the widening of the Bilbo Canal and the President Street rebuild are near completion, and the adoption of the Canal District Vision Plan was completed. He also stated the City produced 19.3 billion gallons of drinking water in 2017. Mr. Bell briefly

reviewed the sewer stoppages and water distribution system leak rate per mile. He briefly discussed the launch of the \$20 million biosolids project at the President Street Water Reclamation Plant, the completion of the agreement for 2 new public parking decks at Savannah River Landing and the public/private partnership extending the Riverwalk to West River Street.

Mr. Bell then moved on to Economic Strength. He briefly discussed the creation of the Savannah Business Opportunity Program. He stated Housing and Neighborhood Services are changing lives, there were 48 homes purchased through the DreamMaker program, 18 infill homes were constructed, 155 home repairs were completed, and 407 rental units were developed.

He stated there is increased activity in the Enterprise Zones, \$20 million in private investments was attracted. Additionally, business opportunity was expanded with the implementation of the Food Truck Ordinance and the creation of the Hire Savannah Program.

He stated the City of Savannah received a \$10.4 million reimbursement from FEMA for Hurricane Matthew recovery.

He also stated 650 students were put to work through the Summer 500 Program as it continues to expand. The Moses Jackson Advancement Center and Business Education/Training served 147 clients through the poverty reduction services, 676 received their G.E.D., 889 were served through the job readiness and workforce programs, and 243 were served through academic support programs.

He continued stating new debts were issued in 2017, a General Obligation Bond in the amount of \$2 million and \$6.58 million Downtown Savannah Authority Revenue bonds. He concluded with a few facts from the Development Services division, stating there were \$355.8 million in permit valuation, which is the third highest ever.

David Maxwell, Chief Financial Officer, presented the State of our Finances. He began by stating there was a 5.53% increase in the Property Tax Digest from 2016 to 2017. Sales Tax revenues also increased by \$2.7 million in 2017. Hotel/Motel tax revenues topped \$20.7 million in 2017.

Alderman Johnson asked if an analysis has been done of the tipping pointing, he stated this can't be done forever and at some point it kind of bottoms out, and we should keep that in mind in our planning. City Manager Hernandez replied this is the total Hotel/Motel tax that gets shared with our partners.

Mr. Maxwell transitioned to final numbers of the General Fund.

City Manager Hernandez stated this portion of the presentation is related to two items on the Council agenda for today.

Mr. Maxwell stated the numbers being presented are preliminary and unaudited but shouldn't change a lot. 2017 actuals for revenues and expenditures have come in better than anticipated, mainly due to the hiring freeze, which is a difference of \$10.2 million. He stated this gives us an opportunity to reinvest those funds. He then reviewed where those extra revenues came from, which included sales and property taxes to name a few.

Alderman Bell asked about the electricity savings. Mr. Maxwell stated when doing the budget they have to anticipate any rate increases that may come from Georgia Power.

Ashley Simpson, Revenue Director, discussed options from the City Manager to reinvest the funds. She stated when the discussions began ground rules were set which included to find projects that support the strategic plan, to let it be an existing project and not one with ongoing expenditures, to look at immediate operating needs across the City, and to look for opportunities to find long term benefits. Ms. Simpson then reviewed the list of suggestions.

Alderman Miller asked what does it mean that we are putting \$200,000 towards the NewZo? City Manager Hernandez replied when the 2018 budget was approved the Metropolitan Planning Commission budget was reduced. In order to jumpstart the NewZo process the MPC felt like they needed additional staff. The City agreed to provide funding so they could bring on a temporary planner that would be dedicated to the NewZo. In the amount is approximately \$45,000 for that position. He reminded Council that this is a placeholder and there is no guarantee that the funds would be restored to the MPC.

Alderman Hall asked if the end is in sight for the malware virus. City Manager Hernandez stated he believes so but didn't want to get into too much detail. Alderman Hall then asked if additional staff had to be hired or if in house staff was able to perform all the work. City Manager Hernandez replied we needed to go outside and bring in additional professional help. He also stated one of the benefits of the Vice President coming to Savannah was the availability of Federal resources and the ability to help us find and attack the issue. They provided a significant amount of assistance while here.

City Manager Hernandez stated all of the expenditures are one-time expenditures. There are some pay and compensation issues, and he is proposing to do that with some of these funds. He continued stating the last item on the list is a one-time performance increase that Council asked to look at mid-year. He stated this would be a one-time performance bonus that would be issued throughout departments.

Alderman Miller asked how that will work, because all of Council was not in favor of that suggestion.

City Manager Hernandez replied in working with the new Human Resources Director one of the guidelines being looked at is that employees can't be in their probationary period, employees would have had to be on the payroll on February 1 in a non-probationary status, and no adverse disciplinary actions in their personnel file.

Alderman Miller stated he would be totally against that and it would be a waste of \$600,000 and would like to discuss it further before a decision is made.

Alderman Bell asked is there a degree of urgency why this has to be approved today? City Manager Hernandez replied no. Alderman Bell stated she thinks Council needs to discuss this.

Aldermen Miller and Thomas agreed, stating in detail, as a whole, respectively.

Alderman Miller suggested having it as a meeting.

Alderman Johnson stated although it looks wonderful on paper, it can also be a trap if we're not careful. He stated it is one-time revenue, and you don't want to do something that creates future expenses that you would have to budget for later on.

Mayor DeLoach stated these are one-time expenses, all of which are legitimate and expenses that can be paid now or later.

Alderman Johnson stated he would be interested in options of returning the money back to the citizens in term of the fire fee for fiscal year 2018. City Manager Hernandez stated you could do that but advised Council that it will cause us in the following year to significantly raise the fire fee and it will not alleviate these future liabilities.

Alderman Durrence suggested discussing this at the quarterly Council meeting planned in the next few weeks. City Manager Hernandez replied the meeting is targeted for May 4<sup>th</sup>, and staff is in the process of finalizing the agenda.

Alderman Miller stated this was an amazing presentation, far reaching presentation, and shows an awful lot of work that has been done. He stated the booklet is beautiful. However, 18 weeks ago we talked about putting out a flyer to businesses downtown to explain the parking changes and it still has not been done. He stated at the same time there were discussions about getting the SPLOST signs out, and we have 10 of them. Additionally, we started giving out street sweeping tickets after the street sweeping patterns were changed and didn't notify the community. He continued stating our communication methods are in dire need of attention, we are not communicating to our constituents, we need to do a better job, and it's not getting out to our public.

Alderman Bell thanked staff for the inserts in our water bill.

## 8. Executive Session: Real Estate & Personnel

Upon motion of Alderman Johnson, seconded by Alderman Durrence, and unanimously carried Council went into Executive Session for the purpose of discussing Real Estate and Personnel.

Upon completion of this session, a motion was made to come out of Executive Session by Alderman Johnson, seconded by Alderman Shabazz, and unanimously carried.

## 9. City Manager's Briefing / Council Meeting Agenda Items for April 12, 2018

City Manager Rob Hernandez presented the City Manager's Briefing of the agenda items for the Council Meeting of April 12, 2018. The agenda can be found online and will be made a part of the permanent record.

There being no further business, Mayor DeLoach declared this Work Session adjourned.

The video recording of the Council meeting can be found by copying and pasting the below link in your url:

<https://savannahgovtv.viebit.com/player.php?hash=IbxlksSMtjOY>

Luciana M. Spracher, Acting Clerk of Council

