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**December 7, 2017 Council Work Session**

**Savannah City Government**  
**SUMMARY/FINAL MINUTES**  
**COUNCIL WORK SESSION &**  
**CITY MANAGER'S BRIEFING**  
**December 7, 2017 – 10:00 a.m.**

**Present: Mayor DeLoach, Presiding**

**Aldermen Brian Foster, Van Johnson, Tony Thomas, Bill Durrence, John Hall, Estella Shabazz (arrived at 10:35 a.m.), Carol Bell (arrived at 11:35 a.m.)**

**Rob Hernandez, City Manager**

**Brooks Stillwell, City Attorney**

**William Shearouse, Assistant City Attorney**

Mayor DeLoach called the meeting to order.

City Manager Hernandez gave a brief welcome and stated during the Budget Workshop Council gave staff direction regarding the proposed fire fee and the restoration of service level enhancements. Staff has incorporated all feedback in the proposed budget which will be presented by Melissa Carter, Chief Budget Officer.

**Workshop Agenda Items**

**[1. 2018 Budget](#)**

 [FY18 Proposed - Workshop 4 Final Draft.pdf](#)

Melissa Carter, Chief Budget Officer, presented a PowerPoint Presentation on the FY18 Proposed Budget. During the presentation Ms. Carter reviewed the changes from the Preliminary Budget and provided an overview of City-Wide Financials, stating staff took Council's input and direction from the budget workshops and updated the proposed budget. This will include a proposed spending plan with a proposed budget of \$408,035,141 and a proposed General Fund budget of \$182,246,578. The Revenue and Expenses Summary includes the establishment of a Fire Rescue Fund which covers 70% of the Fire Rescue Budget, a 1% millage rollback, pending County Reimbursement for E911 Operations, a 2% Personnel Wage Adjustment, additional spending cuts, service restorations and strategic plan/service enhancements.

Proposed Budget Changes and Restorations include Fire Service Reductions of \$1,922,844. Ms. Carter asked Council to be mindful that this will not impact the existing fire personnel (reduced to elimination of 18 vacant positions).

Alderman Thomas asked that a mid-year review be conducted to look at the General Wage Increase to determine if the additional 1% could be given to employees.

Alderman Johnson asked what is the amount of the additional 1%. Ms. Carter replied \$650,000 and the total for the 2% is \$1.6M. Alderman Johnson asked that this item be flagged for further discussion later.

Ms. Carter reviewed the enhancements Council asked staff to look at, to include Public Safety, Infrastructure, Neighborhoods, and Economic Strength/Poverty enhancements. Alderman Johnson inquired about the addition of the 10 new police officers for Downtown parking garages which will be paid for by the parking fund. Ms. Carter replied it addresses the Berkshire Study recommendation and the Cold Case Unit will be addressed through a permanent allocation instead of a part-time temporary basis.

City Manager Hernandez stated the Waters Avenue Streetscape (CIP) will require the transfer of capital funds from a project that was funded by the Wheaton Street project, it is necessary to transfer funding out, in addition to this funding being allocated. However, this is contingent upon other City approvals and/or transfers.

Ms. Carter then moved on to the Proposed Fire Rescue Fund which establishes a proposed Fire Assessment Rate of \$256 per single family residence. There will be discounts available for all property types. The non single family is capped at 83,500 sq. ft. The initial bill will go out in September 2018 (it will be included on the Property Tax bill), the fee is calculated based on the Risk Factor. A Financial Hardship program will be implemented for the fire assessment, in the amount of \$400,000; this amount will be set aside in the General Fund.

Alderman Johnson asked what was the amount of \$400,000 based off of? City Manager Hernandez replied the amount was based on the number of low income property owners provided by the Census Bureau.

Alderman Thomas asked if it had been decided who will administer the funding? City Manager Hernandez replied once Council gives staff the green light they will decide if it will be done in-house or in partnership with a nonprofit organization.

Ms. Carter moved on to the FY18 CIP Overview. There are 98 projects which total \$64,190,840. The 2018 investment highlights include: Savannah Shines Program; Electronic Timekeeping; Infrastructure Improvements, including, bridge repair, intersections, sidewalks, technology and equipment.

The Savannah Shines program is currently in the Edgemere/Sackville area, but it is a long-term program.

Alderman Thomas asked what does this money actually do, what will \$1.2 million buy? City Manager Hernandez replied it will provide lighting upgrades, sidewalk improvements, and a trail to connect to Daffin Park. Alderman Thomas asked if this was a part Alderman Hall's discretionary fund? City Manager Hernandez replied no, it will create a better neighborhood, looks at derelict properties, etc.

Alderman Shabazz asked what was the amount spent in 2017 on the Savannah Shines program. City Manager Hernandez replied \$1.2 million in addition to what was already in the budget, therefore the total would be \$1.6 million.

Alderman Thomas stated currently the City does not have a neighborhood grant program, and he stated he wants a grant pool program again, and suggested looking at the option again midyear and consider a small appropriation if the monies are allowed.

Alderman Johnson requested an update on the Augusta Avenue project and funds.

City Manager Hernandez stated the plan is to finish the work in the Edgemere/Sackville areas in 2018, and move to West Savannah in 2019, as it is the next ranked. Alderman Thomas stated there are formed groups of neighborhoods that are not a part of the City "network" that are invested in their communities and the City needs to focus on reaching out to them in 2018. These are our citizens and we as a Council need to do a better job at reaching them. He concluded stating there are some that may not necessarily know they are citizens of Savannah, and suggested more outreach to bring them in.

Ms. Carter introduced Dr. Ann Levett, SCCPSS Superintendent, to discuss the Savannah Renaissance Project. Dr. Levett thanked Council for giving her the opportunity to speak about the project and stated present with her today was Aretha Rhone-Bush, Interim Chief Academic Officer.

Dr. Levett discussed the need for partnership stating there are 38,000 students across the district, across 7 municipalities. The majority of the students are living in distressed communities, which is why she would like to put an emphasis on early childhood because that is where the difference is made. She continued stating in Chatham County we have not been able to garner all our resources to make a difference, children can't always focus and perform at the level that they can. She has been working for four years to form partnerships to uplift the community to ensure young people have an opportunity to be successful despite the experiences which they now live. She is proposing what she calls "The land of the little people," a premier learning center located in Port Wentworth, beginning with Pre-K. Her goal is to establish one in every quadrant in the city. We can ensure that those young people will have an opportunity to live, learn, and rise up and choose to stay in our area where we can utilize their talents, by creating a new future for them. Leveraging our resources will create a different outcome, as we cannot change the performance of our students if we don't change the context in which they live. She concluded stating she considers this as an investment in the future of our community and youth.

Alderman Johnson thanked Dr. Levett for coming and being so passionate about the project. He stated he has worked on many projects in the past with her and has a great respect for her and the work she does. However, he does have an issue with the way the program was presented to him.

Alderman Thomas asked who created the program and whose initiative is it? Dr. Levett replied it is an initiative put together by staff, which depends on partnerships to push it forward. We can't make it happen at the breadth and scope we'd like without partners. Alderman Thomas asked if Chatham County will also be approached. Dr. Levett replied, yes. Alderman Thomas stated as a member of Council, he had never heard how much this will cost, where it will be located, questions that should have been communicated much differently at a time before the budget process, preferably during a time that all Council members could take the information in and ask questions.

Alderman Shabazz asked will this initiative be open to all students or concentrated on students from particular areas. She asked City Manager Hernandez is the Savannah Impact Program (SIP) being deleted? He replied the civilian positions are being transferred to the new Human Services Department, the police positions are being transferred to Traffic Engineering, and the grant is moving to the WorkSource Coastal agency. However, we will still have all of the resources within the City. Alderman Shabazz asked what about the impact of SIP on persons reintegrating into society from prison? How will they get prepared to become productive citizens again.

City Manager Hernandez replied staff identified this as a redundant agency. WorkSource Coastal was already providing these services, they are in the business of training individuals and helping them secure employment, that's their core service, not the police. Alderman Shabazz replied the dynamic of SIP, its mission and objectives, is not lost. City Manager Hernandez replied that is correct with WorkSource Coastal now being a part of the Human Services Department, we are accomplishing Alderman Johnson's idea of youth departments through the Human Services Department, by linking all human services through one department, we were lacking a cohesive and coordinated approach.

Dr. Levett stated she would like to clarify a point, early learning opportunities cannot be restricted, the school district cannot restrict people from coming in, and anyone can apply for a position. The process will be open to all children. The plan is to nestle the program in a neighborhood that we can step up our efforts in, in an attempt to target our services towards those children.

Alderman Shabazz asked is there a law that prevents the school board from funding programs for 3 years olds? Dr. Levett replied we can serve 3 years with high needs, which is why we have set up assessment centers. Dr. Levett stated no site has been formally established for the project at this time.

Alderman Johnson asked if she has worked with the Economic Opportunity Authority. Dr. Levett replied yes, as well as daycares and provided training. The School Board does not receive funding at the state level for 3 years, but they do receive money for assessments and special needs; but education is not included.

Alderman Thomas asked Dr. Levett if there was a plan in writing. She replied that she will provide what she provided to the School Board to the members of Council.

City Manager Hernandez responded to Alderman Johnson's earlier question regarding supervising individuals on probation, stating that is clearly a responsibility of the State and not the City. He believes this is an example of the City stepping in when other governmental entities have failed. He stated he looked at the numbers as it relates to SIP and they were low, therefore, he decided reallocating resources to Police and the Human Services Department was a better use of those resources. Especially considering neighborhoods and Council are asking for more Police enforcement.

Council continued the discussion regarding the purpose, benefits and success of the Savannah Impact Program. City Manager Hernandez discussed the benefits of utilizing WorkSource Coastal and the Human Services Department instead.

City Manager Hernandez stated we have positions in the City we cannot fill, WorkSource Coastal is more successful at training and placing they can help us fill our own positions as well. The new Human Resources Director that will be starting the first of the year, will also work with our Human Services Department to set up a program for us.

Mayor DeLoach announced there will be a Job Fair at the Civic Center targeting offenders reentering the job force on February 20, 2018.

Melissa Carter came back to continue the budget review and reviewed Plan 2, which reflects Council's proposed changes, is a balanced budget and reflects the fire fee.

Alderman Shabazz stated she wants to include items 25 and 26 (\$375,000 for an increase in school break camps and extended community center hours).

City Manager Hernandez replied the only way to make that happen is to take it from somewhere else or to come up with more revenue.

Alderman Shabazz replied she was looking at item 34 the Savannah Renaissance Project. Can a reduction be taken from that allocation and possibly added back in later in the year?

City Manager Hernandez replied the \$2.2 million includes capital and some operating expenses. The City and the School Board are on two different fiscal cycles.

Alderman Foster stated the elephant on the table is the \$2.2 million for a plan that doesn't exist, which he can't in good conscience vote for. He suggested that the School Board come back to Council with a plan.

Alderman Johnson stated the \$2.2 million for the Savannah Renaissance Project is an opportunity for Council. The fire fee was proposed for the Fire Department. There are employees that may be without a job and ultimately he feels some of this is being done on the backs of our employees. He suggested using those funds for some of these things.

Alderman Thomas asked what is the total amount of the unfunded enhancements not funded under Public Safety on Plan 2?

Alderman Foster stated we also cut the contingency and reserve. The City Manager and Budget Director were concerned about that and he recommended it be looked at, as that would be his priority.

Alderman Thomas stated he believes we are being very conservative about the monies that will be coming in 2018, and suggested making a secondary list for a midyear review, as a priority A, B and C.

Alderman Johnson expressed his concerns about the City's legal fees; he stated they are off the chart. He suggested figuring out a way to bring them in control, and possibly addressing the need for a legal team structure.

Attorney Stillwell stated the 2017 fees will be about the same, the office budget is about \$1 million, and outside fees are approximately the same.

Alderman Johnson stated he would prefer our legal team fight these things in house.

City Manager Hernandez stated he needs a consensus from City Council on how to proceed.

Alderman Thomas stated the Code Compliance Officers need the proper software while out in the field which is item #18 on Plan 2, a total of \$450,000.

Mayor DeLoach stated he believes the school program should be funded. He suggested looking at it again in June. He informed Council that he needs a commitment of some sort from them to take to the School Board so they can move forward.

Alderman Thomas stated he is supportive of the project however his issue is that the School Board has a much larger budget than the City of Savannah. He agreed with the Mayor's suggestion to put in contingency funds for a midyear review based on being provided with a solid plan.

City Manager Hernandez stated staff will go back and crunch the numbers. It is his understanding that Council would like to: allocate

contingency funds for the Savannah Renaissance Project; reinstate funding for the Code Compliance Officers software; look into the possibility of having summer break camps; extend Community Center hours at more centers; additional 1% increase for employees; reinstate the firefighter positions; have the Chief prioritize what he needs; and reinstate funding to Step Up.

City Manager Hernandez cautioned Council from earmarking funds for specific nonprofit organizations, as there was a process for ranking and he is unsure of Step Up's ranking.

Alderman Bell stated she would be uncomfortable ignoring the recommendations without hearing from staff

City Manager Hernandez stated he believes it would be appropriate to hear the process used.

Alderman Foster stated a contingency number we all agree on is what is needed.

City Manager Hernandez stated they will begin with the \$2.2 million.

## [2. Executive Session: Real Estate, Litigation and Personnel](#)

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

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

## [3. City Manager's Briefing / Council Meeting Agenda Items for December 7, 2017](#)

City Manager Rob Hernandez presented the City Manager's Briefing of the agenda items for the Council Meeting of December 7, 2017. 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.

Mayor DeLoach adjourned this meeting.

Luciana Spracher, Acting Clerk of Council

