



SAVANNAH CITY GOVERNMENT
SUMMARY/FINAL MINUTES
COUNCIL WORK SESSION & CITY MANAGER'S BRIEFING
OCTOBER 8, 2020 – 11:00 a.m.

Due to the Coronavirus Pandemic, the City Council work session and City Manager's Briefing was held via Zoom video communications at 11:00 a.m. Following the roll call, Mayor Johnson asked Alderman Leggett to offer an invocation.

PRESENT: Mayor Van R. Johnson, II, Presiding

Aldermanwoman Kesha Gibson-Carter, At-Large, Post 1, Chairman

Aldermanwoman Alicia Miller Blakely, At-Large, Post 2

Aldermanwoman Bernetta B. Lanier, District 1

Alderman Detric Leggett, District 2

Aldermanwoman Linda Wilder-Bryan, District 3

Alderman Nick Palumbo, District 4, Vice-Chairman

Aldermanwoman Dr. Estella Edwards Shabazz, District 5, Mayor Pro-Tem

Alderman Kurtis Purtee, District 6

OTHERS PRESENT:

City Manager Pat Monahan

City Attorney Bates Lovett

Clerk of Council Mark Massey

Workshop Agenda Items

[1. Livability](#)

[Exhibit 1: Neighborhood Livability.pdf](#)

City Manager Pat Monahan introduced Taffanye Young, Chief Community Services Officer for the PowerPoint presentation on Neighborhood Livability.

Following the presentation:

Alderman Leggett asked for the PowerPoint presentation for all Council Members.

Mayor Pro-Tem Dr. Shabazz asked in consideration of the work of NewZo, can it be a tool used to collect and use data. NewZo will be a valuable tool.

Aldermanwoman Wilder-Bryan expressed her appreciation for the work done in District 3.

Alderman Palumbo appreciates the new direction given the work being done with community benefits and the 311 system. All the ideas and goals can be integrated in a format the Council can use for agendas.

Alderwoman Lanier discussed working in the 80's, 90's, and early 2000's not only as a resident but as an operational/management analyst in local government. From the residential neighborhood component, she has concerns. For years, there have been different service delivery standards in some of the marginalized, low wealth communities. We are now looking for ways to document those statistics. She is concerned with the livability quotients and numbers. Although the intent is to use this information as a management tool, a lot of this work is still subjective. We don't have a resident score to rank their neighborhoods. Some of these residents are living in these neighborhoods by choice, but someone coming from the outside might look at the rankings to determine where they want to live or establish a business in Savannah. She has concerns with rankings, except as a management tool, because those rankings could be used to avoid certain areas of the City.

Ms. Young and Mayor Johnson explained/responded by stating the City will be accountable for the data collected. Neighborhoods will need to be measured in order for the City to address the needs of each community. The data will be used for different purposes to correct and/or fill the service needs of the residents. The goal will be to have all neighborhoods across the City on the same playing field.

Alderwoman Miller Blakely asked about Area C. What is the Westside of Savannah called and what year was the Study completed. Ms. Young explained the Study was done in various years but mainly in 1996. The Power Point presentation going to Council will have the timelines of the Area C Study.

Mayor Johnson asked the City Manager how Census Tract One interacts with Area C. City Manager Monahan explained Census Tract One is not part of Area C. It is the Census Tract just west of MLK, from Bay Street to Oglethorpe. It is the most economically distressed Census Tract in the entire State of Georgia. Mayor Johnson expressed judging how a City is progressing depends on how it raises up areas like Census Tract One.

Alderwoman Lanier added the City needs to be cognizant not to just move the poverty area around. The State and the City has used areas like Census Tract One to qualify for State Opportunity Zones, then when the development comes in there is an effort to push the low wealth individuals out of the area. That has been the practice and Alderwoman Lanier is concerned about the canal district area. There will be changes but there are models (HUD NN Model - generates jobs) the City can use to help those low wealth individuals with upward mobility. The City should not use the poverty to enrich the City and push the poor citizens out.

[2. City Monuments Discussion](#)

[Exhibit 1: Presentation - City Monuments Discussion.pptx](#)

City Manager Monahan introduced Ms. Luciana Spracher for the City Monuments PowerPoint presentation including revised/additional recommendations.

Recommendations from the Civil War Memorial Task Force are to reinforce the original recommendations approved by City Council in 2018 within the current confines of State law.

Following the presentation:

Mayor Johnson expressed to Council Members this is an opportunity for Council to weigh-in on some of the recommendations. He asked City Attorney Lovett for the history as it relates to the recommendations.

Alderwoman Miller Blakely asked Ms. Spracher if the Monuments & Markers Commission was notified concerning the presentation. Ms. Spracher responded, the Commission has not seen the PowerPoint presentation; however, Mr. Christopher Monroe has been in communication and is updated on the work of the Task Force. As a former member of the Monuments & Markers Commission, Alderwoman Miller Blakely wanted to make sure the Task Force is working with the Commission for positive resolutions for the monuments.

Alderwoman Wilder-Bryan thanked Ms. Spracher for the book and for being the gatekeeper of Savannah's history, and the wonderful work the Archives Department is doing. She asked Ms. Spracher if she could find out what happened to the pieces that went around the columns across from First Bryan African American Church. Mr. Christopher Monroe has a program to get those pieces replaced and she wanted to assist him. Ms. Spracher will send Alderwoman Wilder-Bryan the requested information.

Alderman Palumbo thanked Ms. Spracher and the Archives Department for the work provided for Savannah's three hundred year history. He identified the changes of the civil war monument over the years. The civil war monument is a very important part of the City history and the entire story needs to be told.

Mayor Pro-Tem Dr. Shabazz stated, moving forward the City will be held accountable for all history and herstory shared with the public. She thanked Alderwoman Miller Blakely for the outstanding

work while serving on the Sites & Monuments Commission and asked her to work hand-in-hand with the Commission as an Alderwoman. Alderwoman Miller Blakely agreed to continue her service.

Attorney Lovett gave an opinion. The State of Georgia has given restrictions to local governments on moving monuments for the last two decades or so. That was originally a result of the flag being changed. When the rebel flag came off Georgia's flag, part of the give and take was that monuments would be protected, specifically confederate monuments. This is among the most restrictive removal of Home Rule. There are specific rules that allow for the movement. There now exists a unique opportunity to get movement done. Because of the destruction of monuments across the country, the only way we can move the monuments is to preserve and protect them. That is what this Council would be doing to protect and preserve the monuments from destruction.

Attorney Lovett continued by telling Council there have been threats of lawsuits if the monuments are moved. He suspects those individuals will follow through with their threats. There are municipalities in Georgia who have moved their monuments successfully and there are municipalities in the middle of lawsuits such as Macon and Covington. Two points to consider: (1) this is an opportunity for the outside group(s) to sue the Mayor and Aldermen individually, and not as representatives of the City, but you are protected by sovereign immunity and legal counsel will defend you; and (2) the human being that moves the monument is subjected to criminal charges. He does not believe the police will arrest anyone doing their job, but there is another way to press charges. Someone could go to the Magistrate Court and apply for a criminal warrant, then the City would have to defend that employee in court. The City will need to find another path to move the monuments to preserve and protect. The recommendations of the Committee will be made in due course. The Council should be aware that a fight is coming.

Alderwoman Wilder-Bryan mentioned a clip from the movie A Color Purple, "All my life I had to fight." Let's go and do this by telling the whole story. It's time we do something different in this City. The people elected this Council to be their voice, and if we have to bubble-wrap to protect and preserve, then that is what we will do. We are ready to fight to serve all of Savannah.

Mayor Pro-Tem Dr. Shabazz mentioned in 2020 the rise/movement and energy of Black Lives Matter and how it has brought the entire segment of races, gender, and life styles together. As the United States and the World have taken on Black Lives Matter, the issue is our duty as representatives of the City of Savannah in this situation, we must be held accountable for our constituencies. She is ready to fight for justice.

Alderwoman Miller Blakely wants the community to know this is a hard decision the Council must make in relations to the monuments legislation. Citizens need to communicate with their State Legislators and Senators to let them know the law that is in place needs to be removed, so the City can do what needs to be done as it relates to the monuments.

Mayor Johnson informed Council there was no decision needed at this time. He suggested referring the report and recommendations back to the Historic Sites & Monuments Commission to have their input before Council takes any actions. The collective consensus of Council was in agreement with Mayor Johnson.

[3. Personnel](#)

Moved to Item #1 - Litigation was added.

Alderwoman Wilder-Bryan moved to recess into executive session, Alderwoman Lanier seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

The executive session began at 11:02 a.m.

There was no action taken.

The executive session ended at 11:47 a.m.

Mayor Pro-Tem Dr. Shabazz moved to exit the executive session and rejoin the work session at 11:55 a.m., Alderman Palumbo seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Mayor Johnson adjourned the Work Session at 1:11 a.m.

The audio recording of the Council Meeting can be found by copying and inserting the below link in your url:

<https://savannahgovtv.viebit.com/player.php?hash=7swi90WHFDN1>

Mark Massey, Clerk of Council

Date Minutes Approved: _____

Initials: _____

