



APRIL 14, 2022, 11:00 a.m. - WORKSHOP and CITY MANAGER'S BRIEFING

CITY GOVERNMENT

OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS

OF THE MAYOR AND ALDERMEN

SAVANNAH, GEORGIA

The work session and City Manager's briefing was held at 11:00 a.m.

PRESENT: Mayor Van R. Johnson, II, Presiding

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

Alderwoman Alicia Miller Blakely, At-Large, Post 2

Alderwoman Bernetta B. Lanier, District 1

Alderman Detric Leggett, District 2

Alderwoman Linda Wilder-Bryan, District 3

Alderman Nick Palumbo, District 4, Vice-Chairman

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

Alderman Kurtis Purtee, District 6

ALSO, PRESENT:

City Manager Joseph A. Melder

Chief of Staff Daphanie Williams

City Attorney Bates Lovett

Clerk of Council Mark Massey

Deputy Clerk of Council Margaret Fox

Workshop Agenda Items

[1. Civic Center and Gamble Municipal Building Discussion.](#)

After brief background information, City Manager Melder introduced Christian Sottile and Craig Clements of Savannah-based Sottile and Sottile for a PowerPoint presentation on the city's need for 100,000 square feet of office space and the options available.

Following the presentation and discussion by members of the City Council, the City Manager offered options for the City Council's consideration.

Mayor Johnson indicated City Manager Melder presented Council Members options for future city office space. City Manager Melder asked Council for direction on which option he should pursue,

and then he will send Council a memo detailing a description of the plan.

Option 1: Retain the Gamble Building and renovate it for up to 40,000 sq ft of municipal office space; and Build between 60,000 - 100,000 sq ft of municipal office space on the Oglethorpe Avenue frontage at the Civic Center (between Johnny Mercer Theater and Oglethorpe Avenue).

Option 2: Do not retain the Gamble Building for municipal office use; but Build up to 100,000 sq ft of municipal office space on Oglethorpe Avenue frontage at the Civic Center (between Johnny Mercer Theater and Oglethorpe Avenue).

*Per the City Manager, both Options 1 and 2 provide an opportunity to keep/save/incorporate the Johnny Mercer Theater, the Ballroom, the meeting spaces, and the MLK Jr. Arena. There also is the option of demolishing each of the spaces and building a municipal office space on any one of those parcels owned by the city.

Option 3: Level (demolish) the Civic Center and restore The Plan with historical squares, with no municipal office space at the Gamble Building, and no municipal office space at the Civic Center.

Option 4: None of the above. (City Manager Melder stated this option would allow the City Council to identify what goes on the Civic Center site after you demolish it.)

Following City Manager Melder's explanations of the options available to Council Members, Alderwoman Gibson-Carter was ruled out of order, when a point of order was raised.

Mayor Johnson asked the Clerk of Council to (straw) poll the City Council on the options. *A (straw) poll neither adopts nor rejects a measure.

At the request of Alderwoman Wilder-Bryan, Mayor Johnson asked the City Attorney to describe what is meant by (straw) polling the Members of Council.

City Attorney Lovett advised this is a poll for direction. No votes were taken. At this point, it is a very public and transparent process. City Council is giving the City Manager guidance to do what's next, pursuant to the Charter. There will certainly be votes taken at some point.

The results of the (straw) poll are as follows:

Mayor Johnson – Option 1

Alderwoman Gibson-Carter – abstained due to ambiguous process

Alderwoman Miller Blakely – rejected options, requests community input/weigh-in

Alderwoman Lanier – would like to hear from the community

Alderman Leggett – Option 1

Alderwoman Wilder-Bryan – Option 1, with housing

Alderman Palumbo – Option 1, with housing

Mayor Pro-Tem Dr. Shabazz – Option 1, with public input, housing, and parking

Alderman Purtee – Option 1, with housing and bringing more services and resources to the Southside

At the request of Alderman Purtee, the City Manager advised this will include a public engagement process. He further added this is not a vote or decision, rather strategic direction. Anything that comes later is subject to the City Manager having to bring forward budgets and plans.

Alderwoman Miller Blakely asked the City Manager to clarify what is affordable housing, workforce housing and income-based housing.

Alderwoman Lanier asked the City Manager to clarify if Option 1 “raise(s)” (levels) the MLK Jr. Arena.

Alderwoman Gibson-Carter moved to enter into Executive Session to discuss personnel regarding the police department, seconded by Alderwoman Miller Blakely. The motion failed, 3-6-0, with Alderwoman Gibson-Carter, Alderwoman Miller Blakely, and Alderwoman Lanier voting yea.

The PowerPoint presentation is available and on file in the Clerk of Council's office.

Mayor Johnson adjourned the Workshop at 1:38 p.m.

A video recording of the workshop can be found by copying and inserting the link below in your url:

<https://savannahgovtv.viebit.com/player.php?hash=YYqxbH9zRZ4Y>

Mark Massey, Clerk of Council

Date Minutes Approved: _____

Signature: _____

