



SAVANNAH CITY GOVERNMENT

SUMMARY/FINAL MINUTES

COUNCIL WORK SESSION & CITY MANAGER'S BRIEFING

MAY 13, 2021 – 12:00 p.m.

Due to the Coronavirus Pandemic, the City Council Work Session and City Manager's Briefing was held via Zoom video communications at 12:05 p.m. Alderman Leggett offered the invocation.

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

OTHERS PRESENT:

Acting City Manager Michael B. Brown

City Attorney Bates Lovett

Clerk of Council Mark Massey

Workshop Agenda Items

[1. Housing Authority Update](#)

[Exhibit 1: Housing Authority Update.pdf](#)

Acting City Manager Brown explained the importance of affordable housing, associated cost, and the Housing Task Force. After fact findings, the Housing Task Force will give a briefing to Council in June, then make recommendations during a second briefing. Mr. Brown introduced Housing Authority Director Earline Davis, also attending; Housing Authority Director of Development Services Rafaella Nutini and Housing & Neighborhood Services Director Martin Fretty.

Ms. Davis presented the PowerPoint slide presentation. Following the presentation, there were questions and discussions from the Mayor and Aldermen/Alderwomen:

Alderwoman Miller Blakely asked Ms. Davis if the Housing Authority is developing affordable housing as well as management. Ms. Davis responded, the Housing Authority provides bond funding for some properties for construction and they manage traditional public housing neighborhoods. Alderwoman Miller Blakely asked the timeframe when Yamacraw will be demolished and where will the existing residents go. Ms. Davis answered, the application to HUD will be submitted late Summer or early Fall. Current residents will have first right of refusal to return when the new affordable housing is constructed. Ms. Davis stated the determination on the property use when Yamacraw is demolished will be determined by the Board, after approval of the application, however affordable

housing is the first choice. Alderwoman Miller Blakely asked about the Westlake Apartments at the time of the major flood. Ms. Davis responded the Housing Authority could not go in to assist residents as it is a County owned property. Alderwoman Miller Blakely asked if the Section 8 Vouchers will be increased. Ms. Davis answered, HUD establishes the market rates.

Alderwoman Wilder-Bryan asked if during the renovations of Westlake, were there any improvements in the infrastructure; she asked Ms. Davis to send her information on that question. She asked if Yamacraw will be demolished and the timeframe. Ms. Davis outlined the process; letters were sent, meetings held, and individual contact with residents were made last Fall to inform them of the Housing Authority's application to HUD on Yamacraw demolish. Two year residents are eligible for rental vouchers, less than two years will be rehoused with the Housing Authority paying relocation expenses. Alderwoman Wilder-Bryan asked if the new houses on Pennsylvania Avenue will be eligible for Section 8 Vouchers for mortgage payments and could Ms. Davis inform the public how to get information on the application process. Ms. Davis responded, the program is for current Section 8 Voucher rental participates who wish to become homeowners, they should contact: the Housing Authority's Homeownership Program for relevant information.

Alderwoman Gibson-Carter asked various questions and made comments on the following: 1.) how does the City fit into the Housing Authority's program for residents who need immediate affordable housing; 2.) concerns with a waiting list at the Housing Authority for homeless individuals; 3.) are there any plans to incorporate life skill programs for the homeless; 4.) the City can partner with the Housing Authority through local nonprofit organizations to make sure families are ready for public housing residency; and 5.) what was the motivation to demolish the Bartow property. Ms. Davis answers: 1.) there is no fast-tracking, the HUD process must be followed; 2. & 3.) for public housing residences, the Housing Authority has resident services. If there are problematic situations, Housing Authority staff will personally visit the resident to align them with community resources to address the problem. The Housing Authority's is not capable of ongoing one-on-one case management due to lack of staff; 4.) 5.) the Salvation Army submitted an application for transitional housing to the Housing Authority and HUD approved the project as an allowable use for the location.

Alderwoman Gibson-Carter suggested the Acting City Manager allow more time for serious agenda items like housing. She requested a plan of action for housing for individuals seeking immediate residency. Mr. Brown responded, the presentation was not a plan it was an update on the accomplishments of housing over the past twenty years. For services to families, each project shown during the presentation had a set of services associated with the individual property. Mr. Brown will provide a report of provided services for each location. He asked Council Members that have any questions to submit a memo or a list of the questions to his office and he will address each request.

Mayor Johnson thanked Ms. Davis for the Housing Authority presentation and encouraged Council Members with any questions to submit them to Acting City Manager Brown's office for a response. He informed Council Mr. Fretty works closely with Ms. Davis on the Housing Task Force, and soon the City will have its first Housing Affordability Plan, which includes action steps for the City to get positive results.

Ms. Davis acknowledged the assistance of the Housing Authority Director of Development Services Rafaella Nutini. Mayor and Council thanked both Ms. Davis and Ms. Nutini for the presentation.

ANNOUNCEMENT:

Acting City Manager Brown arranged a mobile workshop, to include driving through several neighborhoods and past several housing developments for next week, Tuesday, May 18, 2021, from 11:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m. Pickup and drop-off will be at the Civic Center.

Mayor Johnson adjourned the work session at 1:20 p.m.

The audio recordings of the work sessions can be found by copying and inserting the below links in your url:

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

Mark Massey, Clerk of Council

Date Minutes Approved: _____

Initials: _____

