



SAVANNAH CITY GOVERNMENT
SUMMARY/FINAL MINUTES
COUNCIL WORK SESSION & CITY MANAGER'S BRIEFING
SEPTEMBER 24, 2020 – 4:00 p.m.

Due to the Coronavirus Pandemic, the City Council work session and City Manager's Briefing was held via Zoom video communications at 4:00 p.m. Following the roll call, Mayor Johnson asked Alderwoman Miller Blakely to offer an 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:

City Manager Pat Monahan

City Attorney Bates Lovett

Clerk of Council Mark Massey

Mayor Johnson added a time sensitive item to the work session agenda. Line Item #22 will be added as an Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA), City locations for Council's approval of drop-off boxes:

Absentee Ballot Boxes on City Property:

Colin McRae, Chairman, Board of Elections, discussed the type of drop-off boxes and the approved locations of the eight (8) boxes.

1. The Civic Center
2. W. W. Law Center
3. Carver Village Community Center
4. Liberty City Community Center
5. Southwest Library
6. Wilmington Island Police Precinct
7. Savannah State, LaRoche side
8. UGA Extension Building in Garden City

Items 1 through 4 are City property locations. Chairman McRae opened the floor for questions:

Alderwoman Miller Blakely asked will the boxes be secure and can the Eisenhower location still be used. Yes to both.

Alderman Purtee asked what is the southern most location for the drop-box. The Southwest Library.

Alderman Leggett asked will the Board of Elections continue to reach out to Pooler and the Board of Education for a location in the Highland's area. He asked if there was anything the Aldermen/Alderwomen could do to assist. Chairman McRae indicated the Mighty Six is a possibility and the Board of Education building such as a school. They will continue to reach out and if any of the Aldermen/Alderwomen have any contacts with Pooler or the Board of Education that would help.

Alderwoman Miller Blakely asked what time the Board of Elections closes and will a box be available at the Eisenhower. The office generally closes at 5:00 p.m. and the drop-box at the Eisenhower location is available 24/7.

Alderwoman Gibson-Carter shared Chairman McRae's sentiment and gratitude to the League of Women Voters for this opportunity in getting the drop-boxes located throughout the County, and all who assisted in the process.

Workshop Agenda Items

[1. National League of Cities Service Line Warranty Program \(placeholder at Mayor's request\)](#)

[Exhibit 1: Document A.pdf](#)

[Exhibit 2: Document B.pdf](#)

[Exhibit 3: Document C.pdf](#)

[Exhibit 4: Document D.pdf](#)

[Exhibit 5: Sample Staff Reports.docx](#)

[Exhibit 6: Sample Resolutions.docx](#)

[Exhibit 7: Royalty Agreement 3 Product - City of Savannah, GA.docx](#)

Mayor Johnson introduced Jermaine Reed, NLC Board of Directors and Lee Zell, NLC Regional Director for a presentation on the NLC Service Line Warranty Program. The City generally covers any water line breakage from the box to the street. The NLC Service Line Warranty Program covers a water line breakage from the box to the home. Many cities have experienced good success with the National League of Cities (NLC) Service Line Warranty Program, and Savannah has an opportunity to offer the Program to residents.

Mr. Reed, a former Council Member at Kansas City, MO, expressed his satisfaction with the Service Line Warranty Program for the constituents of Kansas City. The City received great success and was able to partner with minority businesses in offering the Program.

Mr. Zell presented the Program in great detail. City Manager Pat Monahan provided positive feedback of staff's evaluation and benefits of the Program. Mayor Johnson added the certified plumbers, contractors, DBE's and minority/women owned businesses used for the Program would all be local.

Following the presentation, there was a discussion/questions from Council.

Alderwoman Miller Blakely asked if the cost of the Program would be paid by the residents. No cost to the City but the residents choose voluntarily to participate in the Program for a cost of 5.75/month for water line and \$7.75/month for sewer line, on a month-by-month payment plan. She asked if the charges would be added to the resident's water bill. This Program is separate from billing.

Alderwoman Miller Blakely asked if there will be a process for plumbers, contractors, DBE's and minority/women owned businesses to participate in the Program. The response was yes.

Mayor Pro-Tem Dr. Shabazz asked how the plumbers will be compensated. The Program pays the plumbers directly. She asked how does the City guarantee this Program will be equally distributed across the City for the various DBE's, Savannah First and minority/women owned businesses and will they need to be bonded. The City will provide a list of certified plumbers within the City to the Program administrators, and the plumber and/or contractors will need to be bonded.

Alderwoman Wilder-Bryan asked Mr. Zell to explain the non-tax revenue stream. As residents participate in the Program, \$0.50 of each monthly payment is given to the City for non-tax revenue, a water bill forgiveness program. She asked if a resident uses a certified plumber for a water line break service, can the resident cancel the Program and if the same water line breaks again, who takes care of the second service after cancellation. Yes, the Program still pays for the second service. Alderwoman Wilder-Bryan asked is the price range capped at \$8,000. No, the cap is \$8,500.

Mayor Johnson will send to Council Members a copy of the Resolution for review, and add it to the agenda for adoption at the next Council meeting in two weeks.

[2. Panhandling Discussion](#)

A slide presentation on panhandling was presented by City Manager Monahan, City Attorney Lovett,

Strategic Initiatives Manager Glenn Hull, and Public Communications Director Nick Zoller.

Following the presentation there were questions and comments.

Alderman Purtee asked if this was in conjunction with the Chatham-Savannah Homeless Authority. The City will put together it's program, present it to Council for approval and then present the program to the Chatham-Savannah Homeless Authority for a joint venture. Alderman Purtee shared the Chatham-Savannah Homeless Authority has money set aside for addressing the panhandling issue in Savannah. He suggest the City work with the Authority, so there is no duplication of services or resources.

Mr. Zoller shared with Council the Chatham-Savannah Homeless Authority met with stakeholders sometime earlier in the day, and have a scheduled target date of January 2021 to launch a panhandling campaign.

Alderwoman Wilder-Bryan thanked Mr. Hull for championing the Dundee Village project, the City Manager for his homelessness efforts throughout the City, and Mayor Johnson for the water buffalos and dumpsters. She thanked Mr. Zoller for the presentation and expressed her agreement with Alderman Purtee on joint venture with the Homeless Authority.

Mayor Pro-Tem Dr. Shabazz thanked all involved with the program and shared a conversation with former City Manager Rob Hernandez and current Interim City Manager Pat Monahan on working the past year with the panhandling issues in Savannah. She brought forward the issue of public safety when it comes to trash up keep and City property, the panhandlers and how the City can legally mandate enforcement.

Alderman Palumbo thanked staff for the presentation and Alderman Purtee and Alderwoman Wilder-Bryan for their service on the Chatham-Savannah Homeless Authority in keeping the Dundee Village project in the forefront. He likes the idea of reaching out to the residents to get them involved in addressing the panhandling issue and the safety issues surrounding the homelessness in Savannah.

Alderwoman Miller Blakely asked City Attorney Lovett if his statement about panhandlers having rights according to the law. She asked Mr. Hull if they are putting tiny houses on the Dundee property for non-veterans similar to the veterans tiny house project. Mr. Hull indicated the City Council gave authorization to enter into a request for proposal (RFP) with a service provider some months ago. Currently, a team is in place to evaluate the property and researching container housing and tents for the Dundee Village project. A container has been procured to house a restaurant, an ADA compliant shower, a guard office space and laundry facilities.

Alderwoman Miller Blakely has concerns with the young people on City corners selling water. She asked City Attorney Lovett if it is possible to have them purchase a license or pay some type of taxes on the money they collect. Attorney Lovett will investigate any opportunities and report back to Council his findings.

Alderwoman Lanier thanked the presenters and acknowledged there has been an uptick in panhandlers in the Savannah area. She advised the team to keep in mind there are many types of panhandlers. There are transit individuals, youth soliciting money for school activities, and normal panhandlers. She asked the presenters, when they were putting a team together to evaluate the Dundee Village project to invite panhandlers to the table. Mr. Zoller indicated, with Council approval, that would be the next step.

Mayor Johnson thanked the presenters for all the hard work done to bring the panhandling issue before Council. He implored all to remember these are people and we have the responsibility to respect them as individuals and Americans. The City should not treat them as an after thought or a side note because they are panhandlers and unsightly to visitors. This is a social issue the City will continue to monitor.

[3. Southside Community Center](#)

City Manager Monahan communicated to Council this was the last topic on the initial list of priorities by Council. A new list will be provided to Council with some suggestions for future work sessions including budget sessions.

Mr. Monahan reported there is only one community center serving the Southside. The City has two properties on the Southside. With the sale of those two properties and the SPLOST VII one million dollars for a Southside community recreational facility, the City will be able to move forward with a community center on the Southside.

Alderman Purtee has worked diligently to find a facility and present his recommendations to Council. He has located a building to house the Southside police precinct currently at Oglethorpe Mall, a senior center and a youth development center. The facility not only will serve District 6, but it will serve Districts 4 and 5, making it a centrally located facility with access to main roads. There would be minimal structural enhancement, plenty of free parking, it may contain commercial appliances for

use in the senior center and an opportunity to have the facility housed with other City departments such as code enforcement and a place for residents to pay utility bills.

Alderwoman Gibson-Carter agreed with Alderman Purtee regarding a center on the Southside that serves as a service center as well as a business center for citizens to pay their bills. She requested a work session inclusive of identification of rental properties that the City currently has City staffers occupying. When it comes to cost savings, real estate is the first place the City should look. There are great opportunities before the City with the new City Manager coming onboard and with the pandemic, we now know some staff are able to work effectively from home. The City pays \$750,000 annually for the space in the Savannah Morning News facility where a majority of the community services staff reside. This staff could be working in neighborhood community facilities instead of on the outskirts of the City. Having a work session that Council can look at the City's rental properties and access how many of the rental properties have double or triple charges such as payment of utilities and insurance. This would be an important item during the budgetary process for Council consideration.

Mayor Johnson added the Gamble Building is back on the table for consideration to bring some staff to one location. City Manager Monahan added staff is working on space planning in the Gamble Building to bring community services from the Savannah Morning News building on Chatham Parkway back downtown, closer to the neighborhoods they serve. He added there are two hundred employees that can telework. Once staff completes the space planning, it will be presented to Council, hopefully within the next sixty days.

Alderwoman Miller Blakely in conversations with Alderman Purtee that the County has eighteen million dollars in SPLOST VI funds to partner with the City for a recreational center on the Southside. When looking at areas on the Southside for a community center, she asked Council not to forget the residents who live on the other side of Middleground Road who also need a recreational/community center. City Manager Monahan asked Alderwoman Miller Blakely if the eighteen million dollars was in SPLOST VII and not SPLOST VI. She was told it was SPLOST VI. Mr. Monahan asked, since it's in SPLOST VI, has the County already collected the money. Alderwoman Miller Blakely said she was told the money is available now. She asked the City Manager to check on the accuracy of the information.

[4. Discussion regarding Personnel, Litigation and Real Estate](#)

NOT HELD

Mayor Johnson adjourned the Work Session at 5:52 p.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=xAGNDeZVre3U>

Mark Massey, Clerk of Council

Date Minutes Approved: _____

Initials: ____