



SEPTEMBER 8, 2022, 10:00 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 10:05 p.m. Mayor Johnson recognized Alderman Purtee to offer a prayer.

PRESENT:

- Mayor Van R. Johnson, II, Presiding
- Alderwoman Kesha Gibson-Carter, At-Large, Post 1
- 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. 2023-2027 Housing and Community Development Plan](#)
- [2023-2027 Housing and Community Development Plan.pdf](#)

PRESENTED by City Manager Melder, and Human Services Director Kerri Reid.

Following the presentation, there was discussion and questions from Council as it relates to the information received:

Mayor Johnson thanked Ms. Reid for the presentation and commented the department does a good job on the programs, but a poor job of communicating the information to the public. City Manager

Melder stated staff will look at better ways of communicating to the public the available programs offered to residents.

- Alderwoman Miller Blakely thanked Margaret Williams and Valetta McDonald for helping with a family situation recently by providing information and assistance. She asked Ms. Reid if there were other programs available for residents not interested in cooking (yes, the child development program and hopefully, a manufacturing element from Savannah Tech to be added next year).
- City Manager Melder advised the City partners with Savannah Tech on programs for skilled laborers (forklift, etc.). Ms. Reid explained other job training programs available to the public. Alderwoman Miller Blakely suggested keeping the public informed of the programs and providing success stories as follow-up.
- Mayor Johnson indicated the City has a relationship with the local labor unions and there have been two union job fairs to provide apprenticeships for residents.
- Mayor Pro-Tem Dr. Shabazz spoke on programs and the graduates. The improvement corridors were restated for Mayor Pro-Tem Dr. Shabazz: 1) MLK-Montgomery Street; 2) Waters Avenue; 3) Pennsylvania Avenue; 4) Skidaway Road; and 5) Augusta Avenue. Mayor Pro-Tem Dr. Shabazz asked Ms. Reid if the core area meetings will be expanded to other areas of the city. The meetings were held in June and will be repeated next year. She asked Ms. Reid to revisit a few PowerPoint slides for the public to have information on the City's 5-year plans and goals for economic development.
- Alderman Palumbo discussed the City's affordable housing and the accomplishments since 2018. The goal was 300 new quality affordable rental housing units, the City has exceeded that goal by 332% by creating 997 units. The City is now tackling the homeless issue by providing 50 units for homeless individuals/families. This is a major accomplishment for the City.
- Alderwoman Gibson-Carter stated despite the numbers heard, street homelessness is evident, especially for single mothers & families. Over the past several days, she, along with Alderwoman Blakely, Alderwoman Lanier have received 11+ calls from single mothers being evicted from Family Promise Shelters, some with Section 8 vouchers. Despite COVID funds received via ARPA, the local shelters still have the same number of beds from 20 years ago. Alderwoman Gibson-Carter asked City Manager Melder to make the local shelter programs more accountable where beds are concerned.
- City Manager Melder stated the City does require accountability for the local providers. Because of the recent opportunities, there are now more resources available to agencies. A shelter for unaccompanied women opened last week, the City established an interagency council on homelessness, the City has put resources in to expand programs, and are working with all the city's providers to make sure individuals are moving towards some type of economic stability. The City is working with all its partners, school systems, surrounding municipalities, Chatham County, etc., to create dynamic solutions.
- Mayor Johnson stated the City does not and cannot regulate housing and/or rents. It is set by State Law.
- Alderwoman Wilder-Bryan requested adding certifications for barbers & cosmetologists. She asked Ms. Reid how are they tracking the cases for fair housing and discrimination. Ms. Reid indicated there is an education and outreach link going directly to HUD. Alderwoman Wilder-Bryan asked Ms. Reid if the City has a designated resource person for fair housing (no).
- Alderwoman Lanier mentioned the State has allocated \$250 million of ARPA funds for neighborhoods. That's good because the City has many neighborhoods that qualify. Alderwoman Lanier expressed concern because the poster-child neighborhood for environmentally worse conditions is Hudson Hill, Cloverdale & Woodville, but those neighborhoods do not qualify for those funds based on the grant requirements. She asked City Manager Melder why those neighborhoods do not qualify for the grant funds. Mr. Melder stated he has staff inquiring about the qualification for the grant funds.
- Alderwoman Lanier asked if there are funds available for homeowners to repair their homes. City Manager Melder indicated the housing department has programs to address funds for homeowners needing repairs to their homes. The City is looking to expand those services.
- Alderwoman Lanier discussed public housing, the many vacancies, and barriers with the Housing Authority. She discussed the number of homeless individuals against the number of vacancies, and she stated there is a problem and the hurdles must be eliminated. The City should have a voice in getting people into the empty housing units.

Mayor Johnson thanked everyone for their participation.

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

[2. Impact Fees](#)

[Impact Fees Presentation 09-08-22.pdf](#)

PRESENTED by City Manager Melder, Planning & Urban Design Director Bridget Lidy, Bill Ross,

president of Ross + Associates, and Paige Hadley, President of HatleyPlans.

City Manager Melder explained Item #35, Resolution of the Draft Improvement Element, for Council approval. Issues for Council to consider are: 1) % of charge for the impact fee; 2) any exemptions; and 3) any exemptions will be covered by the City. If approved, the Resolution will be sent to the State for review (60 day time frame).

Following the presentation, some of the topics discussed and questions answered follows:

- Alderwoman Miller Blakely stated she has received numerous calls and she asked what will be the cost of the impact fee. City Manager Melder indicated in the Methodology Report a chart cites the maximum costs, based on type of land use, the impact fee will be \$5,600.00 for single use and \$300.00/room for hotels. Alderwoman Miller Blakely asked for the information on the meeting: Friday, September 9, 2022, at 9:00 a.m. at the Floyd Adams Center, 20 Interchange Drive, Main Room in person and Zoom.
- Alderwoman Lanier asked Mr. Ross who/how will the exemptions be managed and what areas will benefit from the economic advancement. Also, when doing research on best practices across the Country, how did impact fees affect low-wealth individuals and the housing affordability in those areas. Mr. Ross stated he could not answer the question, particularly in other states, they have different approaches to impact fees. In Georgia, the City of Atlanta has adopted an exemption for affordable housing and the City of Decatur has not yet adopted impact fees, but have a very extensive inclusionary housing requirement. Mr. Ross has provided Ms. Lidy with a copy of the Decatur Ordinance on inclusionary housing as a good model.
- Alderman Purtee expressed concern that initially developers were targeted, however, the impact fees are being passed to the homeowner. He asked how will the City ensure they're not contributing to overtaxing citizens. Mr. Ross stated the State passed impact fee legislation: current taxpayers were paying for improvements they didn't need, the improvements were for future residents. Alderman Purtee understands the reasons behind the purpose, but expressed concern for rent control and affordable housing when impact fees are passed down to homeowners.
- City Manager Melder explained impact fees are not an affordable housing tool, it is not a tax on developers, but a fee on development. Since single family homes are the largest impact driver requiring the most infrastructure, fire and police, and recreational needs, it is the major growth engine. If adopted, the maximum impact fee for a single family home will be just north of \$5,600.00.
- Alderwoman Miller Blakely asked if any building in the City would pay the impact fee, such as SCAD for dormitories. City Manager Melder stated yes, it would be like a permit or tap-in fee for development.
- Alderwoman Gibson-Carter remarked, both the Advisory Committee and Home Builder's Association members making decisions for Savannah do not necessarily live in the City. She suggested rolling back the millage rate to give residents tax breaks. Alderwoman Gibson-Carter discussed The Highlands community with 200+ new homes and the need for amenities (police, fire, libraries, and recreation centers) versus smaller developments of 10-12 homes per year in the Westside corridor with current amenities. She asked if the developers of the smaller developments could receive some type of liberalities. Mr. Ross discussed the Ordinance and the appeals process the Council could consider for those developments. Alderwoman Gibson-Carter asked Mr. Ross if the maximum impact fee of \$5,600.00 for a single family home is high, average or low (average).
- Alderwoman Gibson-Carter asked Mr. Ross if the majority of impact fees collected will be from hotels. City Manager Melder answered, with the projected growth in the City, residential will be the majority collected from impact fees. She asked if the impact fees collected stay in those communities (yes, that is the capital improvements elements).
- Alderman Purtee stated the City of Savannah police department does cover The Highlands. City Manager Melder indicated there is a police station in The Highlands and the City provides fire and police protection in The Highlands. Mayor Johnson indicated The Highlands has City services.

Mayor Johnson indicated the last administration did not have an appetite for impact fees. The process is extensive and in depth. Impact fees are a tool and he asked Council to be thoughtful and sure when voting for impact fees.

Mayor Johnson thanked panel members for information on impact fees and Council for contributing by way of questions and discussions.

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

Mayor Johnson adjourned the Workshop at 12:00 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=NUJ7vXaBIC7j>

Mark Massey, Clerk of Council

Date Minutes Approved: _____

Signature: _____

