



SEPTEMBER 22, 2022, 4:30 p.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 4:30 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

Mayor Johnson stated today is the first day of Fall.

Workshop Agenda Items

- [1. Legislative Agenda Update](#)
- [Exhibit 1: Legislative Agenda Process.pdf](#)

PRESENTED by City Manager Melder, and Director of Policy and External Affairs Joe Shearouse.

Following the PowerPoint presentation by Mr. Shearouse, the following discussions were held pertaining to the legislative agenda update:

- Mayor Johnson indicated that we have had very strong lobbying efforts, internally and externally. He likes the current team we have on the field.
- Staggered terms and term limits for Council Members need to be addressed now - a Draft Resolution was sent to Mayor, City Attorney and City Manager. (Alderman Purtee)
- Council Members are encouraged to send suggestions and recommendations. Council Members compensation can be added to the discussions. (Mayor Johnson)
- Consider including the travel policy and cost of living adjustments for Council Members. (Alderman Palumbo)
- Alderwoman Lanier stated she made a request in late 2020 for rent management and anti-gentrification exemptions to be placed on the legislative agenda for discussion; however, it did not get much discussion. Alderwoman Lanier indicated she would like to re-submit both topics as legislation issues.

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

[2. School Zone Camera Program Update](#)

[Exhibit 1: School Zone Camera Program Update.pdf](#)

PRESENTED by City Manager Melder, and Assistant Police Chief Robert Gavin.

After City Manager Melder and Assistant Police Chief Gavin made their presentation, the City Council discussed the following:

- Pleased with the school zone cameras, Alderwoman Wilder-Bryan asked Assistant Police Chief Gavin how the next 5 school zones for cameras will be selected (by permits).
- Assistant Police Chief Gavin stated, eventually all public school zones in the City and Chatham County will have cameras. Alderwoman Wilder-Bryan asked Assistant Police Chief Gavin about the percentages of revenue from the cameras: 5% to schools; 60% to the City; and 35% to the vendor.
- Hodge Elementary, DeRenne Middle, and Beach High School zones have needed signage for years. There is a serious problem with regulating speeds. Mayor Pro-Tem Dr. Shabazz asked for cameras in those particular school zones. Assistant Police Chief Gavin stated they will start with the listed school zones in the presentation, but others will be added shortly.
- Alderwoman Wilder-Bryan asked Assistant Police Chief Gavin the range of the cameras (the entire school zone), and if the cameras will eliminate drop-off and pick-up (the police department is working with schools to eliminate and/or reassign areas for pick-up and drop-off).

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

[3. Medical Cannabis Dispensary Ordinance](#)

[Exhibit 1: Medical Cannabis Dispensary Ordinance.pdf](#)

PRESENTED by City Manager Melder, and Director of Planning & Urban Design Bridget Lidy, Assistant Police Chief Robert Gavin, and MPC representative Marcus Lotson.

After the presentation, Council members raised the following points:

- Alderwoman Miller Blakely asked Ms. Lidy if the six dispensaries/companies would cover the entire State (yes, some have multiple license). She asked for copies of the six companies (upon approval of the State license, a list of the companies will be distributed to Council Members). Alderwoman Miller Blakely asked for the cost of the dispensaries because she feels the cost is bias and discriminatory (the State Commission will be contacted for the cost, but current documents show encouragement by minority and women owned businesses along with steps to assure non-discrimination were instituted by the Commission).
- As a proponent for hemp and medical cannabis, Alderwoman Lanier questioned the City's priorities as to how this particular ordinance is being introduced now when she asked for an inclusionary zoning ordinance which is desperately needed for affordable housing, and community benefits ordinance back in January 2020. How did medical cannabis leap frog to the head of the list. City Manager Melder responded the City is not prioritizing medical cannabis over affordable housing. There are State Law Permits coming soon dealing with medical cannabis and the City wanted to be prepared. A workshop is scheduled in just a few weeks for discussions on inclusionary zoning.
- Alderwoman Lanier shared a four year old story, when working on her Georgia Environmental Certification about Agriculture in Thomasville, GA, in a class with 'good ole boys'. The instructor stated, "no one is planting now, everyone is holding off and the government is paying farmers not to plant. Everyone is waiting on that marijuana." That was said

because they understand the importance of the economical issues involved. Alderwoman Lanier is concerned and asking is the medical cannabis ordinance profit driven rather than citizens health driven (public health). The medical component of the cannabis oil will require a prescription, the City has pharmacies that dispense medicine. Why add dispensary locations that might be inconvenient locations for some residents; the dispensary locations will create wealth for the six companies. City Manager Melder indicated the City has no control of the State Law dispensing medical cannabis.

- Alderman Palumbo commended staff on being proactive in channeling the use in the correct places and methods. People are suffering and the medical cannabis is needed.
- Mayor Pro-Tem Dr. Shabazz requested reviewing the map in the area of Highway 17. The map shows the dispensaries will not be located near the alcohol overlay boundaries.
- Alderwoman Lanier asked if there are pharmacies selling opioids in alcohol overlay areas, and what is the rationale behind dispensaries not being near the alcohol overlay boundaries. Mr. Lotson stated pharmacies are likely permitted within the alcohol overlay areas; the City cannot regulate what pharmacies can sell. City Manager Melder added, pharmacies are not viewed as nuisance businesses like package stores. The medical cannabis is a new issue for the City, the workshop is a way for learning and having discussions.
- Mayor Pro-Tem Dr. Shabazz thanked City Manager Melder for the additional information on locations of the dispensaries versus the alcohol overlay districts. She explained in the 5th District, the majority of residents in the alcohol overlay areas are African Americans (black residents). Because there were numerous alcohol/package stores in the district, Council created the alcohol overlay districts for the protection of the citizens (specifically the African American populated areas).
- Alderwoman Miller Blakely asked Ms. Lidy why the dispensaries are mainly in the community business (BC) and downtown central business areas. Ms. Lidy stated this is a retail use. In working with the police department, putting the dispensaries in the BC and downtown areas made more sense than placing them near rehab facilities, schools, parks or cemeteries.
- City Manager Melder indicated this is a draft recommendation, Council Members can offer feedback. This is a starting place.
- Alderwoman Miller Blakely asked for information with regard to the cost of establishing and operating a dispensary. The locations identified are expensive. Ms. Lidy explained, this is a starting point and if Council Members would like to identify other locations, staff can look at those options. Assistant Police Chief Gavin stated, keeping the children safe was a major priority, and keeping the dispensary locations in safe places for the public.
- Mayor Johnson stated, this is a beginning point and an opportunity to be prepared. He thanked staff for this starting point, but ultimately, Council will make the final decisions.
- Alderwoman Lanier expressed and stated this is an equity issue. The rationale for not allowing dispensaries to be located in low-wealth areas makes no sense when people (black people) in the overlay districts have the same sicknesses.
- City Manager Melder stated, with respect to the zoning options, it seems Council wants less conservative options. Staff will bring back options for Council to review.
- Alderwoman Wilder-Bryan stated, this is regulated by the State. This is a beginning. Keeping the locations away from residential areas and locating the dispensaries downtown is a good place to start.
- Alderwoman Gibson-Carter expressed her thanks for the workshop. As an At-Large Alderwoman, she is not advocating for any location. She identified the following concerns: 1.) being conservative is why equity is lacking; 2.) the City Manager Melder should go back and look for another starting point; 3.) how the program will rollout; and 4.) have town hall meetings where citizens have an opportunity to weigh-in.

Mayor Johnson recommended City Manager Melder meet with each Council Member for their individual input.

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

Mayor Johnson adjourned the Workshop at 5:56 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=xcxswUpWzHtx>

Mark Massey, Clerk of Council

Date Minutes Approved: _____

Signature: _____

