



**APRIL 23, 2026 - 11:00 a.m. - WORKSHOP and CITY MANAGER'S BRIEFING**

**CITY GOVERNMENT**

**OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS OF THE MAYOR AND ALDERMEN**

**SAVANNAH, GEORGIA**

The work session was held at **11:04 a.m.**, in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Media Room. Mayor Johnson, called the meeting to order, then recognized Ald. Carolyn H. Bell to offer a prayer.

**PRESENT:**

Mayor Van R. Johnson, II  
 Alderwoman Carolyn H. Bell, 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, District 3 - Vice Chair  
 Alderman Nick Palumbo, District 4 - Chairman  
 Alderwoman Dr. Estella Edwards Shabazz, District 5 - Mayor Pro Tem  
 Alderman Kurtis Purtee, District 6

**ALSO, PRESENT:**

City Manager Jay Melder  
 Assistant City Manager Taffanye Young  
 Chief of Staff Daphanie Williams  
 City Attorney Bates Lovett  
 Clerk of Council Mark Massey  
 Deputy Clerk of Council Gwendolyn Jones

**Workshop Agenda Items**

[1. 100 Days of Summer 2026 Preview Presentation](#)

[1. 100 Days of Summer 2026 Preview 20260423.pdf](#)

PRESENTED by City Manager Melder, Fire Chief Derik Minard, Police Chief Lenny Gunther, Savannah Impact Coordinator LaToyia Daniels, Cpl. Udon Carter, Cultural Resources Senior Director Stuart Miller, Human Services Senior Director Kerri Reid, Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement Services Jimmie Johnson, Recreation & Leisure Services Senior Director Nick Roberts, Marketing and Communications Specialist Ryan Rish, and Ald. Carolyn H. Bell

Following the presentations, City Council members discussed and asked questions.

Ald. Miller Blakely asked Chief Gunther what the age category was for the Father's Day event at Jesus First Ministry and whether it was it just for fathers and sons. (Saturday, June 20<sup>th</sup>, from 12:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m., and you could bring the whole family.)

Ald. Wilder asked how we are going to get kids to these sites and what the age range is for these programs. Chief Gunther stated they have some vans available, and the age range for the summer camp was ages 8 to 14.

Ald. Lanier commented on the good job on the use of AI and that she loved it. She asked if the council could have access to the graphics so they could put them on their social media. Ald. Lanier stated that if the programs were all filled (with participants), that would be a good problem for us to have.

Ald. Wilder mentioned that for the previous year, the Mayor offered to make sure that those who did not have coverage and fees were not turned away because they could not afford the cost. She asked if we were going to stand on that this year. (Yes)

Ald. Leggett asked the City Manager if it was possible to do another walk-through regarding the consideration for a larger footprint for the Savannah Impact Program (SIP) as these types of programs are so successful that they are starting to expand. He stated he knows that PALS (Police Athletic League), they were thinking about doing tumbling and similar programs. City Manager Melder stated that we are looking at how we could build out a tumbling or some type of activity space, working with PALS and SIP there. Ald. Leggett stated that not only is the SIP office is becoming a holistic part of the community, but we are also using it for neighborhood meetings, teaching self-defense, and a lot of different activities. He stated he wanted to highlight all the good things that are coming out of there because it shows in our region off Waters Avenue that it is actually working for our young people who are utilizing that space, but he thinks we are outgrowing it.

Ald. Lanier mentioned to the City Manager a conversation with the director of the housing authority regarding the possibility of us purchasing Kayton Homes' gym for \$1, and said it was possible. She stated she was going to put it in writing, and maybe the City Manager could continue that conversation. City Manager Melder replied.

Mayor Pro Tem Dr. Shabazz asked, in regard to the firefighter slide, what is the location of the graduation on May 20<sup>th</sup>? Chief Minard stated the Explorer Graduation is on May 20<sup>th</sup> from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. at the fire training center, 280 Agonic Road. She asked what the goals of the police department are during the 100 Days of Summer--is it to engage the community and at-risk youth with pro-social activities to reduce the rate of recidivism? She stated she was thankful for what we are doing now with our 100 Days of Summer with our youth, especially our at-risk youth.

Ald. Wilder thanked Director Jimmy Johnson and Issac Felton from ONSE, Latoya Daniels, and Sgt. Carter from SIPS, and Attorney Lovett. She stated we have lawnmowers, and we are trying to get these young kids off of these corners during the summer.

Mayor Johnson stated that these programs are primarily, if not exclusively, for people living in the city of Savannah. We have to make sure of that because of the stewardship of local tax dollars to make these things happen. He stated he has asked staff to really make sure that these are individuals in the city of Savannah, and if all young people in the city of Savannah have been accommodated, we are not Savannah only--it is just Savannah first.

Ald. Leggett asked Ms. Daniels with SIPS about the next gun violence event and if there were any graduates this year coming from high school (in the Beyond the Badge program). Ms. Daniels responded.

Before the remaining staff presentations, City Manager Melder stated he wanted to recognize Senior Director of Cultural Affairs Stuart Miller, who will retire on May 8th, for his incredible service to the City of Savannah. He has not slowed down a bit as he has been planning for 100 Days of Summer for both Cultural Resources and for his first 100 days of retirement.

Mayor Johnson stated he had a question for the Office of Neighborhood Safety & Engagement (ONSE) Director regarding the young men who took the pledge not to touch a gun again. He stated that he followed those young men last year with great interest. Mayor Johnson stated these are young men who had been justice-involved and justice-impacted. He asked Director Johnson whether they had kept up with the young men. (Yes, we have had a 70% success rate--two were victims of gun violence, and one picked up an aggravated (assault) charge.) Mayor Johnson stated "You do not expect 100% because you are changing a lifestyle, you are changing a mindset."

Ald. Leggett asked the City Manager if he had checked with the school board to see if the MOU was still valid because he knew that we had raised the question that our football and basketball coaches were unable to use certain play spaces. City Manager Melder responded.

Ald. Palumbo thanked all the presenters. He stated he wanted to commend Mr. Roberts and his team for really embodying the spirit of recreation re-imagined. Ald. Palumbo said, "Look at all the incredible offerings in the summertime that are not traditional youth sports or team sports." Ald. Palumbo also wanted to commend Director Roberts on the outreach and the engagement, and stated that he could tell it was human-centered design on the flyer work. He stated that he knows that artificial intelligence is having its moment, and it could be very efficient. Ald. Palumbo stated that even if it was AI-assisted that you still had enough human interaction, which looks very deliberate in the Savannah-based design, and that is going to encourage more engagement. He stated kudos for the team going the extra mile.

Ald. Wilder asked about the time for water aerobics and the end date. Director Roberts responded. She thanked Director Roberts and city staff for having a valuable meeting with recreation, and stated she was told that they were going to be having some ongoing meetings.

Ald. Miller Blakely stated she was so full and happy with all of this stuff that you (Recreation & Leisure Services) are doing in recreation. She stated they actually listened to the council, and we are so thankful. Ald. Miller Blakely expressed that she could not wait to go into the community and let them know about all of these wonderful programs that we have for our children, even for the young adults.

Ald. Lanier asked about the vacancies. She stated that these are such excellent programs, and once we share these, it is going to be an overwhelming outreach. Director Roberts responded.

Mayor Johnson stated that to follow Ald. Blakely's point, we have asked for a menu, and you all have given that. He stated he was appreciative of the efforts. Mayor Johnson stated he was still interested in building space in terms of food and Wi-Fi. He stated we have those challenges in some of our community centers and at our buildings, so, where are we in that and when can we kind of say "the best spots to be are here because here you can do those things that you want to do." City Manager Melder responded.

Mayor Johnson stated he wanted to also thank the City Manager and Director Roberts for meeting with the coaches of teams, at the behest of Ald. Leggett and Ald. Wilder, to talk about the challenge we have to create spaces for teams. He stated we also have to create spaces for the sake of space, spaces for individuals, and spaces just for kids who are not necessarily organized but need space to be able to play as well. Mayor Johnson stated he was appreciative of you all listening to them and hopefully educating them that every space cannot be team space.

Ald. Lanier stated she senses a gap here because this is too much work and presents good information, opportunities, and resources to not have everybody know about what the city is offering. She stated that people always say there is nothing to do and that is not true; so, she is thinking do we have a dashboard? Ald. Lanier stated she thinks we need a dashboard where someone would come and say, "I want this program." Once they go there and find out it is full, then they can see where the vacancies are and opt for another program.

Mayor Pro Tem Dr. Shabazz stated she wanted to mention some buzzwords that she just wanted to put on the table which has been so great in the presentation, and the work that you all (city staff) are doing, and those words are a "youth" and "families"--not just talking about our youth but also including our families because the units of the children has to be led by the

parents. She thanked everyone for putting this together under a lid of being positive for our residents and our citizens in Savannah.

Ald. Bell presented the Summer 500 Program to the council. She thanked Ald. Miller Blakely for being a major cheerleader, Mayor Johnson, City Manager, and Team Savannah.

Ald. Miller Blakely congratulated Ald. Bell and thanked the City Manager for listening and hearing.

Mayor Johnson stated that we appreciate all of the work. He stated that obviously, we want to make sure the young people are engaged and involved and do our part. This is our part in being able to do that. Mayor Johnson stated that he agreed with Ald. Lanier--he has heard kids say there is nothing to do. No, there is plenty to do, and that is not even mentioning the faith community, who also provides a bunch of programs during the summer. Mayor Johnson thanked the team for all of this work and stated that we want to make sure we push this out in a big way.

[2. Appointments to Boards, Commissions and Authorities](#)

[UPDATED Boards MASTER LIST-2026 as of 04-14-2026.pdf](#)

Mayor Johnson facilitated a discussion on board appointments during which council members submitted nominations for various boards. The nominations are to be considered and voted upon during the April 23, 2026, Regular Council Meeting.

[3. Executive Session Regarding Personnel, Real Estate and Litigation: As Needed](#)

HELD. Mayor Johnson entertained a motion to hold an executive session. Mayor Pro Tem Dr. Shabazz moved to hold an executive session regarding personnel, litigation and real estate, seconded by Ald. Palumbo. The motion passed unanimously, 9-0-0.

At 12:56 p.m., Mayor Johnson recessed the work session for the executive session to be held in the City Attorney's library/conference room on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor of City Hall, which began at 1:12 p.m. All members were present, including the City Manager, City Attorney, and Clerk of Council.

No action was taken during the executive session.

Ald. Palumbo moved to adjourn the executive session, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Dr. Shabazz. The motion passed unanimously, 9-0-0.

[4. City Manager Updates: As Needed](#)

There was no City Manager's Update held.

Mayor Johnson adjourned the workshop/executive session at 1:46 p.m. No action was taken.

Mark Massey, Clerk of Council

Date Minutes Approved: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

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

<https://www.youtube.com/@cityofsavannah/videos>