



FEBRUARY 4, 2025 - 10:00 a.m. - CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING
CITY GOVERNMENT
OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS OF THE MAYOR AND ALDERMEN
SAVANNAH, GEORGIA

The regular meeting of the City Council was held at **10:05 a.m.**, in the SCCPSS Board of Education Room located at the Eli Whitney Administrative Complex, 2 Laura Avenue, Building G. **Mayor Johnson** called the meeting to order, then recognized **Ald. Nick Palumbo** who introduced **Ald. Kurtis Purtee** to offer the invocation. Mayor Johnson spoke about the recent airplane tragedies, and he asked everyone to remember those people affected by the incidents that occurred in Washington, D.C. and Philadelphia. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited in unison.

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
Alderman Nick Palumbo, District 4 - Chairman
Alderwoman Dr. Estella Edwards Shabazz, District 5 - Mayor Pro Tem
Alderman Kurtis Purtee, District 6

ABSENT:

Alderwoman Linda Wilder-Bryan, District 3 - Vice Chair

ALSO, PRESENT:

City Manager Jay Melder
Chief of Staff Daphanie Williams
City Attorney Bates Lovett
Clerk of Council Mark Massey
Assistant to Clerk of Council Renee Osborne

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

[1. Adoption of the Regular Meeting Agenda for February 4, 2025.](#)

Mayor Pro Tem Dr. Shabazz moved to approve agenda item #1 as amended (adding a recognition of Margaret Williams), seconded by Ald. Palumbo. The motion passed unanimously, 7-0-2. Ald. Miller Blakely was away from the dais, and Ald. Wilder-Bryan was absent.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

[2. Approval of the Minutes for the Regular Meeting Held on January 9, 2025, at 2:00 p.m.](#)

[Agenda Plus_RM DRAFT MINUTES January 9, 2025 City Council Regular Meeting.pdf](#)

Mayor Pro Tem Dr. Shabazz moved to approve agenda items #2 and #3, seconded by Ald. Palumbo and Ald. Purtee. The motion passed unanimously, 7-0-2. Ald. Miller Blakely was away from the dais, and Ald. Wilder-Bryan was absent.

[3. Approval of the Minutes for the Work Session and City Manager's Briefing Held on January 9, 2025, at 11:00 a.m.](#)

[Agenda Plus_WS DRAFT MINUTES_January 9, 2025 City Council Workshop.pdf](#)

Mayor Pro Tem Dr. Shabazz moved to approve agenda items #2 and #3, seconded by Ald. Palumbo and Ald. Purtee. The motion passed unanimously, 7-0-2. Ald. Miller Blakely was away from the dais, and Ald. Wilder-Bryan was absent.

ALCOHOL LICENSE HEARINGS - (CITY MANAGER RECOMMENDS APPROVAL OF ALL ITEMS IN THIS SECTION UNLESS NOTED OTHERWISE)

[4. Approval of a Class C \(Liquor, Beer, Wine\) \(By the Drink\) Alcohol License to Allison Diaz for Dew Drop Inn, A Bar located at 11432 Abercorn Street. The establishment is located between Largo Drive and Idlewood Drive in Aldermanic District 6.](#)

[Checklist - Dew Drop Inn](#)

[Density Map - Dew Drop Inn](#)

[Alcohol Reports - Dew Drop Inn](#)

[Measurement Report - Dew Drop Inn.pdf](#)

[Security Plan - Dew Drop Inn.pdf](#)

Mayor Johnson declared the hearing open for agenda item #4.

Speaker(s):

- Kerry Grant - IN SUPPORT

a. Ald. Palumbo moved to close the hearing for agenda item #4, seconded by Ald. Leggett and Ald. Purtee. The motion passed unanimously, 7-0-2. Ald. Miller Blakely was away from the dais, and Ald. Wilder-Bryan was absent.

b. Ald. Purtee moved to approve agenda item #4, seconded by Ald. Palumbo. The motion passed unanimously, 7-0-2. Ald. Miller Blakely was away from the dais, and Ald. Wilder-Bryan was absent.

[5. Approval of a Class J \(Liquor, Beer, Wine\) \(By the Drink\) Alcohol License to Da'Von Mclure for Gutstein Gallery, A Event Venue at 201 East Broughton Street. The establishment is between Abercorn and Lincoln Streets in Aldermanic District 2.](#)

[Checklist - Gutstein Gallery](#)

[Density Map - Gutstein Gallery](#)

[Alcohol Reports - Gutstein Gallery](#)

[Measurement Report - Gutstein Gallery](#)

[Security Plan - Gutstein Gallery](#)

Mayor Johnson declared the hearings open for agenda items #5 and #6.

No speaker(s).

a. Ald. Leggett moved to close the hearings for agenda item #5 and #6, seconded by Ald. Palumbo and Ald. Lanier. The motion passed unanimously, 7-0-2. Ald. Miller Blakely was away from the dais, and Ald. Wilder-Bryan was absent.

b. Ald. Leggett moved to approve agenda item #5, seconded by Ald. Lanier and Ald. Palumbo. The motion passed unanimously, 7-0-2. Ald. Miller Blakely was away from the dais, and Ald. Wilder-Bryan was absent.

[6. Approval of a Class C \(Liquor, Beer, Wine\) \(By the Drink\) Alcohol License with Sunday Sales to Derrick Law-Staton for Henry St. Bistro, A Restaurant at 1308 Montgomery Street. The establishment is between West Henry and West Anderson Streets in Aldermanic District 2.](#)

[Checklist - Henry St. Bistro](#)

[Density Map - Henry St. Bistro](#)

[Alcohol Reports - Henry St. Bistro](#)

[Measurement Report - Henry St. Bistro](#)

[Security Plan - Henry St. Bistro](#)

Mayor Johnson declared the hearings open for agenda items #5 and #6.

No speaker(s).

a. Ald. Leggett moved to close the hearings for agenda item #5 and #6, seconded by Ald. Palumbo and Ald. Lanier. The motion passed unanimously, 7-0-2. Ald. Miller Blakely was away from the dais, and Ald. Wilder-Bryan was absent.

b. Ald. Leggett moved to approve agenda item #6, seconded by Ald. Lanier. The motion passed unanimously, 7-0-2. Ald. Miller Blakely was away from the dais, and Ald. Wilder-Bryan was absent.

ORDINANCES - SECOND READING - (CITY MANAGER RECOMMENDS APPROVAL OF ALL ITEMS IN THIS SECTION UNLESS NOTED OTHERWISE)

[7. A Joint Petition of Bridget Lidy on Behalf of the Mayor and Aldermen of the City of Savannah, Georgia and Brianna Paxton for a Zoning Text Amendment to Sections 3.12 Special Exceptions, 3.21 Variances, 5.4 Principal Use Table, 5.9 Traditional Residential Districts, 5.12 Traditional Neighborhood Districts, 5.13 Traditional Districts, 8.1 Residential Use Standards for Limited and Special Uses \(File No. 24-004284-ZA\), Continued from the November 7, 2024 meeting; the item will be continued to March 13, 2025.](#)

[Exhibit 1: MPC Recommendation Packet \(File No. 24-004284-ZA\).pdf](#)

[Exhibit 2: 10.24.2024 Council Workshop Presentation on the Density Bonus for Affordable Housing Program.pdf](#)

[Exhibit 3: Final Proposed Revisions 10.09.2024 \(File No. 24-004284-ZA\).pdf](#)

[Exhibit 4: Draft Ordinance \(File No. 24-004284-ZA\).pdf](#)

Ald. Lanier moved to continue/postpone agenda item #7 to the March 13, 2025 City Council Meeting, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Dr. Shabazz. The motion passed unanimously, 7-0-2. Ald. Miller Blakely was away from the dais, and Ald. Wilder-Bryan was absent.

PURCHASING ITEMS - (CITY MANAGER RECOMMENDS APPROVAL OF ALL ITEMS IN THIS SECTION UNLESS NOTED OTHERWISE)

[8. Notification of an Emergency Purchase for Elevator Repairs at City Hall with TK Elevator \(LOCAL\) in the amount of \\$53,906. The emergency purchase was required due to the controller needing to be replaced. \(Facilities Maintenance\)](#)

[Exhibit 1: Funding Verification- City Hall Elevator Repairs](#)

[Exhibit 2: Purchasing Note -City Hall Elevator Repairs](#)

Mayor Pro Tem Dr. Shabazz moved to approve agenda item #8, seconded by Ald. Palumbo. The motion passed unanimously, 7-0-2. Ald. Miller Blakely was away from the dais, and Ald. Wilder-Bryan was absent.

[9. Authorize the City Manager to Execute a Contract for Engineering Services from EMC Engineering, Inc. \(LOCAL\) in an Amount Not to Exceed \\$4,880,947. These services to design the Springfield Canal from the US Highway 17 to the Musgrove Canal at Bowles C. Ford Park. \(Stormwater Management\)](#)

[Exhibit 1: Funding Verification - Springfield Canal.pdf](#)

[Exhibit 2: Purchasing Notes - Springfield Canal.pdf](#)

Ald. Lanier moved to approve agenda item #9, seconded by Ald. Palumbo and Mayor Pro Tem Dr. Shabazz. The motion passed unanimously, 7-0-2. Ald. Miller Blakely was away from the dais, and Ald. Wilder-Bryan was absent.

Ald. Lanier asked the item to be heard separately to bring attention to it.

Mayor Pro Tem Dr. Shabazz stated this is a good thing happening (focus and investments) to the Springfield Canal, moving downstream. The improvements are going to help with flooding.

City Manager Melder stated clarity will need to come from the federal government pertaining to this item, as a result of any funding freezes or holds. They are following the updates.

[10. Authorize the City Manager to Execute a Contract for Travel Services with Duluth Travel in the Amount Not to Exceed \\$120,000. Savannah Police Department is seeking to streamline and automate its travel services. \(SPD\)](#)

[Exhibit 1: Funding Verification - Duluth Travel.pdf](#)

[Exhibit 2: Purchasing Notes - Duluth Travel.pdf](#)

Mayor Johnson asked the City Manager if the City already has travel services. City Manager Melder responded that the city does have other travel services, but these services are for the Police Department who requires some streamlining and efficiencies which are cost neutral. Mayor Johnson asked if this was a local company (No). Mayor Johnson reiterated Council's position regarding Savannah First. He further stated the current contract may need to be reevaluated if they are unable to perform at the level of this particular vendor.

Ald. Palumbo moved to approve agenda item #10, seconded by Ald. Leggett. The motion passed unanimously, 7-0-2. Ald. Miller Blakely was away from the dais, and Ald. Wilder-Bryan was absent.

[11. Authorize The City Manager To Execute A Contract Modification No. 2 And Renewal For Urban/Design And Architectural Support With Sottile and Sottile \(LOCAL\) in an Amount Not To Exceed \\$350,000. Staff is requesting additional funds in order to support the Civic Center redevelopment, River Street improvements, and other City projects. \(Planning and Urban Design\)](#)

[Exhibit 1: Funding Verification- Urban Planning and Design Services.pdf](#)

[Exhibit 2: Purchasing Notes- Urban Planning and Design Services.pdf](#)

Ald. Lanier asked the City Manager where the money is coming from for this contract (Hotel/Motel or CID). The City Manager responded that where the money comes from is based on the type of work being performed, and he provided different examples. Ald. Lanier stated her reasons for paying close attention to this work. She emphasized that she does not want the Water Works project to get lost or fall behind.

Ald. Lanier moved to approve agenda item #11, seconded by Ald. Palumbo. The motion passed unanimously, 8-0-1. Ald. Wilder-Bryan was absent.

SAVANNAH AIRPORT COMMISSION

[12. Approval of the 2025 Airports Council International – North America Premier Airport Membership Dues, in the Amount of \\$36,749.](#)

Mayor Pro Tem Dr. Shabazz moved to approve agenda items #12 through #18, seconded by Ald. Palumbo and Ald. Lanier. The motion passed unanimously, 7-0-2. Ald. Miller Blakely was away from

the dais, and Ald. Wilder-Bryan was absent.

[13. Approval to Renew the 2026 and 2027 Out-of-Home Advertising on Hwy 278 and Hwy 170 with Adams Outdoor Advertising, in the Amount of \\$585,234.](#)

Mayor Pro Tem Dr. Shabazz moved to approve agenda items #12 through #18, seconded by Ald. Palumbo and Ald. Lanier. The motion passed unanimously, 7-0-2. Ald. Miller Blakely was away from the dais, and Ald. Wilder-Bryan was absent.

[14. Approval to Renew Contract for Professional Services with Ailevon Pacific Aviation Consulting, in the Amount of \\$173,250.](#)

Mayor Pro Tem Dr. Shabazz moved to approve agenda items #12 through #18, seconded by Ald. Palumbo and Ald. Lanier. The motion passed unanimously, 7-0-2. Ald. Miller Blakely was away from the dais, and Ald. Wilder-Bryan was absent.

[15. Approval to Execute a Contract with Marketing and PR Consultant Jo Piani of Luna PR, in the Amount of \\$55,000.](#)

Mayor Pro Tem Dr. Shabazz moved to approve agenda items #12 through #18, seconded by Ald. Palumbo and Ald. Lanier. The motion passed unanimously, 7-0-2. Ald. Miller Blakely was away from the dais, and Ald. Wilder-Bryan was absent.

[16. Approval to Renew Services with INFAX for the Embross Common Use Passenger Processing System and Common Use Self-Service System, in the Amount of \\$38,224.](#)

Mayor Pro Tem Dr. Shabazz moved to approve agenda items #12 through #18, seconded by Ald. Palumbo and Ald. Lanier. The motion passed unanimously, 7-0-2. Ald. Miller Blakely was away from the dais, and Ald. Wilder-Bryan was absent.

[17. Approval to Execute a Construction Contract with Complete Demolition Services, LLC for the Demo Quail Run Lodge and Old Williamsburg World Travel Office project, in the Amount of \\$387,000.](#)

Mayor Pro Tem Dr. Shabazz moved to approve agenda items #12 through #18, seconded by Ald. Palumbo and Ald. Lanier. The motion passed unanimously, 7-0-2. Ald. Miller Blakely was away from the dais, and Ald. Wilder-Bryan was absent.

[18. Approval of Change Order No. 1 with Terracon for Special Inspections for Building 2 for the Air Cargo Facility, in the Amount of \\$322,650.](#)

Mayor Pro Tem Dr. Shabazz moved to approve agenda items #12 through #18, seconded by Ald. Palumbo and Ald. Lanier. The motion passed unanimously, 7-0-2. Ald. Miller Blakely was away from the dais, and Ald. Wilder-Bryan was absent.

AGREEMENTS

[19. Approval of a Water & Sewer Agreement with Southern Apartment Builder, LLC for Cedar Grove Apartments. This is for a development consisting of 72 apartment units of Mohawk Street in the Wilshire service area in Aldermanic District 6.](#)

[Exhibit 1: Water & Sewer Agreement - Cedar Grove Apartment.pdf](#)

Ald. Purtee moved to approve agenda item #19, seconded by Ald. Palumbo and Ald. Bell. The motion passed unanimously, 7-0-2. Ald. Miller Blakely was away from the dais, and Ald. Wilder-Bryan was absent.

MISCELLANEOUS

[20. Approval of a Major Subdivision Hidden Pointe Phase 2A. The proposed property totals 1.967 acres and will consist of 10 lots/townhomes with varying lot sizes. The property is in Aldermanic District 6 at Street Location: Navajo Road and Fulton Road.](#)

[Exhibit 1: Plat: Major Subdivision Hidden Pointe Phase 2A.pdf](#)

[Exhibit 2: MPC Decision.pdf](#)

Ald. Purtee moved to approve agenda items #20 and #21, seconded by Ald. Palumbo and Mayor Pro Tem Dr. Shabazz. The motion passed unanimously, 8-0-1. Ald. Wilder-Bryan was absent.

[21. Approval of a Major Subdivision Hidden Pointe Phase 2B. The proposed property totals 10.114 acres and will consist of 49 lots/townhomes with varying lot sizes. The property is in Aldermanic District 6 at Street Location: Navajo Road and Fulton Road.](#)

[Exhibit 1: Plat: Major Subdivision Hidden Pointe Phase 2B.pdf](#)

[Exhibit 2: MPC Decision Decision.pdf](#)

Ald. Purtee moved to approve agenda items #20 and #21, seconded by Ald. Palumbo and Mayor Pro Tem Dr. Shabazz. The motion passed unanimously, 8-0-1. Ald. Wilder-Bryan was absent.

[22. Public Hearing Regarding the Ability to Opt Out of the State's Version of Homestead Exemption, Pursuant to O.C.G.A § 48-5 - 44.2.](#)

Mayor Johnson gave opening remarks regarding the new Homestead Exemption approved by referendum, as well as HB 581 regarding homestead exemption as passed by the State Legislature.

City Manager Melder provided a presentation for public education purposes.

Mayor Johnson advised that he knows of additional changes/amendments being proposed for HB 581. Then, Mayor Johnson opened the public hearing for input from the public. He asked the City

Manager to keep track of questions, so that the city can record the questions, and publicly provide answers within 24 hours. He stated we will keep a running list of those questions and post them in a public format.

Ald. Bell spoke about improvements to your property under Stephen's Day, who determines what is a minor or major improvement (Tax Assessor).

Mayor Pro Tem Dr. Shabazz spoke about HB 581 at a community meeting last night. She was asked by a constituent if she will be paying more taxes, as a result of this change. The City Manager responded that if a homeowner has Stephen's Day Homestead Exemption now, they will not pay more taxes. In virtually every case, Stephen's Day Homestead Exemption offers a better protection and a lower tax base/price every year than HB 581.

Mayor Johnson stated HB 581 is the State's way of catching up with us.

Ald. Miller Blakely asked about HB 581, will there be any increases for your exemptions/valuations? City Manager Melder responded no. A homeowner will receive whatever rate is their highest or greatest benefit.

Mayor Johnson stated homestead is a legal term, investment or multiple properties are not eligible. Then he invited speakers to the podium.

Speaker(s):

- Jason Combs - NOT SURE, asked for side-by-side cases/comparisons, and he questioned impact on STVRs
- Bob Rosenwald - OPT OUT RATIONALE REQUESTED, 68% of Chatham County voters approved this proposal, but we are opting out, asked about complexity of HB 581 versus Stephen's Day, bureaucracy, and timing of mandated appraisals
- Billy Nebb - EXPRESSED CONCERN ABOUT INCONSISTENT MESSAGING ON SOCIAL MEDIA, asked about current exemptions under Stephen's Day, and asked if we opt out can we opt back in

Ald. Palumbo moved to close the public hearing for agenda item #22, seconded by Ald. Lanier and Ald. Miller Blakely. The motion passed unanimously, 8-0-1. Ald. Wilder-Bryan was absent.

Ald. Miller Blakely commented to the public that this is a positive thing we are doing, by opting out. Stephen's Day is the leader, and the State is trying to do something similar to Stephen's Day.

[23. Approval of a Resolution by the Mayor and Aldermen of the City of Savannah to Opt Out of the State's Version of Homestead Exemption, Pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 48-5-44.2.](#)

[Local Government HB 581 Opt-Out Period Ends March 1.pdf](#)

[House Bill 581_as passed house and senate.pdf](#)

[HB 581 Property Tax Reform_flyer.pdf](#)

No was action taken on agenda item #23. This item is not to be voted upon, until after the third public hearing is held on February 13, 2025 at 6:00 p.m.

After the last agenda item was considered, Mayor Johnson asked to add an Executive Session to the agenda concerning litigation.

Mayor Pro Tem Dr. Shabazz moved to close the regular meeting to hold a closed executive session regarding litigation, seconded by Ald. Palumbo. The motion passed unanimously, 8-0-1. Ald. Wilder-Bryan was absent.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Ald. Leggett requested a special recognition concerning the passing of Rev. Dr. James Capers, former pastor of Holy Spirit Lutheran Church in Savannah, GA.

Mayor Johnson sent love to the family of Ms. Wilhelmenia Dean who passed away at 99 years old.

Ald. Leggett announced the community meeting (Savannah GPS – Developing Our Strategic Plan Together) taking place in District 2 tonight at the Delaware Community Center at 6pm.

Ald. Miller Blakely also encouraged residents to participate in the Savannah GPS meetings, and she challenged the other districts to outdo the District 6 meeting which had great turnout.

Mayor Pro Tem Dr. Shabazz encouraged residents to attend the District 5 Savannah GPS meeting being held on Wednesday, February 5th at 6:00 p.m.

Ald. Lanier encouraged residents to show-up for the District 1 Savannah GPS meeting being held on Friday, February 7th at 6:00 p.m.

Mayor Johnson recessed the regular meeting to hold a closed executive session regarding litigation at 11:23 a.m. The executive session was held in the private room adjacent to the Board Room. All members were present, except Ald. Wilder-Bryan who was absent. Also attending were City Attorney Bates Lovett, City Manager Jay Melder, and Clerk of Council Mark Massey.

Mayor Pro Tem Dr. Shabazz moved to end the executive session regarding litigation, seconded by Ald. Palumbo. The motion passed unanimously, 8-0-1. Ald. Wilder-Bryan was absent. The executive session ended at 11:43 a.m.

*In open session, Mayor Johnson re-entered the Board Room and announced that the Mayor and Aldermen held a closed executive session regarding litigation for which no votes were taken. Then, he adjourned the meeting at 11:44 a.m.

Mark Massey, Clerk of Council

Date Minutes Approved: _____

Signature: _____

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

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

