



JUNE 12, 2025 - 11:00 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 **11:03 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. **Alderman Purtee** offered a prayer.

PRESENT:

- Mayor Van R. Johnson, II, Presiding
- 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-Bryan, 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
- Chief of Staff Daphanie Williams
- City Attorney Bates Lovett
- Interim Deputy Clerk of Council Gwendolyn Jones
- Assistant to Clerk of Council Renee Osborne

Workshop Agenda Items

- [1. 2024 Year End Financial Closeout](#)
 - [Exhibit 1: 2024 Savannah Council Audit Results Presentation.pptx](#)

Mayor Pro Tem Dr. Shabazz started the meeting with the first item of the 2024 Year End Financial Closeout.

City Manager Melder introduced Senior Director of Financial Services David Maxwell, who in turn introduced Trey Scott with the auditing partners of Mauldin & Jenkins CPA. Mr. Scott made

a presentation. The city was awarded a Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting from the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA).

Mayor Pro Tem Dr. Shabazz thanked City Manager Melder, David Maxwell, and Trey Scott for the presentation as well as the receipt of a "clean opinion" on our reporting.

Ald. Bell commended David Maxwell and his staff on the audit report. She thanked them for "keeping us straight".

Ald. Wilder-Bryan thanked them for the audit. She stated that through the audit we are able to stay in compliance with state laws regarding our budget. She asked City Manager Melder about the recommendations and process for direct deposit for employees and contractors (currently we pay vendors via a paper check). She has been questioned by people who have been waiting for payments for over 21 days.

Mayor Pro Tem Dr. Shabazz asked what was the new growth attributed to (a reinvestment in traditional urban core and through policies that City Council has made).

Ald. Lanier stated that the new growth has occurred mostly in the first district. She stated that it was the reason they had to change the boundaries. She also stated that we have to be careful and that equitable policies have not been put in place. She noted that good policies have not provided incentives for builders and contractors. There is a habit of saying one thing and doing another. This has caused difficulties when dealing with people in communities on a daily basis and being unable to recommend policy solutions that will solve the cries of the people.

Ald. Purtee indicated that he was glad that the millage rate had been lowered (millage rate calculated at 11.749 mils). He noted that in his area there has been exponential growth on the southside and in the 6th District. He shared that it would be great to see the benefits of the rollback rate. He urged his colleagues to vote for that option.

City Manager Melder stated that setting the rollback rate versus a different rate impacts the public process. He urged council to be mindful of moving forward to roll it back, and then being unable to set it higher than the rollback rate in the future.

[2. SPLOST 8 Update](#)

[Exhibit 1: 061225 SPLOST 8 Workshop.pptx](#)

City Manager Melder gave a presentation on SPLOST 8. He referenced the feedback that was received as well as the status of the current SPLOST negotiations. The Revised Recommended SPLOST 8 List is used to meet the needs of council's priorities.

Mayor Pro Tem Dr. Shabazz stated that she and Ald. Miller Blakely saw that some of their asks are not being funded for the Fifth District. She also noted that where the Fifth and Sixth Districts run into each other that the sidewalks and traffic calming were key factors. Mayor Pro Tem Dr. Shabazz stated that for the record, it has been a neglected area, and she would like that to be pinned at the top of priority.

Mayor Johnson stated that we should point out the benefit of these two administrations. Our managers have maintained a rolling list of concerns from council, which were the results of town hall meetings, visioning sessions, etc. He stated that the city manager was able to mirror the strategic plan initiatives with the additional requests from council. City Manager Melder and his team have attempted to pay for things with less money but that has not been possible. SPLOST is not the only option that we have to fund stuff. We also have the general fund and a capital improvement plan; there may also be run-off from previous SPLOSTs that may be included. We should be able to move forward with the county and provide the MOA. It has to remain balanced just like the budget.

Ald. Purtee stated that it is important to remember with some of the projects that we get some projected timelines. Narrowing down the timelines will help to project when the projects will start. He suggested that when looking at the median enhancement or streetscapes for the southside, it also ties in with other districts. These types of projects enhance public safety, pedestrian safety and promote Vision Zero as well as a walkable community.

Ald. Miller Blakely asked how do we determine who gets the street paving and the new sidewalks. The southside has truly been neglected and she would like to hope and pray that we put some resources into that area. The taxpayers in that area have not received some of the amenities and benefits that they paid for with their tax dollars. Ald. Miller Blakely asked about the Southside Retrofit and Revitalization Plan for District 6. Will any of it be incorporated into District 5 as well? (Yes). Will the Windsor-Largo roundabout be included with other capital needs. (Yes). She asked about Mohawk Park as she had spoken to Ald. Purtee who said there may be money left over from SPLOST 7 for the park. (Yes, there is a plan for that).

Mayor Johnson repeated the question about whether there was a SPLOST 7 project closeout. City Manager Melder planned to investigate further.

Mayor Pro Tem Dr. Shabazz stated that when she and Ald. Miller Blakely conducted their site visits at Mohawk Park they saw some very bad things.

Ald. Leggett asked about the hotel-motel tax list and how they tie into the budget (included in the FY2025 budget). He stated that there are also a lot of issues with drainage in the 2nd District, especially in the midtown area.

Mayor Johnson thanked City Manager Melder for his wisdom and foresight on the battle to pursue hotel-motel tax. He stated that hotel-motel tax is money that citizens are not paying. Those things are taken off of taxpayers backs, and we're able to add more projects with better bang for our dollar through the SPLOST project.

Ald. Lanier stated that her district's list is lengthy but the majority is infrastructure work. She asked the City Manager about Stiles Avenue, Louisville Road, and for clarification on the I-16 Flyover. She wondered why it had not been included as a priority with the county especially when other infrastructure projects have been left out (county-wide impact/interstate project). Ald. Lanier stated that in looking at where it sits in the 1st District, the most impactful would be the completion of Stiles Avenue and Louisville Road culvert (part of the stormwater basin improvement list). She stated that with the current funds the priority would not be in taking down the overpass. It doesn't ring for the people that live in that area and does not rank as high as completing the Stiles Avenue project and those issues. She stated that River Street was able to use a tool that was very impactful like the CID. Ald. Lanier had heard about a recommendation from MPC and asked if there was another tool that might be available to support these types of areas and the changes going on. She urged, let's use some economic development tools for this area also.

Ald. Miller Blakely asked about the I-16 Flyover being a part of the county and with DOT. She asked if there was anything within the capital fund to repair the area by the train trestle near Gwinnett Street and East Broad.

Ald. Bell commented that she is in support of the project as a tier one, priority one project.

Ald. Wilder-Bryan stated that she is very proud of the \$20M that will be put into the Skidaway project. She explained to her district residents how Victory Drive is so beautiful but around the corner there are no sidewalks, the grass needs cutting, and it's a commercial district. Some success has been achieved with Victory Drive and Skidaway after all these years. Ald. Wilder-Bryan asked if we go ahead with SPLOST 8 would it free up monies for the southside to do some other things. She stated that the bulk of the money is going to the 2nd and 4th Districts. However, District 3 is still short of approximately \$475M that went to District 1. She wants the business owners on Skidaway to know that the best is being done. This is really great.

Ald. Palumbo stated that he had a quick recap, and asked what are the next steps and timeframe.

Mayor Johnson thanked Ald. Palumbo for his question. He wanted to make sure that the county understands that council is very transparent and people need to know what they are voting for. He stated that they are seeking consensus for the City Manager to get through the negotiation process and reach the IGA point. This is not perfect but it gets us closer to where we need to be. Mayor Johnson was glad to see a lot of the parking lot items on the list in the districts. He hoped that council would be supportive of the funds so that folks get the projects that they need.

Ald. Miller Blakely noticed that only \$4M was allocated for Parks and Recreation for park and playground improvements. She asked if it was possible to see if we could add more to that. (Yes, City Manager Melder stated that there was \$17.1M allocated).

Mayor Johnson stated, let's go forth and get this thing done this year.

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

There was no executive session.

[4. City Manager's Update](#)

There was no agenda review.

Mayor Johnson recessed the work session at 12:46 p.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>.

