



JUNE 26, 2025 - 12:00 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 12:10 p.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
Alderman Kurtis Purtee, District 6

ABSENT:

Alderwoman Dr. Estella Edwards Shabazz, District 5 - Mayor Pro Tem

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

Workshop Agenda Items

[1. 2025 Mid-Year Financial Update](#)

[Exhibit 1: 062625 FY25 Mid-Year Financial Update.pptx](#)

City Manager Melder introduced the presentation on the 2025 Mid-Year Financial Update, Revenue, Expenditures, and Millage Rate Adoption (rollback rate) led by David Maxwell, Melissa Carter and Sancia Joseph-Jarvis. Ms. Jarvis noted that the City had received the Distinguished

Budget Award for the FY25 Budget which is the highest form of recognition in governmental budgeting.

Ald. Wilder-Bryan asked how much of the \$602M has been spent on projects that will not be finished during this timeframe. (City Manager Melder stated that when a project is budgeted it does not necessarily mean that the funds will be expended for that year; many capital projects may take longer than a year to complete). Ald. Wilder-Bryan asked if they could provide an explanation of the budget to the public. She thanked City Manager Melder and stated the importance of clarifying information regarding the budget to the listening public. The public may not always understand the budget and compare it to other entities, such as SCAD (who may be able to move more quickly with project turnover). Ald. Wilder-Bryan asked about the interfund (an exchange of monies between departments) and about where the money comes from.

Ald. Miller Blakely thanked them for the presentation but she was concerned that there was only one location on the southside to turn surveys into. She asked City Manager Melder if communication could be made with Savannah Mall (Southwest) Library as an added drop-off facility/location.

Ald. Lanier thanked them for the presentation and asked about the enterprise fund revenue. She stated that she was curious what constituted the increase from 2024-2025 for the Civic Center.

David Maxwell made a presentation on the millage rate recommendation. The final millage rate recommendation is 11.749 mils/2025 rollback rate (lowest rate since 1987). It eliminates any additional tax for reassessment. Council could put it to a vote at the next Council meeting.

Mayor Johnson stated that he thought this was good news and reflective of responsible financial stewardship. He thought that it appeared that our growth has tapered off. He asked what can we expect in 2026/2027. Mayor Johnson stated that when citizens see their taxes go up it is always the city's fault. Per City Manager Melder there are three millage rates applied to properties: Savannah millage rate, school board millage rate, and county millage rate.

Ald. Miller Blakely asked if there was a millage rate for Chatham Area Transit (yes, in 2024 at 1.056 mils). She asked if it had always been that way and wondered when it had been added.

Ald. Wilder-Bryan stated that the rollback rate resonated with her because it ensures that the property tax revenue remains stable year to year unless a deliberate decision is made to increase taxes. She asked Mr. Maxwell if he could explain it in layman's terms for the listening public. She stated that using the rollback rate for taxes is a plus. She further stated that the public thinks that rolling it back will increase their property tax, but we don't have any control over that, right? (the board can adopt the rate).

Ald. Lanier spoke regarding property assessments and wondered what was going on between '21 and '22. She noted that it was a big jump from 2.8 to 11.8. She stated that some of the criteria had to be subjective. What was happening in the economy then to cause that big jump. (Housing shortage, prices increased on existing housing).

Ald. Lanier stated that in the impact fees there were different levels for different entities; she asked if this was a flat fee for all including industrial (yes). She also asked if an industrial project would pay the same amount as if it was residential (no).

In reference to the Bacon Park Golf Course, Ald. Miller Blakely asked who is the private operator.

Ald. Wilder-Bryan stated that from 2013 - 2016, Bacon Park facilities, put in \$3M of investment funds to maintain it. She wanted to see a (report) on how much has been collected in fees, what we are getting for the lease of the property, as well as how much of it goes back into our fund. Ald. Wilder-Bryan asked what do we do with the money that has been generated. She asked what happened between 2016 - 2025. She stated that the information in the summary about the revenue adjustment is pretty vague (exhibit 1- Bacon Park fee change modifications).

Ald. Bell stated that she saw some staff in the room that have understand why we got out of the business. She suggested that the expenses be included to show how expensive it became for the city's operating budget to maintain Bacon Park Golf Course and come up with the money to make the necessary improvements. That information would be helpful to Council as well.

Mayor Johnson stated there is an amount of investment that was required and we did not have the skill set within city government to be able to maintain the pristine and competitive golf course. He also stated that golfers know what golfers like - we wanted something in our arsenal that met the desires and tastes of real golfers.

Ald. Leggett asked City Manager Melder, through leisure services, if our young people have the opportunity to play at the Bacon Park Golf Course for free or at a lower fee. He stated for us to have this type of investment/facility would be beneficial for our kids in the area.

Ald. Miller Blakely asked City Manager Melder if we own any other golf courses in the city. (No, Bacon Park is the only municipal golf course).

Ald. Wilder-Bryan stated we should keep a big eye on Bacon Park because it was not until 1961 that Blacks were allowed to golf there. They were also only permitted to golf there on Mondays, so we need to make sure that the quality and equity is still there. Ald. Wilder-Bryan stated that Bacon Park does a great job.

Mayor Johnson stated that the golf course is the most inclusive.

Mayor Johnson stated that regarding the rollback, individuals can speak now or forever hold thy peace. We encouraged the residents to stick with us as we paid for salaries, road improvements, stormwater improvements, etc. He stated that with the uncertainties of the future, this is very responsible and the way that we should go.

Ald. Miller Blakely expressed concerns over all the new growth, and asked as we get ready to implement fees to the residents for stormwater, is it still necessary? She read in the presentation that we have increased the budget. She also stated that we need to look at not assessing fees because we have money (according to what was presented in the workshop). She stated that we collected \$38M and residents have complained about the water bills. We are taxing them on water and sewer but we are growing. Do you know how that looks? She stated that we should not assess them a stormwater fee. We could have given them the rollback two years ago. Give them the rollback but don't make them pay a stormwater fee.

Mayor Johnson asked Ald. Miller Blakely if she suggested that we take the growth but don't give it back and use that to offset the stormwater fees. Mayor Johnson stated that this negates the growth.

Ald. Purtee shared that on the southside they have struggled for many years due to a lack of a dedicated funding source for stormwater and drainage. He attended a meeting and discussed implementing a fee of approximately \$5.00 +/- per month for stormwater. Ald. Purtee stated that the southside has struggled with using different pots of money that should be used for other expenses. His district does not have a dedicated fund source to be able to work on/maintain these bigger capital projects. They have a lot of crumbling stormwater infrastructure that has not been maintained in decades. He understands that no one likes the fees or higher taxes but needs to engage the community on how to move forward with stormwater.

Ald. Palumbo stated that the collection for the current stormwater project occurred over a 20 year period. The most difficult part is the funding itself and the predictability of the funding creating a boom or bust cycle. Stormwater is difficult because it is so expensive but so necessary.

Mayor Johnson stated that we all pay it but we need to convey to City Manager Melder what to cut in a balanced budget. Mayor Johnson also stated that we can roll it back as far as they want to go but it is a service delivery issue and the budget would remain balanced with the current proposal.

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

[UPDATED Boards MASTER LIST-2025 as of 06-23-2025.pdf](#)

Mayor Johnson facilitated the discussion on Boards: 1. Chatham Area Transit Board and 2. Chatham-Savannah Authority for the Homeless. Both boards have legislation that has changed their fundamental organization as of July 2025.

He recommended reappointments to the CAT Board with Ald. Leggett and Mary Snowden (both terms were expired). He recommended reappointments of Ald. Wilder-Bryan and Ald. Purtee to the Chatham-Savannah Authority for the Homeless. Mayor Johnson then facilitated a board appointment discussion for the additional boards as follows:

Cultural Affairs Commission, Economic Opportunity Authority (on hold), Greater Savannah International Alliance (verify international status), Historic Preservation Commission, Keep Savannah Beautiful (appointed all of the city residents), Savannah Development and Renewal Authority, Savannah Recreation Commission, and Savannah Zoning Board of Appeals.

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

A closed Executive Session Regarding Personnel was held. No action was taken. The executive session began at 1:27 p.m. and ended at 1:52 p.m.

Ald. Lanier moved to hold an executive session regarding personnel, seconded by Ald. Palumbo. The motion passed unanimously, 9-0-0. Mayor Pro Tem Dr. Shabazz was absent.

Ald. Palumbo moved to adjourn the executive session/workshop, seconded by Mayor Johnson. The motion passed unanimously, 9-0-0.

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

There was no City Manager's update held.

Mayor Johnson ended the work session at 1:52 p.m.

Mark Massey, Clerk of Council

Date Minutes Approved: _____

