



**OCTOBER 8, 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 **11:02 a.m.**, in the 2nd Floor Media Room. Mayor Johnson, called the meeting to order, then recognized Alderman Detric Leggett 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

ABSENT:

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
Clerk of Council Mark Massey
Deputy Clerk of Council Gwendolyn Jones

Workshop Agenda Items

[1. Parking Matters Workshop](#)

[1. Parking Matters Workshop Presentation.pdf](#)

City Manager Melder provided a brief overview of the workshop agenda. He then introduced Senior Director of Parking & Mobility Sean Brandon to present the Parking Matters.

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

Ald. Leggett stated the issue became more than an issue when we started talking about people living in certain areas and having to go two to three blocks away from their primary residence to get home. He noted that it becomes a safety issue for people who are parking two or three blocks down with groceries, family members, or what have you, and because, in certain areas, it is darker than most. Ald. Leggett asked the following questions, to which Senior Director Brandon responded:

- What are we doing for the enforcement piece when the meters are in place?
- Are we talking about having vehicles that will be equipped with license plate readers?
- With the new metered area west of Forsyth Park, would a lot of that be alleviated with the new parking structure that is going to go there?
- Are we thinking of having a conversation with our surrounding hotels that are in that zone about their people parking vehicles outside of the hotel and businesses?
- If the valets are encouraging their visitors to park on the street, or they park the vehicles on the street, do we make changes to the ordinance to change the ticket cost for that day?

Ald. Leggett, stated before moving all the way into this, do we have a good plan? He stated he has talked with the City Manager about a plan of enforcement that the surrounding residents and businesses know there would be an enforcement piece attached to this and that it is going to be aggressive. Senior Director Brandon responded. Ald. Leggett stated he wanted to make sure everyone's voice is heard.

Ald. Leggett also mentioned SCAD students are not supposed to have vehicles their freshman year. However, he has seen a large influx of vehicles in the Abercorn Street corridor, where they have a lot of vehicles parked for a long period of time. Ald. Leggett stated we are addressing our partnerships with surrounding churches, St. Vincent, and another school; so, he just wanted to make sure that enforcement matches all around the board. Senior Director Brandon and City Manager Melder responded.

Mayor Johnson stated the interesting thing about parking is that you know you are doing right if everybody is not happy. He explained the behavior of people when they are here, which is that they want to avoid garages where possible and to be as close as they can be to their destination. Mayor Johnson stated that oftentimes he has received calls about people who have been ticketed/towed, and it was not us that towed them. He further stated that parking is a good sign of a vibrant city, although it is a difficult challenge to be able to manage.

Ald. Wilder stated she wanted to be clear that the study that we did in 2025 was about one particular corridor. We need a citywide plan. Ald. Wilder expressed that we are spending money for one particular section, and everyone in their districts has problems with parking because of the new businesses that are taking residence, and so we have to plan for growth. In our communities, we have restaurants coming, and everybody wants to walk and go to those restaurants, but there is nowhere to park. Ald. Wilder asked what the future plan is for a citywide plan that offers more solutions other than downtown. Ald. Wilder stated she knows every alderperson here has a watch zone in their district. She has some new development on Gwinnett Street, extra parking at the Savannah Gardens, and the City is about to receive money for the Victory Drive corridor. Ald. Wilder stated we are going to have these same problems, so she wanted to be in front of that with solutions past East Broad Street. Ald. Wilder also asked about the parking app--allowing users to see when a parking space is available. City Manager Melder and Senior Director Sean Brandon responded.

Ald. Miller Blakely asked how much the study cost and whether it was just for the downtown area. (\$100,000, Liberty to Victory) She asked about doing a citywide study. Senior Director Brandon and City Manager Melder responded.

[2. 100% Savannah Plan Update](#)

[2. 100% Savannah Plan 5-yr Update Presentation.pdf](#)

Mayor Johnson said that six and a half years ago, the prior City Council took a huge, historic, and bold step by adopting the 100% Savannah Plan. He stated it passed unanimously, it was forward-thinking, and the work continues to grow. Mayor Johnson shared that he and Sustainability Officer Nylah Oliver just returned from Boston--they were at Harvard with the

Community Data Health Initiative and the African-American Men's Association, which presented the City of Savannah with an award that he and Nylah accepted on behalf of the City Council. He stated people wanted to know about the work we were doing related to our 100% Savannah Plan, environmental health, and data health. Mayor Johnson also shared that the day before, he was in Baltimore at the Local Government For Sustainability conference, and again there were speeches about our 100% Savannah Plan. Savannah is really leading the way among our colleagues across the country on this type of work.

City Manager Melder stated we have been able to grow the work, and environmental health has become an important focus beyond sustainability, which is obviously really important. He thanked City Council for their leadership on that aspect, and Nylah and the team for coming in and embracing it. City Manager Melder stated we have a lot of work to do on environmental health and environmental justice for our residents. City Manager Melder and the Office of Environmental Services & Sustainability, including Sustainability Officer Nyla Oliver, Clean Energy Program Manager Josh Corning, and Project Manager Avni Naik presented an update on 100% Savannah Plan.

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

Ald. Palumbo thanked the Office of Environmental Services & Sustainability for the update. He said, "What a phenomenal team. You all just get it." Ald. Palumbo stated that, after five years, it is time to look at what is next. He shared that the Council first adopted the resolution in March 2020 and how the team found a way to do public engagement at a time when it was very difficult to engage the public. Ald. Palumbo stated they found a way to sustain this effort at a time when top-line administrators may not have supported funding-stream changes, so they pivoted, found a way to continue, and invested locally. Ald. Palumbo told the team they were doing a phenomenal job keeping ahead of changes and riding the different waves of administrations and regulations as they change.

Ald. Bell thanked the Office of Environmental & Sustainability for their engagement with the community and for their presentation.

Ald. Miller Blakely asked the following questions:

- What is "GW"? (Gigawatt-hours)
- Has the team spoken to Georgia Power directly about their commercials advertising decreased power bills? Ms. Oliver responded.
- Could citizens receive produce from the 55 community gardens, 14 of which are on city-owned lots? Ms. Naik responded. Ald. Miller Blakely also asked City Manager Melder for a list of the community gardens. City Manager Melder stated he would provide a list with a point of contact for each community garden.
- Referencing a slide about the Brownfield Revitalization of 20 properties, what are PH I and II ESAs (Environmental Site Assessments), CAP (Corrective Action Plan), and GPR (Ground Penetrating Radar)? Ms. Naik responded.
- In referring to the proposed changes, she asked about the movement of the community economic development category. Ms. Oliver explained.
- Now partnering with community engagement, you talked about engaging with Savannah State, SCAD, and other partners. Have you all considered partnering with ILA Local 1414 and the Ports because, environmentally, the air in that area is not good for the port? Ms. Oliver responded.
- In her response, Ms. Oliver said they received air quality monitors through Brown University, and the focus is on the westside of Savannah. Ald. Miller Blakely asked her to name the sites: Ogeecheeton, Woodville, West Savannah, Old West Lathrop Avenue, and Augusta Avenue--those have not been finalized, but were proposed.

Mayor Johnson stated they discussed expanding the work (the air quality monitors) to specifically measure what young people are dealing with. He stated that there were researchers there who talked about the effects of asthma. So, if they are around community centers and schools, we have a better opportunity to capture data about what kids are inhaling around those places.

Ald. Miller Blakely expressed that she knows for a fact that West Savannah is suffering when it comes to air, noise, and environmental pollution, and she was glad to hear that they are working on it.

Mayor Johnson stated we have known for years that the folks over there were not crazy and that their lived experience made them subject matter experts. So, this (air quality monitors) is really bolstering what they have been telling us, and that is why that work is there. He expressed that as the money, the technical assistance, and our international and national connections come in, we are able to take those resources and funds to those areas of Ogeecheeton, West Savannah, and Hudson Hill to address those things significantly. Hence, the work of environmental justice/health is able to grow because of that lived experience.

Ald. Lanier stated that this work you all are doing has come quite a long way because it started with environmental injustice. The City's attention to this work started with those areas that were called out. She stated she calls those areas ground zero for environmental injustice in this city and maybe in this whole region. Ald. Lanier said, "The City came and saw the advocacy that we had been doing in the Hudson Hill area and decided to invest further into this work until it has led up to what you all are doing now, but what happened?" She expressed that we took the route of sustainability and concentrated there, which is good, current, timely, and a lot of information is out there on that, but we have moved away from focusing through the years on the environment of the EJP. Ald. Lanier stated that looking at the plan and knowing the impact that we have on the environmental pieces, she does not feel the gravity of the environmental injustice piece in this plan is equal to what we are seeing in the community. Ald. Lanier expressed that there was a disconnect somewhere in what is actually happening in these communities: Hudson Hill, Woodville, Carver Village, Ogeecheeton, and Tremont Park are the worst. Our codes and policies have not kept up with the infractions; people have suffered, and we have not responded to ward them off. Ald. Lanier stated she has spoken with management, and they looking to have some work done through our planning department with these new plans that should give us some relief--maybe some overlays that could give some relief as these properties change hands. She stated the plan is heavy on sustainability and resiliency, and that was excellent, but it is not balanced with the gravity of the actual environmental injustice problem we have in this city and on the westside. City Manager Melder responded.

Mayor Johnson mentioned that while in Boston for the Community Data Health Initiative, all they talked about was environmental justice as it related to heat, air, and water. So, the funding opportunities and grants that we are now able to secure are all in that space because that is where the work is leading.

Ald. Lanier stated she was wondering whether the Council knows the gravity of the problems. She suggested that Council take a tour (an open-air tour) to look at those areas and see what people are subjected to--it's critical.

Ald. Miller Blakely stated that when you look at something that says 100% Savannah Plan, she thought it was for the whole city as a whole. So, when you talk about environmental issues, environmental injustices should have been right in the midst of all of that.

Mayor Johnson stated the work started with dealing with renewable energy because it was using carbon fuels that were causing the environmental injustice as it related to air. The intent was that we had to get to a point where Savannah was safe and environmentally healthy, and that was the way we were able to start down that road. Mayor Johnson expressed as the work continues to grow and Savannah's profile continues to be raised, we are also able to now address this through Bloomberg, Harvard, and other places. These funding opportunities are allowing us to now take these funds and use them where we think is best, which is in the environmental justice space. Mayor Johnson stated there are some things we do not control, we cannot control, but there are things that we can control. There is still a need for us to be 100% Savannah, and the reason why we are coming back after 5 years is that now we are able to continue to massage and build out this plan. Mayor Johnson stated our goal is still 100% Savannah citywide, but we have to put the resources, as it relates to environmental justice, where we know the greatest marginalization and need is, which is in West Savannah.

Ald. Palumbo stated we are talking about sustainability, which means we have to talk about everything because it touches everything, but this one started as a renewable clean energy plan. They are asking to pivot a little wider to the built environment, our buildings, the natural environment, which includes our communities, and waste diversion, which is a massive problem. Ald. Palumbo stated that this is larger than what the original plan intended, and they are boldly going where no city has gone before. He stated the team is asking for a little more, so if we have knowledge at this table on how we can do better and do more, let's work with the team--this small but mighty team.

Ald. Wilder stated we are not saying that we are 100%. We are saying that this is a plan that is going to take us where we need to be in Hudson Hill. Ald. Wilder stated her concern was that there are 16 out of the 45 initiatives that are complete. She asked the team to tell the Council about one of the 29 that remain and asked the following questions:

- How do we do something about the other ones that remain?
- How is that going to be measured?
- How are the people going to know that it is complete?

Ald. Wilder also asked about the map showing the location of the electric car charging ports because people wanted to see where those locations were. (The map is on the City's website.)

Mayor Johnson stated the sustainability team is not the 100% Savannah team; it is a sustainability department, and one of its main goals is to implement the 100% Savannah Plan. He stated we have gotten to where environmental justice is an opportunity where we could bring up and do an entirely separate environmental justice plan, if that is what the Council wants to do. Mayor Johnson stated the 100% Savannah plan is still one of our most ambitious goals, and it has value and merit. The good news is that, because of the work we are doing nationally and internationally, there are opportunities to really build out an entire environmental justice plan by itself.

Ald. Miller Blakely asked what we have done to address the environmental injustice that has been happening in West Savannah. City Manager Melder responded.

Ald. Lanier stated it is a classic case study on environmental injustice, who it is done to and where it is done. She stated that while we are patting ourselves on the back for all of this good work that we are doing, we have pivoted from the environmental justice focus to sustainability. Ald. Lanier stated we need to continue this sustainability work; they have done great work. She stated it is unfortunate that we have not had more control over people's quality of life, the sickness, and what has happened to these generations. Now, as we receive better-documented information, that should be part of the dashboard of all the different work everybody is doing, but let's not act like we are doing the best work ever and that we don't have any problems when it comes to environmental injustice. Ald. Lanier stated she gives her support in them continuing the great work on sustainability, but at the same time, we are going to have to do something significant on this environmental justice piece that folks have been suffering with for decades. City Manager Melder responded.

Mayor Johnson stated the conditions have been in place for over 80 years, and most of it has not been caused by the City of Savannah at all. He stated we are acknowledging that we are in the right space, and this is really a challenge to the Council to move further and do more. We need sustainability; we need environmental justice; we could, we should, we must do both. Mayor Johnson stated his hope and expectation of the Council is that the direction to the City Manager is either that we keep it as one plan or that we can break it off. City Manager responded.

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

No executive session was held.

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

[Exhibit 1: Tuesday Night Memo Final 10062026.pdf](#)

No City Manager's Update was held.

Mayor Johnson adjourned the workshop at 1:03 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>



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