



MARCH 27, 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 **11:05 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, asked the Clerk to call the roll, then recognized **Alderman Purtee** to offer prayer. Mayor Johnson requested Council members to hold an executive session, regarding Personnel, Real Estate, and Litigation immediately following the work session during lunch.

PRESENT:

- Mayor Van R. Johnson, II, Presiding
- Alderwoman Carolyn H. Bell, At-Large, Post 1
- Alderwoman Bernetta B. Lanier, District 1
- 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

ABSENT:

- Alderwoman Alicia Miller Blakely, At-Large, Post 2
- Alderman Detric Leggett, District 2

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. SPLOST Projects Update](#)
 - [Exhibit 1: 032725 SPLOST Workshop.pptx](#)
 - [Exhibit 2: 032725 SPLOST 8 Planning City Council Workshop.pdf](#)

Mayor Johnson briefly stated that SPLOST has been the equity driver in the city. The Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) has contributed to many large capital projects such as the EnMarket Arena, fire engines, buildings, etc. He stated that SPLOST has also been very cost effective.

Chief of Information and Public Affairs Joe Shearouse made a presentation regarding the SPLOST Project Update. He stated that it has been one of the greatest tools for municipal government and has been transformative for Savannah (\$700M collected). He reviewed the evolution of SPLOST and its allowable uses. Chief of Community Services Taffanye Young also presented the Planning of SPLOST 8. She shared some local examples of what SPLOST has done locally, within the community (including community development).

Mayor Johnson stated that this is his fourth SPLOST and it is delicate because it is where the administrative and political come together. It must be able to meet the current needs of the city and look towards the future. He suggested looking at opportunities to be visionary and to consider opening a public portal that can help inform residents. For example, fire trucks were purchased in the past with SPLOST dollars, rather than with property tax dollars.

Ald. Bell thanked Joe Shearouse for his presentation and how the history of SPLOST relates to Savannah. She shared that citizens have wondered, "what do you do with that one percent?" She stated that it makes the upcoming SPLOST more meaningful and questioned whether or not to vote on it. She thanked Chief Young for the guidelines for how we proceed. Ald. Bell shared her concern about public input and noted that citizens are the ones that vote on the use of the SPLOST funds. She would like for the public to be well-informed and involved throughout the process so that information is not thrown at them all at once. There are other municipalities to consider besides the county, in addition to the City of Savannah. She stated that it is a negotiated process and she thinks that it is important that the public understands the process and how the final list is approved.

Mayor Pro Tem Dr. Shabazz asked how the City Manager will generate the list of capital needs. She stated that her success from this work occurred when she focused on the constituents' needs and wants, and she was able to put capital improvement projects on the list.

Ald. Palumbo thanked the team for their presentation. He stated that SPLOST is at its best when it can anticipate future challenges and is essential to the function of the city. Some projects can only be tackled by SPLOST because of the funding it provides. He stated that he liked the Mayor's suggestion of grabbing data from people's suggestions and pulling data from Savannah GPS. We are receiving more demand from the community for digital infrastructure, fiber optic cable, and internet options. We also need to develop a new category for coastal resilience.

Mayor Johnson stated that due to the uncertainty in our federal government, monies that we have already received or hope to receive, we need to be in a position of readiness to achieve some of our previous goals on our own. SPLOST allows us the opportunity to do that.

Ald. Wilder-Bryan asked about the leftover funds from previous SPLOST funding. She asked City Manager Melder if we can unpark the remaining funds and reallocate them to other related capital projects. (YES).

Ald. Wilder-Bryan asked whether constituents would have an opportunity to address any past concerns regarding SPLOSTs that were not approved. She also stated that people need to understand that when they vote for SPLOST, more money is available for lighting, drainage, sidewalks, etc. Skidaway is suffering due to minimal lighting, sidewalks, etc.; however, people are pleased with DeLesseps and it looks like a different street. Ald. Wilder-Bryan commended the capital projects and budgeting departments for their contributions. She asked how does the parking, utility, and revenue departments have a surplus of money. She heard that years ago in a prior administration some money was moved and she inquired if that was doable. We are being creative to make good government good. The City Manager advised that they were inter-organizational loans.

Ald. Lanier stated that she has seen the positive impact that SPLOST has had in the community. She can attest to the drainage improvements that were made on the westside, especially from

SPLOST 1, 2, and 3. It seems that we are now behind the growth curve, with new roads and construction especially due to increased population. We may need to tweak and apply the tools towards infrastructure needs. She has nothing new to add to the SPLOST list because she is facing the same complaints at the neighborhood meetings (District 1) related to economic development and infrastructure. She is glad that this council has the opportunity to compile a list for the referendum and knows that this will allow residents to see the positive impact in their communities.

Mayor Johnson stated that context is key. The individuals who complain are the same ones that visit community centers, neighborhoods, and enjoy community development projects built by SPLOST. It is important to remind people what SPLOST is and what it means for the future.

Ald. Purtee thanked the Mayor for his comments. City of Savannah has done some things well, by making the necessary purchases and investments. But it can be a hard sell when we still struggle with the back-to-basics infrastructure needs (i.e. pot holes). We need to maintain the investments and projects that we have put SPLOST money into. For example, Windsor Forest has struggled with flooding, sidewalks and street maintenance for years; the same applies to Wilshire and Sweetwater. It is all over the city and we need to be more diligent with the investments that we have.

Mayor Johnson stated that good process yields good results. Do our front work and SPLOST will sell itself. Let us give the residents something that they can highly support.

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

Mayor Johnson recessed the work session at 12:19 p.m.

Mayor Pro Tem Dr. Shabazz moved to hold an Executive Session regarding Real Estate, Litigation, and Personnel, seconded by Ald. Lanier. The motion passed unanimously, 9-0-0.

The Executive Session began at 12:35 p.m. All members were present, including the City Manager, City Attorney, and Clerk of Council. The Executive Session was adjourned at 1:27 p.m.

[3. City Manager's Agenda Review](#)

There was no agenda review.

No action was taken during the executive session, and both meetings were adjourned at 1:27 p.m., upon its conclusion.

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>

