



NOVEMBER 13, 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 was held at **12:02 p.m.**, in the 2nd Floor Media Room. Mayor Johnson called the meeting to order, then recognized Ald. Carolyn H. Bell to offer a prayer.

PRESENT:

- Mayor Van R. Johnson, II, Presiding
- Aldermwoman Carolyn H. Bell, At-Large, Post 1
- Aldermwoman Alicia Miller Blakely, At-Large, Post 2
- Aldermwoman Bernetta B. Lanier, District 1
- Alderman Detric Leggett, District 2
- Aldermwoman Linda Wilder-Bryan, District 3 - Vice Chair
- Alderman Nick Palumbo, District 4 - Chairman
- Aldermwoman Dr. Estella Edwards Shabazz, District 5 - Mayor Pro Tem

ABSENT:

- Alderman Kurtis Purtee, District 6 - Chairman

ALSO, PRESENT:

- Assistant City Manager Taffanye Young
- Chief of Staff Daphanie Williams
- City Attorney Bates Lovett
- Clerk of Council Mark Massey
- Deputy Clerk of Council Gwendolyn Jones

Workshop Agenda Items

- [1. Public Art Master Plan Update](#)
- [1. Public Art Master Plan Presentation.pdf](#)

Mayor Johnson briefly discussed the United Way Campaign and the reopening of the federal government prior to deferring to Assistant City Manager Taffanye Young to present agenda items.

Assistant City Manager Young provided a short overview of the Public Art Master Plan. Following the overview, Assistant City Manager Young welcomed Cultural Resources Director Stuart Miller to introduce Designing Local Managing Principal/Co-founder Amanda Golden, who presented the Public Art Master Plan.

Following the presentation, there were questions and comments from members of the City Council:

Ald. Bell stated that she suspected that after she reads it thoroughly and has more discussions, she would be convinced that this warrants a separate commission from the Cultural Arts Commission.

Ald. Wilder-Bryan stated that what she found missing (from the presentation) was the most integral part, and that was the citizens. She stated that if we want our citizens to be an integral part of this process, there should be a place somewhere (in the presentation) where we have contacted the neighborhood presidents and associations to make sure they are a part of the key element to make this work.

Assistant City Manager Young, Director Miller, and Ms. Golden answered the following questions that were asked by Ald. Wilder-Bryan:

- How was the plan going to be incorporated so that it would be beneficial to the people in all the districts? And if we do roll this out, how about we start with the 6th district and work our way up to the 1st district?
- Who is going to ultimately be responsible for maintenance?
- Why do we have to have another commission when we have bureau chiefs and directors?

Ald. Leggett asked how public art will connect with our youth initiative services and the leisure services bureau. He also stated he wanted to make sure we talk about Savannah's local artists and the ethnic pieces of these different communities. Although the community has been gentrified, and with the historical portions of our communities and the ethnic piece that is attached to it, we want to make sure that the art that goes in (the community) does not hide or dispel what the community has really built. Ald. Leggett stated that this is why we asked for the community piece to give the historical portion of it, so it is not overlooked.

Ald. Leggett expressed his concern regarding the art located at the WaterWorks building not being maintained and how it was distasteful to people who were represented in the artwork. Ald. Leggett stated that we have to have a maintenance program that is going to protect these things.

Ald. Leggett further stated that he wanted to have a conversation with public transit to discuss how public transit is going to be a part of public art. He stated that Chatham Area Transit has a vision for how they would like to spruce up the bus stops and make those things look good as a part of their engagement with the community. Ald. Leggett stated that he wanted to make sure that with every step and effort that is made there is a holistic plan for the entire community, and not leaving out the most important part of the community, which is the people, the communities, and the gateways in which it holds.

Ald. Lanier stated it seems as though we are trying to recreate something that already exists. She asked if staff, our partners, or anyone at the table knew the subject of creative placemaking. (Yes). Ald. Lanier stated that is where the public meets urban planning. She stated that if that is our community benefit strategic approach, this project in the arts should be resident-driven and system-led, and we have a system in place, our new strategic plan, that dictates this is the way we move. Ald. Lanier stated the artwork is organic, that bubbles up from the areas in the communities, and not a top-down approach that we have practiced in the past. She stated that it would have been a good idea if the council had some input prior to the meeting.

Ald. Lanier asked whether the policy would govern artwork that impacts the public but sits on private property. Director Miller stated that the public art plan is for public art that is on public property. Ald. Lanier asked what policy we have that governs artwork on private property. Ms. Golden responded regarding limitations on the part of the City with respect to private properties.

Ald. Miller Blakely asked how this plays in with the Historic Sites and Monuments Commission because they are doing the same thing we are getting ready to do--creating an Art Commission. She stated that to her, it seemed redundant. Ald. Miller Blakely further expressed her concern regarding hiring an art administrative position when we already have a Historic Sites and Monuments Commission. She asked why we are doing something like this and stated she does not see why we need to spend money on a new commission and position when we already have that in place. Director Miller and Assistant City Manager Young responded.

Ald. Miller Blakely stated she looked at where the community workshops were and noticed that for District 5, it was in Liberty City, and in District 6, it was at the Crusader Neighborhood. She stated she thinks that staff need to go into areas that people do not normally go to have these meetings, namely the Middleground Road area.

Ald. Bell expressed her concern regarding the new public art administrative assistant within Cultural Resources. She stated that she was led to believe that the position is not necessarily a new position, and she does not want to be led to believe that approving this policy would create a new position. Assistant City Manager Young provided an explanation.

Ald. Lanier asked if the council had been notified. She stated that it seemed that we are now really focusing on this, and maybe there was a step missing. Ald. Lanier asked, once they had an opportunity to hear of this today, can we do these again (community meetings) because she would like to have helped get people there, and even go and be involved. Assistant City Manager replied.

Ald. Palumbo stated that we have talked about the areas of improvement in which he agreed, but the two things that he is hearing the consensus that we want more public art and we want it citywide, and a better process. He stated that for the Historic Sites and Monuments, it may be beyond their scope. Ald. Palumbo thanked staff for their effort and looks forward to meeting with them over the next week or a little longer.

Ald. Wilder-Bryan stated that we have a new marketing director and the problem she has is that we have all these great ideas and they never get rolled out into the community. She stated that we should incorporate our marketing department in getting more information out.

Mayor Pro Tem Dr. Shabazz stated that she agreed with all of her colleagues. She stated that equity needs to be spread across the board and throughout our entire city. Mayor Pro Tem Dr. Shabazz stated that we have to be inclusive of everybody's story and art expertise. She stated that this is a good thing.

[2. Housing Development Update](#)

[2. Housing Development.pdf](#)

Assistant City Manager Young stated that we have had a recent series of meetings and had a chance to see all of the incredible progress that has been happening over the last two years. She stated we had a wonderful bookend when we were out at Dundee Cottages, and had a chance to see that community coming to life. Assistant City Manager Young introduced Housing Senior Director Martin Fretty to present. He then introduced CHSA Executive Director Anita Smith-Dixon and Chatham Savannah Land Bank Authority Director Alison Goldey, who also presented.

Following the presentation, there were questions and comments from members of the City Council:

Ald. Wilder-Bryan thanked the community partners. She stated she is so appreciative of Sr. Director Martin Fretty and the Housing Services department. Ald. Wilder-Bryan stated we are doing amazing things with Team Savannah.

Mayor Pro Tem Dr. Shabazz thanked the staff for listening to the council in reference to the medical frail housing. She also wanted to thank Ald. Lanier and her constituents and all involved for the new development in the Ogeecheeton community on Dawes Avenue where there are 30 new homes specifically for families experiencing existing homelessness and/or at risk of being homeless. Mayor Pro Tem Dr. Shabazz stated that she and Ald. Lanier worked

together and did not misstep on Dawes Avenue. She also thanked Sr. Director Bridget Lidy for keeping us on course with this.

Ald. Leggett asked Assistant City Manager Young if we could play the presentation on channel 8 (SGTV) as much as possible. He asked if, anytime we have these PowerPoints and presentations, could we find a way, with the Public Information office, to put them on our sites or even give them to the council, and then we could put them on our social media because of all the good things that are happening. He stated that now that we have a new marketing director, Aurelle, and our team, he looks forward to them using some amazing things to highlight what we do. Ald. Leggett stated that this is the kind of stuff that the community wants to see on our public information channel.

Mayor Johnson stated he wanted to thank the council. He stated that our folks were able to work within their strengths and talents (Anita Dixon-Smith, Taffanye Young, Martin Fretty, Alison Goldey, and all those involved) to just get things done in a significant way. Mayor Johnson stated that, as much as we see improvement, we still see blighted properties, and he asked if we could do a huge public service campaign of saying, "If you have a property that is tied up, come see us." He stated that the eminent domain process has been an effective way for us to help families clear title and help them to have dinner together again. Mayor Johnson stated that with the holidays coming, he believes it is a good time to get the families talking, and he asked the council about doing an end-of-the-year blitz public communication campaign by saying, "Hey, call us and let us see what we can do for your individual situation." Mayor Johnson stated Let us help these folks and help us at the same time.

Ald. Palumbo stated that the Mayor's idea was a great idea, and he also mentioned assisting with any estate planning services as a public resource and public utility, just like we do for credit assistance or otherwise. He stated that, with the budget coming up, he did not know if there were any non-profit entities that could support this.

Ald. Lanier stated the Affordable Housing Fund has been a great tool for us. She stated she had the opportunity to sit on the Step-Up Board, where they created that fund and turned it over to the City. Ald. Lanier stated that it is what they all had envisioned it to be, and she is sure that we can do even more. She stated she had questions about the Georgia Port Authorities' contribution, and stated it would be good to know how that money is helping the portside communities.

Ald. Lanier stated she and Mayor Pro Tem Dr. Shabazz have been working and having quite a few meetings, Ald. Bell has also been in attendance regarding the plans that are coming to Ogeecheeton and Dawes. She explained that the area is located in two districts, and they were working on trying to find a balance by talking to City Manager Melder and staff about some of the asks from Ogeecheeton. Ald. Lanier stated that one of the main things is an access road because the new road creates more of a hindrance for them--one way in and one way out, and the one way out only allows you to make a right turn. She stated they also need an area plan because there are some environmental issues, growth and development, and there are industrial plots that have been intrusive.

Ald. Lanier stated that when we talk about the project at 916 MLK, that was a big issue when that property was decided to be demolished because it is very historic. She stated that when we talk about it, although it is gone; let us at least acknowledge the history and culture connection to the Savannah Pharmacy site. Ald. Lanier stated she was glad that they are doing that work over at the Charity Hospital on Florence Street because that was an area the council had received a lot of complaints about maintenance, but had not received them lately. She further stated that the Kiah house looks great and it is a community asset, and that her only concern is that the community benefits from the asset, and they do not feel so foreign to the asset.

Ald. Miller Blakely thanked Housing Services for their presentation and was happy to see the partners. She asked for housing services to talk about home repairs often. Ald. Miller Blakely asked for a list of the minority firms from the Landbank Authority and to explain how the Landbank Authority works to the public. She also asked what happened to the tenants who

lived at Mercy Housing. (Sr Director Martin Fretty stated he could follow up and check.) Ald. Miller Blakely also asked when the construction would be completed. (6 months).

Ald. Bell thanked everyone for what they are doing and stated they are doing an amazing job.

Ald. Lanier stated we have had conversations about modular houses and container villages, so we look to have some innovation, and she was sure staff are looking toward some innovation, and asked that they look at doing something transitional.

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

There was no executive session held.

[4. City Manager Updates](#)

There was no City Manager's update held.

Mayor Johnson adjourned the workshop/executive session at 1:47 p.m.

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>

