



FEBRUARY 27, 2025 - 12:30 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 **12:37 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, and he requested Council members to hold an executive session regarding personnel and litigation, immediately following the work session.

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

Clerk of Council Mark Massey

Assistant to Clerk of Council Renee Osborne

Workshop Agenda Items

[1. 2025 St. Patrick's Day Major Special Event Briefing](#)

Members of the Special Events Taskforce for St. Patrick's Day was introduced by City Manager Melder and presented by Faye DiMassimo (Chief of Planning and Economic Development), Sgt. Jason Pagliaro (Savannah Police Department), and Judee Jones (Director of Department of Revenue). A new approach has been taken to the parade this year especially due to the large amounts of incidents that have been happening throughout the country. Their presentation focused on enhanced security, event preparation matters, the coordination of deputy marshals,

availability of port-o-potties, effective litter clean-up, and a public-facing interfacing map link. Road closures, impacted areas, and parade routes will populate within the map.

Sgt. Pagliaro discussed that public safety for the St. Patrick's Day events in the community primarily focused on the city market area, Ellis Square, and the River Street-Bay Street area. Extended consumption of alcohol will be allowed on St. Patrick's Day only in designated areas (i.e. open containers permitted). No alcohol sales from on-street vendors will be permitted (inside establishments only). The same restrictions that have been in place every year for the past 20 years will apply. To step up protection, Special Threat Assessment partners will also come in from the FBI for additional security.

Judee Jones from Revenue presented information in connection with the Alcohol Beverage Compliance Unit (ABC). Their main goals will be to ensure that alcohol establishments comply with Alcohol Beverage ordinances, to develop new working relationships with managers and employees, and provide educational information during visits. She shared a festival event activity schedule (beginning March 11 - March 17th). The schedule will include a meeting with stakeholders and random establishment inspections. Non-alcohol fixed location vendors must comply (food trucks and tents) as well as be monitored and inspected to be sure that they are in compliance.

City Manager Melder stated that there are a number of things that we have to consider when hosting a large event like St. Patrick's Day. We want to show transparency not only with our rules on safety but also about the enforcement hours for ABC. It is important that all alcohol establishments know that the City will be enforcing its ordinances. More information will be presented in press conferences about street closures, security measures, and clean-up services; information will also be conveyed to downtown residents due to the disruption in downtown neighborhoods. Mailers are a new feature this year and will be placed on every door to inform residents of towing enforcement and other key information.

Mayor Johnson thanked the team for their efforts. This is an annual event, and although we have been successful in past years, we can never be too careful. We are only one incident away from having a disaster. Our radar is up but we will continue to maintain contact with our state, federal, local partners, and social media platforms to monitor the events. The City wants to have visitors come to the city to enjoy themselves, have their spirits lifted, and return home safely. He acknowledged his Deputy Assistant, Marty Johnson, who had experience in this area as well.

Ald. Palumbo thanked the team for their presentation. He commented that we all need to be mindful of the event that occurred in New Orleans earlier this year. We need to be more vigilant and prepared for any contingency.

May Pro Tem Dr. Shabazz voiced the seriousness of resident and visitor safety. She said, continue to plan, come to Savannah and enjoy, we will keep you safe. She also referred to the "control zone" restrictions during the St. Patrick's Day Festival and revisited the prohibited items, such coolers, unruly animals, fireworks, etc. She asked about the rideshare period and how long it would last. Mobility & Parking Services Director Sean Brandon stated that it will be from 10:00 p.m. to 5:00 a.m., from Friday into Monday evening. The times are targeted so that they can allow flexibility to residents as they move about (geofences). She asked for clarification for the public about the Jasper Green Parade; it will begin on Sunday at 3:00 p.m. and run from Johnson Square to Madison Square.

Ald. Bell asked if there will be a safe parking/guarded area for bicycles. Sgt. Pagliaro responded that there would be no issues as long as individuals are locking their bikes up appropriately and not riding them around crowds.

Ald. Miller Blakely asked Judee Jones about the alcohol license compliance and the red-cup zone parameters. Judee Jones responded that it extended to Bull and Victory Drive and will only be for Monday, March 17th -St. Patrick's Day.

Mayor Johnson said we can expect huge crowds on the weekend as there will be an ebb and flow due to having an off weekend parade (Monday) vs. a on weekend parade. We can anticipate a slightly smaller crowd on parade day because it's a regular business day, as well as a school day. The Mayor asked if we had coordinated with the school system. As Bay Street is a

major thoroughfare and most of downtown will be unavailable, what alternatives are available? Sgt. Pagliaro stated that Bay Street would remain open until about 9:15 a.m. to allow people time to get around.

Ald. Wilder-Bryan stated that last year SPD conducted visible roll calls, the people enjoyed it and were able to see who was protecting them. She heard about the 275+ officers who would be available but not about the deputy marshals (it should be equitable). Judee Jones responded there are currently 30 deputy marshals from various city departments. Ald. Wilder-Bryan stated that there are pros and cons to the water barricades. She said that anyone with a large truck could go through them and asked why concrete barricades had not been considered, especially when there are lives at stake. She asked that messaging be clear to our residents.

Sgt. Pagliaro explained that concrete requires heavy equipment to move it into place and to remove it at the conclusion of the event. For extra protection more than one barricade is placed (doubling up allows for the same effect as concrete).

Ald. Leggett asked if the neighborhood leaders surrounding the festival area have been made aware of the challenges that they may face. City Manager Melder responded that they will coordinate with them as well via the mailers and weekly meetings. Ald. Leggett stated that the trash receptacles will be placed strategically for trash and for security. City Manager Melder will follow up on the Sanitation Department disposal schedule as well as the Yamacraw area parking issue so that residents there can park. Ald. Leggett also asked about the City's plan for the homeless during the festival. The subsequent meeting with the Homeless Authority will address that further. Shuttles will continue to run with the exception of the DOT Shuttle that runs around Drayton Street.

Ald. Bell commented that she has always been impressed with the Sanitation Team and how closely they follow the parade and their amazing clean up effort.

Mayor Johnson stated that we need all hands on deck and that this is our "Super Bowl".

[2. Interagency Council on Homelessness \(ICH\) Strategic Plan](#)

The Interagency Council on Homelessness (ICH) Team gave a presentation on their Five-Year Strategic Plan to End Homelessness. The participating team members were: Executive Director of Savannah-Chatham County Interagency on Homelessness Stephanie Kaple, Chair and executive member of CSAH (Chatham Savannah Authority for the Homeless) Karen Guinn, Vice-Chair Jennifer Davenport, and Homeless Authority Chief Executive Officer Jennifer DuLong. The agency's goal is to achieve functional zero which means that homelessness is rare, brief, and non reoccurring. The city and county are able to provide the correct service(s) to make it limited to the amount of time that a person spends in that experience. They were also able to survey 112 people and 23 families who were experiencing homelessness as part of the research.

There are six goals with measurable outcomes as part of the plan. The team also looked to establish the role of the (ICH) in the community, strengthen the role of our lead agency, CSAH, and to adopt a management encampment policy. Jennifer DuLong spoke about the Homeless Authority Outreach Team and working with Chief Gavin (SPD) and Chief Gunther (SPD), and being specific about working with homeless individuals in various areas around the city to be sure that they have been offered services.

Mayor Johnson stated that he thought that the Homeless Authority was the CoC (Continuum of Care). City Manager Melder explained that the CoC is a federal designation from the U.S. Department of HUD that defines the area that receives federal funding to support homelessness efforts. CoC requires a board for which in Savannah-Chatham County is the ICH Board. Every CoC usually has a joint partner/collaborative applicant, for our area is CSAH.

Ald. Leggett asked for an alternative for individuals who do not wish to participate with any of the services. Public spaces are for everyone as long as those individuals are obeying the laws. Ald. Leggett addressed Mayor Johnson and stated that he hopes that whatever options are available to the homeless currently would continue going forward and throughout the rest of the year (not only for St. Patrick's Day).

Mayor Johnson stated that in our city we would not criminalize homelessness.

Ald. Miller Blakely asked each of the team members to introduce themselves and their positions with the Homeless Authority. She asked for clarification on the act to amend CSAH and to specify the role of the organization for the public.

Mayor Johnson thanked Karen Guinn (out-going Chair) for her work efforts as we are now moving together as one team.

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

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

There was no action taken during the Workshop.

Mayor Johnson recessed the work session at 1:54 p.m.

Mayor Pro Tem Dr. Shabazz moved to close the work session and hold an executive session regarding litigation and personnel, seconded by Ald. Palumbo and Ald. Miller Blakely. The motion passed unanimously, 9-0-0.

The executive session began at 1:55 p.m. All members were present, including the City Manager, City Attorney, and Clerk of Council.

At 2:00 p.m., Mayor Pro Tem Dr. Shabazz moved to end/adjourn the executive session regarding litigation and personnel, seconded by Mayor Johnson. The motion passed by unanimous consent.

No action was taken, and the workshop was adjourned, upon conclusion of the executive session.

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>

