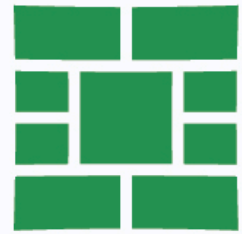


SAVANNAH

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MARCH 26, 2026 - 3:30 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 **3:40 p.m.**, in the 2nd Floor Media Room. Mayor Johnson, called the meeting to order, then recognized Ald. Kurtis Purtee 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-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
 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. Savannah Parking Matters Update Discussion](#)

City Manager Melder provided a brief overview of the parking matters update. He then introduced Parking & Mobility Sr. Director Sean Brandon and Ralph DeNisco to present the parking matters update.

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

Mayor Johnson stated that about two or three councils ago, particularly with the parking meter study, the council adopted half of what was recommended, but it created issues on the other end--people wised up and figured it out. Mayor Johnson expressed that meters make people move; otherwise, people will park their car and will stay parked there all weekend long because they can get around other ways. He stated that he wanted to make sure that we do not make that same error again.

Ald. Palumbo stated he thinks this is a massively undervalued tool in the movement of people. He stated that how people park, move, and access our city really does matter. Ald. Palumbo asked the following questions, to which Sr. Director Brandon responded.

- What is the operating goal or objective in the update?
- Have we achieved or set an objective for what we want to achieve with parking?
- Do we have an operational metric that we are going by, a mantra?

Ald. Palumbo asked what we are trying to achieve in the movement of people to make it easier to access the businesses and protect the residents. He stated we have talked a lot about what we are doing in the study itself, but before the council makes a decision, he wanted the council to understand what it was going to strategically achieve, not the unintended consequences, but the intended ones, by updating it, providing meters or access points. Ald. Palumbo stated that we know it is a problem that needs to be addressed, as there is more demand than ever before, and asked how we could channel that to the best result.

Ald. Lanier stated that we are experiencing growing pains, and that is why we have these issues. She stated that there was a time when local people converged on downtown to pay bills, shop, hang out, etc., but the demographics and patterns are changing. Ald. Lanier stated she thinks to take the pressure off of downtown, we have to start thinking about hubs, about putting more resources in areas where people do not have to drive so far to go to the grocery store, run errands, or do things people ordinarily do.

Ald. Lanier mentioned the removal of the buses from downtown and how it impacted the local community. She then mentioned the Downtowner (a free, on-demand ride service provided by the City of Savannah). Ald. Lanier stated that Sr. Director Brandon talked about the workers who would park further so they could park for free and walk to work. She stated she thought that the reason for the council investing in the Downtowner was to be able to assist those people by getting them closer to their jobs. Ald. Lanier asked how the Downtowner was working, how we are able to gauge that we are assisting the population of workers, and whether there was something in place that allowed us to measure other than the driver's estimates. Sr. Director Brandon responded.

Mayor Johnson stated he wanted to congratulate this council. He stated the council wanted to make sure that they were not just shuttling around tourists. Mayor Johnson stated the services were extended into the neighborhoods in which he personally knows seniors who consider the service a lifeline. It is free of charge because the council subsidizes that travel, particularly for people who are in the service industry who may not make as much. Mayor Johnson stated he received very good compliments for it (the Downtowner) from citizens.

Ald. Leggett mentioned that we moved the DOT Shuttle west, and the shuttle is now going into Cloverdale and Carver Village to address the needs of those individuals who need to go to certain places downtown. He further stated that we have always had issues with Harris Street because there is a large number of Airbnb and short-term vacation rentals in that area. Ald. Leggett stated that when someone goes to work on Thursday and comes back home, there is no place to park in a two to three-block radius.

Ald. Leggett referenced his travel to conferences in D.C., where he saw residents who placed placards on their cars that allowed them to park in metered parking spaces. He asked if we were going to start that soon with residents to test areas that are really pressured like, Harris Street, or in the areas that we have meters. Ald. Leggett also asked if we were also looking at high construction areas where construction sites have dumpsters that take four parking spaces away from the residents. Sr. Director Brandon responded. Ald. Leggett stated he did not want us to put ourselves in the position where we really do not address the elephant in the room, which would be the parking taken by SCAD students, the St. Vincent issue that is going to always

be on the table, and the Savannah Classical issue at Anderson St. and on 37th Street. He stated we really have to enforce, and if that means we have to hire more people and incentivize people who want to work those shifts. Sr. Director Brandon responded.

Ald. Leggett stated that he wanted to make sure that the residents, who live in the area, are considered when we put the placards out, and we give enough information to the neighborhood association. Sr. Director Brandon explained how a residential sticker program works in conjunction with metered spaces.

Ald. Bell stated that she welcomed the program. She stated one thing that was not mentioned, which only exacerbates the problem, is what happens to those residents who live around Forsyth Park when people from all over the city come to the park. She stated they have to park somewhere, so they spill over into the neighborhood.

Ald. Miller Blakely stated she could remember growing up here in Savannah and having a transit system that was so awesome. She stated that she looks around our city now and she sees more SCAD buses than she does Chatham Area Transit (CAT) buses. Ald. Miller Blakely asked what was happening with our transit system. She stated she thinks that if our transit system was up to par, like it should be, we would not have a lot of these parking issues because people would want to ride the bus. So, what are we going to do to address that issue, which will eventually alleviate some of the problems with parking? Mayor Johnson stated that it is out of the council's purview to talk about.

Mayor Pro Tem Dr. Shabazz commended the work that Sr. Director Brandon and his staff have been doing over the years, especially with the Downtowner. She stated that when the council talked about the Downtowner years ago, it was a concern and a problem about our citizens who were working late and who needed a ride either from downtown to the parking garages or wherever their destinations were. Mayor Pro Tem Dr. Shabazz stated, in reference to parking, what we are seeing over at Cann Park are folks who have these campers or some folks who are living in their vehicles. They are parking in the residential areas. She stated she wanted to put that on the table, so we can keep our eyes on it and keep enforcement regular by paying attention to those vehicles that are parked there for a long time. Mayor Pro Tem Dr. Shabazz also mentioned the Bingville Community area, which is north of Victory Drive. She stated there are some minor issues in that area.

Ald. Wilder-Bryan asked the following questions, to which Sr. Director Brandon and Mr. DeNisco responded:

- What is the significant difference from the study that was done 10 years ago?
- What are you trying to do now that you were not able to do 10 years ago?
- What is going to be different?
- What is your battle cry that we do differently so that we can eliminate the problems?

Ald. Wilder-Bryan stated that we want to always incorporate other parts of the city. She stated she would like to see the associated ordinances before the council votes on them. Ald. Wilder-Bryan also asked about the budget for Parking and Mobility to employ other people. City Manager Melder responded.

Ald. Lanier asked about the parking spaces within Forsyth Park. Sr. Director Brandon stated the spaces over by the restaurant would potentially be metered, but not the ones in the parking lot at this point. Ald. Lanier also asked about expanding the DOT into our westside neighborhoods. She stated we went with Cloverdale and Carver Village, but there are quite a few residents in West Savannah who walk downtown early in the morning. Ald. Lanier asked how we could bring that into the conversation and let them ride for free. Mayor Johnson replied.

Ald. Palumbo publicly commended Sr. Director Sean Brandon. He stated that Mr. Brandon was truly one of our city's finest public servants. Ald. Palumbo stated he was ready to bring it forward.

Mayor Johnson stated he thinks it behooves the council to follow the recommendations to their natural conclusion, and the council should at least follow it through. He stated that what they

put forward has been well-thought-out, and it encompasses the science as opposed to how people feel about it.

Ald. Miller Blakely asked when they are going to talk about including other areas of the city. City Manager Melder responded.

Ald. Bell asked for a timeline. City Manager Melder responded.

Ald. Wilder-Bryan stated that this is good government, and anything that we can do to change the quality of life for our citizens, we need to move forward on it.

Mayor Johnson asked where the parking matters are in terms of the Savannah GPS. City Manager responded. Mayor Johnson stated that we are unanimously clear on where we should move forward.

[2. Savannah Moves Plan Update Discussion](#)

City Manager Melder stated the presentation would provide the council with an update on the overall citywide progress in the schedule leading up to the council's consideration of Savannah Moves later this year. He then turned it over to Chief of Planning & Economic Development Faye DiMassimo, Department of Transportation Sr. Director Henry Stephens, and the consultant with Kimley-Horn, Christopher Marsengill, to talk through Savannah Moves.

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

Ald. Palumbo stated the area between Stevenson, Montgomery Crossroads, White Bluff, and Waters Avenue is our heaviest commercial and office district. There are people who live there, transient people, soldiers, and multi-family housing. He stated that he knows it is the most challenging one that is out there, but it's got to be in there.

Ald. Wilder-Bryan stated we have a master plan, and she is glad that the Ground Zero and the GPS are in sync with our master plan. She asked if there was something that we did not capture with GPS in order for us to move forward on this. Ald. Wilder-Bryan stated we went through all the districts, but what is the missing part? City Manager Melder and Chief DiMassimo responded.

Mayor Pro Tem Dr. Shabazz commended everyone for the work that has been done to get us to this point and stated, "Let's go."

Ald. Lanier expressed her appreciation for the staff hearing her by adding the bypass road in the Woodville community to this study. She stated that this is a critical piece for the Woodville community because they cannot continue to exit there with the crossroad and the industrial traffic coming through there. Ald. Lanier also asked about the parking on 37th Street: are we going to have parking on 37th and two lanes, or one lane and parking? Chief DiMassimo responded.

Ald. Lanier asked, since Vision Zero is now included in the Savannah Moves project, what type of priority was that getting? She stated she has neighborhoods that have been requesting some of these measures for many years, and they have nothing as far as traffic calming. Ald. Lanier asked if the process was the same or if they needed to edit the process? Chief DiMassimo and Sr. Director Stephens responded.

Ald. Lanier stated that one of the priorities here is to drive economic growth. She stated we have all of these coordination organizations, but she does not see anyone there that could adequately speak to the situation and some of the problems on the westside. Ald. Lanier stated she wanted to add the Ivory Bay Community Development Corporation to the coordination committee so we could have some people there who have been working with the issues in these communities for quite some time. Chief DiMassimo stated they will reach out and add them to the committee. Mayor Johnson stated there are some other voices he would like to add as well.

Ald. Leggett asked if we were thinking about what is going to happen with the ferries and the ferry expansion as the bridge goes through its transformation in the next couple of months.

Chief DiMassimo stated we are working actively with GDOT and all the partners, including CAT, about how the construction time frame is going to be managed. It is a four-year-long project and would definitely have an impact.

Ald. Wilder-Bryan asked the City Manager for a completion date for the project on Delesseps. City Manager Melder responded.

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

There was no Executive Session held.

[4. City Manager Updates; As Needed](#)

There was no City Manager's update held.

Mayor Johnson adjourned the workshop at 5:52 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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