



SEPTEMBER 11, 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 and City Manager’s briefing was held at **12:02 p.m.**, in the 2nd Floor Media Room. Mayor Johnson called the meeting to order, then recognized Alderman Kurtis Purtee to offer a prayer. Mayor Johnson asked for a moment of silence in remembrance of 9/11.

PRESENT:

- Mayor Van R. Johnson, II, Presiding
- Alderdwoman Carolyn H. Bell, At-Large, Post 1
- Alderdwoman Alicia Miller Blakely, At-Large, Post 2
- Alderdwoman Bernetta B. Lanier, District 1
- Alderman Detric Leggett, District 2
- Alderdwoman Linda Wilder-Bryan, District 3 - Vice Chair
- Alderdwoman Dr. Estella Edwards Shabazz, District 5 - Mayor Pro Tem
- Alderman Kurtis Purtee, District 6

ABSENT:

- Alderman Nick Palumbo, District 4 - Chairman

ALSO, PRESENT:

- City Manager Jay Melder
- Assistant City Manager Taffanye Young
- Chief of Staff Daphanie Williams
- City Attorney Bates Lovett
- Deputy Clerk of Council Gwendolyn Jones
- Assistant to the Clerk of Council Renee Osborne

Workshop Agenda Items

[1. 100 Days of Summer Recap](#)

Mayor Johnson asked for a moment of silence in observance of 9/11.

Chief Lenny Gunther and Assistant Chief Robert Gavin updated/recapped Council on the 100 Days of Summer 2025 from a law enforcement perspective. Chief Gunther thanked the Mayor and Council members for their continued support.

City Manager Melder stated that Fire Chief Kitchen was unable to attend the workshop but noted that the fire department held several summer programs that were a part of the 100 Days of Summer.

Ald. Purtee asked Chief Gunther to provide the age ranges of the shooting victims for 2025. He also asked for the known suspect ages. Ald. Purtee stated how much he appreciated the department for what they do. He shared that they do a thankless job and that they have his support.

Ald. Wilder-Bryan thanked the chiefs for being visible and proactive at the vigils for the victims (Chevonte Pitts and Alexis Milton, Jr.) and at the homegoing services. She also thanked them for being reachable and willing to work out of the box.

Ald. Miller Blakely thanked Chief Gunther, Chief Gavin, and Chief Adams for being a phone call away. She loved that they conducted the girls' camp and asked what they needed to be able to increase the number of girls (10 participated). Is it money or funds? Chief Gunther stated that they primarily needed support to promote the event (word-of-mouth). Ald. Miller Blakely asked, what about the boys? She also asked why there were only 5 licenses reinstated. She personally spoke with the District Attorney in reference to the expungement program.

Ald. Miller Blakely stated that one coach was recruited for the back-to-school bash and wondered if volunteers were needed. In the programs that are offered, Ald. Miller Blakely shared her concern for the teaching of life skills and soft skills, especially customer service skills - many of our kids are into their devices. Will there be a program to cover things like that in place? (Savannah Impact Program covers job interviewing skills but they can look into offering other classes as well) The Building Bridges Program with Ms. Lumley has a program that takes young men off the streets (39th & Waters Avenue area); she has gotten them jobs with Home Depot and Lowe's. Ald. Miller Blakely suggested reaching out to use Ms. Lumley as a resource for young men, especially those involved in gang/gun violence.

Ald. Leggett stated that he appreciated the department's Roll Call in the Streets and the Beyond the Badge for the girls' camp by using the younger officers to mentor them. He noticed the benefit of the officers working in the community and with the ONSE program to encourage youth. Ald. Leggett asked if SPD was currently working with the public schools' police department to move kids along in the process. Ald. Leggett stated that he spoke with Ald. Purtee about a brand new issue regarding expulsions and getting young people back into the community - do we have an alternative plan? He also asked if the current intel has been beneficial? (yes)

Ald. Lanier thanked them for the presentation and asked Ald. Purtee what his question was? She asked what age ranges of the violent crimes offenders attributed to the percentage. (16+) Ald. Lanier stated that we have to tie the 100 Days of Summer to police work. She recommended making adjustments/correlations to the current numbers and programs. She asked if we were spending more on recreation and recreational programs - these numbers are supposed to be used as management tools. She asked if we had looked at all the numbers to see if a relationship exists between them. She believes that the economic piece is something that we need to work on. By connecting and working with youth from the community, we can come up with ways to put money into their pockets through our various programs. They (youth) want to make money now and get them ready for the workforce. Ald. Lanier asked, what is our vacancy rate and are there any that are ready to become employed? (response -113 vacancies).

Ald. Bell thanked them for the work that they do. In regards to community issues, she stated that we might want to consider a collaborative approach with school districts and other agencies as well. It is important that we try to prepare these kids for the workforce. For example, many companies and partner agencies who are doing this have internships. We need to do what we can to contribute because these kids want to make money. She suspected that if the kids are doing constructive activities, they would be less likely to become involved in undesirable behaviors.

Ald. Wilder-Bryan expressed that the badge ceremony was amazing. The parents and officers were engaged, building lasting relationships. She offered the name of a therapeutic ranch owner who would love to work with the young girls. She reminded council that Coastal Partners has the labor-ready option and in each of the community centers. There are back-to-work training programs.

Mayor Pro Tem Dr. Shabazz thanked all parties for their great engagement in the 100 Days of Summer. She commended everyone involved in the Beyond the Badge for the girls' police camp and inclusivity. She stated that because of the technology on the use of all of our devices, platforms, and television station, that it continues to showcase the work that has been done. Through this work we are able to spread the good news through parents and students to heighten their interest for the summer. Thank you to the City Manager for including the ONSE office and keeping them abreast of issues with the youth.

Jimmy Johnson, Senior Director Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement made a presentation on the ONSE Neighborhood Improvement Teams, Path Forward Program, and the Young Artists of Savannah United.

Nick Roberts, Senior Director of Recreation and Leisure (Department of Fun) made a presentation and provided an update to council on the 100 Days of Summer. His presentation included the summer camp program, parking lot parties, and youth sports.

Mayor Pro Tem Dr. Shabazz noted that it was excellent that the youth (83 participants and site supervisors) that participated in the summer program were paid. The skill set that the participants learned is building their physical and mental capacity, as well as building their resumes. Mayor Pro Tem Dr. Shabazz asked about the engagement of the young women and the Grow and Glow Brunch.

Ald. Bell thanked the presenters and stated to Nick Roberts that she wanted to thank him personally because her folks had graduated from swim classes to competitive swimming and lifeguard training.

Ald. Miller Blakely thanked the presenters. She noticed that one of the community partners was the U.S. Army; she asked if anyone had reached out to the other armed services in the community, especially the Reserves. Ald. Miller Blakely asked, what are the age ranges for the Grow and Glow? (ages 12-20) She also asked about the show time for the movie playing at the Otis Johnson Theatre. She asked Mr. Johnson to name the schools that they are working with in the community. What about Windsor, Islands, New Hamstead? Why aren't you in those schools as well? Ald. Miller Blakely saw that there were a lot of fights at those schools and that ONSE is needed in those areas as well.

Ald. Miller Blakely addressed Nick Roberts and asked about the flag football contact person in the city as well as the number (32) and names of the teams. Have we gotten better with the rental spaces for our teams in order for the coaches to hold practices? Ald. Miller Blakely stated that she would like for them to have the opportunity to practice as she heard space is limited. She asked if we are considering doing a multipurpose sports complex with the City of Savannah?

Ald. Purtee appreciated the presentations and has seen a lot of the investment in our city recreation programs. He stated that ONSE in the schools has been a beneficial and collaborative effort. It has addressed youth challenges by providing a sense of belonging and keeping them out of trouble in the summer. Ald. Purtee is also looking forward to finding other ways to engage and partner with different folks.

Ald. Wilder-Bryan appreciated the visibility in the community of the ONSE staff. She asked if they had considered offering community service hours to those who attend the classes, to teach them about accountability. She stated that we have to continue to find hooks that engage our youth and the community service hours could be one of those. If we have the food, they will come and so will the parents.

Ald. Lanier stated that the Grow and Glow program is a great program for the girls and asked how they market for them? Are many of the girls/youth justice impacted? She also thanked Nick Roberts for the great job that they are doing. She spoke about various gyms such as the one in Kayton Homes that needs some support and inquired whether they plan to open that

gym. Ald. Lanier stated that we can work in an agency to agency capacity to see what it would take to get that gym open. She also mentioned that the YMCA on May Street will be undergoing renovations but is another option for a workout facility.

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

Mayor Pro Tem Dr. Shabazz moved to hold an executive session regarding litigation, seconded by Ald. Lanier. The motion passed unanimously, 8-0-0. Ald. Palumbo was absent.

Mayor Johnson recessed the work session for the executive session to be held on the 3rd Floor in the City Attorney’s conference room at 1:36 p.m.

Ald. Wilder-Bryan moved to adjourn the executive session/workshop, seconded by Mayor Por Tem Dr. Shabazz. The motion passed unanimously, 8-0-0. Ald. Palumbo was absent.

[3. City Manager Updates](#)

There was no City Manager's update held.

Mayor Johnson adjourned the workshop/executive session at 2:06 p.m.

Mark Massey, Clerk of Council

Date Minutes Approved: _____



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