



APRIL 13, 2023, 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 12:01 p.m. Mayor Johnson called the meeting to order and recognized Alderman Purtee to offer a prayer.

PRESENT:

Mayor Van R. Johnson, II, Presiding
Alderswoman Kesha Gibson-Carter, At-Large, Post 1
Alderswoman Alicia Miller Blakely, At-Large, Post 2
Alderswoman Bernetta B. Lanier, District 1
Alderman Detric Leggett, District 2
Alderswoman Linda Wilder-Bryan, District 3
Alderman Nick Palumbo, District 4, Vice-Chairman
Alderswoman Dr. Estella Edwards Shabazz, District 5, Mayor Pro-Tem
Alderman Kurtis Purtee, District 6

ALSO, PRESENT:

City Manager Joseph A. Melder
Chief of Staff Daphanie Williams
City Attorney Bates Lovett
Clerk of Council Mark Massey
Deputy Clerk of Council Margaret Fox

Workshop Agenda Items

[1. 100% Savannah Plan Annual Update](#)

[Exhibit 1: 100% Savannah Update.pptx](#)

PRESENTED by City Manager Melder, Sustainability Director Nick Deffley, and Program Manager Alicia Brown, with Denise Cheeseman also present.

Mr. Deffley gave a brief background of the sustainability goals set by Council and how the department has achieved the goals set forth. He introduced Program Manager Alicia Brown for the presentation.

Following the presentation, Council participated in discussions and asked questions.

- Alderwoman Wilder-Bryan asked Ms. Brown to explain the partnership with The Chelsa At Five Points Apartments receiving discounted permitting fees for installation of solar panels and if the program can be incorporated for senior housing. Ms. Brown explained the partnership and welcomed other apartment complexes to reach out to the sustainability department for assistance.
- Alderwoman Miller Blakely expressed concerns with the workforce training. There are currently fifteen students. Are there plans to increase the number of participants and how would an individual enroll? Ms. Brown stated, the fifteen students enrolled when the first class was offered. There will be additional classes offered in the future for anyone interested in enrolling. Alderwoman Miller Blakely asked if the students in training are paid or receive a stipend. Ms. Brown indicated students are not paid during training, but on-the-job work is paid at \$15.00/hour.
- Alderman Palumbo commended the sustainability team for their efforts and he is excited to see the team pursue the EPA grant of the energy efficiency program. He commended the Savannah sustainability team for being selected to lead all Georgia cities in the RFP process in saving Georgia taxpayers \$1.1 billion in savings.
- Alderwoman Gibson-Carter asked City Manager Melder concerning the allocation for \$100,000.00 up to \$1.5 million for the audit process, can the margins be narrowed to a more definitive number? City Manager Melder stated the scope of the audit depends on the various energy saving factors. He explained a method of savings the City can use during the energy savings audit. Alderwoman Gibson-Carter asked if the Enmarket Arena would be included in the audit; Ms. Brown indicated the Arena would not be included as it is the newest structure.
- Alderwoman Gibson-Carter asked if the City has received a payment from the Arena contractual agreement. City Manager Melder will send Council data when the payment is received (May 2023). Alderwoman Gibson-Carter commended the sustainability team on successful projects. She asked if the faith based community engagement sector previously discussed is still on the table. Ms. Brown indicated support for the faith based community efforts.
- Mayor Johnson thanked the entire Council in making sustainability a priority initiative. He thanked the sustainability team for their leadership and recognition across the State of Georgia.
- Mayor Pro-Tem Dr. Shabazz thanked the sustainability team for their equity by keeping the least in the community and seniors on their radar, and she thanked City Manager Melder for his focus on sustainability.
- Alderwoman Lanier expressed concern for environmental injustices as it relates to low wealth residents on the Westside and the port areas. She discussed the air quality, railroad tracks, noise, etc. that impacts the quality of life on the Westside. The concentration and funds should be used for the residents and not buildings. The City is not concentrating on the actual environmental injustices that are happening right now.
- City Manager Melder stated Alderwoman Lanier made good points as it relates to the sustainability office working on addressing inequities that exist on the Westside, Southside and Eastside. The City takes opportunities when it can to make progress at a magnitude that will make a difference in the lives of the City's residents. Alderwoman Lanier's concerns will be applied to the City's values to try and achieve better goals.
- Alderwoman Lanier asked, in going after the environmental grant, do we have the people who are contributing to the injustices at the table and asking them to help to mitigate the issues? City Manager Melder will have the sustainability team to send a memo to Council on the engagement process, and request, along with any data used to respond to the grant.
- Mayor Johnson indicated the office of sustainability is based on partnerships. As the City continues to raise its profile while maintaining its value and objectives; we must take advantage of opportunities when available.
- City Manager Melder indicated the environmental justice grant is not for government buildings, but for individual households for residents. It provides resources to households to achieve greater energy efficiency and cost savings.
- Mayor Johnson indicated the Secretary of Energy visited Savannah to discuss solar energy. She walked the streets of Woodville and talked with residents relating to their concerns.
- Alderwoman Miller Blakely asked if the grant funds from the environmental justice grant will be used for the residents of Woodville. Ms. Brown indicated the grant funds will target the industrial pollution areas (airport area, along the river). The requirements will be income based.
- Alderwoman Lanier stated, it is important to have the correct partners involved in the total process.

The PowerPoint presentation is on file and available for viewing in the Clerk of Council's office.

[2. Fairgrounds Update](#)

[Exhibit 1: Fairgrounds Update.pdf](#)

PRESENTED by City Manager Melder and City Attorney Lovett.

City Manager Melder indicated there are two items on today's agenda related to the Fairgrounds property. He stated several Council Members have requested a continuance for two weeks of the

Fairgrounds items on the agenda.

Following the presentation by City Manager Melder, Council Members asked questions and made comments:

- Mayor Pro-Tem Dr. Shabazz thanked City Manager Melder and staff for the Fairgrounds update and for the months of continuous reports to Council.
- Alderwoman Miller Blakely asked City Manager Melder why the loan of \$1.9 million. City Manager Melder explained Item #25 on the regular agenda is for a \$1.9 million loan from CHSA to construct 64 senior apartment with favorable financing. This is not a loan to the developer, the \$1.9 million will be leveraged to acquire low income tax credits which is necessary for the affordable apartments project.
- Alderwoman Miller Blakely asked if Bill Gross received any funds from the City when developing the property at the corner of Waters and Anderson. City Manager Melder replied, he will check the City records, but he doesn't believe he received any City funds. Alderwoman Miller Blakely asked if David Jones of the P3 Joint Venture Partner Group under Federal indictment (no, that was Steve Nielson, it was a State indictment). Steve Nielson is not part of this project.
- City Manager Melder indicated, the City established an affordable housing fund to give favorable financing to developers. The City's favorable financing allows for low income tax credit award points to make units affordable. The City will put a significant amount of public resources into the Fairgrounds property with right-of-ways and infrastructure. It is important the affordable housing portion of the development is successful.
- Alderwoman Miller Blakely expressed concern of the purchase and sales agreement stating the \$2 million purchase price would be paid to the City in phases. City Manager Melder explained the payment is in phases as the different project on the Fairgrounds property are approved and completed. Each portion of the property will be paid as developed.
- Alderwoman Miller Blakely asked for information concerning Robert Gould of R. G. Media Affiliates. City Manager Melder stated Robert Gould is a partner in the P3 Joint Venture Partner Group. P3 Partners, LLC and Robert Gould Media Group encompass the P3 Joint Venture Partner Group.
- Alderwoman Miller Blakely asked if phase II, 11.85 acres for a sound and film studio buildings, will be leased out by the P3 Venture Group. City Manager Melder answered, the purchase and sales agreement allows the P3 Venture Group to assign certain work, but stipulates the City will have the right to approve or disapprove of any partners. City Manager Melder explained the purchase and sales agreement allows ownership to revert back to the City after the thirty year debt service period.
- Alderwoman Miller Blakely stated when she was introduced to the Fairgrounds project, Craig Gordon was the individual discussing the sound and film studio projects. She asked if he was still involved in the project. City Manager Melder replied, all correspondence received implies Craig Gordon is no longer a partner in the Group.
- Alderwoman Gibson-Carter received numerous phone calls from residents concerning non-notification of the Fairgrounds project being placed on today's regular agenda. She expressed her concerns for the lack of communication to the 5th District residents.
- Alderwoman Gibson-Carter stated she felt somewhat used by accepting a trip to Atlanta to meet parties participating in the Fairgrounds project; namely, Robert Gould and his mother Carol Gould. She feels she was cultivated and expressed her concerns to City Manager Melder. City Manager Melder indicated he saw no nefarious behavior or actions. Alderwoman Gibson-Carter disagreed and she discussed the many aspects of the Fairgrounds project, including meetings with residents who expressed their priorities and concerns for the property. She stated the Fairgrounds project is politicized in this election season and she feels it is disingenuous to the citizens in the 5th District.
- City Manager Melder stated staff is willing to meet with residents of the 5th District to discuss the Fairgrounds proposal. There are no changes in the purchase and sales agreement that were not in the original winning RFP.
- Alderwoman Miller Blakely requested to read a letter from Craig Gordon. Mayor Johnson indicated he has spoken to the leaders and residents of the 5th District and there is no need for reading a letter. Mayor Johnson stated the meeting is in recess.

[3. City Manager Update](#)

NOT PRESENTED.

Mayor Johnson adjourned the Workshop at 1:40 p.m.

A video recording of the workshop can be found by copying and inserting the link below in your url:

<https://savannahgovtv.viebit.com/player.php?hash=w4GA1jBIExO>

Mark Massey, Clerk of Council

Date Minutes Approved: _____

Signature: _____

