



**AUGUST 8, 2024 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 **12:03 p.m.**, in the City Council Chambers. **Mayor Johnson** called the meeting to order, acknowledging that Mayor Pro Tem Dr. Shabazz will be absent due to travel for her daughter's graduate school graduation in Atlanta. Then Mayor Johnson recognized **Alderman Leggett** to offer a prayer. Mayor Johnson then spoke briefly about the recent Tropical Storm Debby impacting the City.

**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  
 Alderman Kurtis Purtee, District 6

**ABSENT:**

Alderwoman Dr. Estella Edwards Shabazz, District 5 - Mayor Pro Tem

**ALSO, PRESENT:**

City Manager Jay Melder  
 Chief of Staff Daphanie Williams  
 City Attorney Bates Lovett  
 Clerk of Council Mark Massey

**Workshop Agenda Items**

[1. Boards, Commissions, and Authorities Discussion](#)

[Exhibit 1: UPDATED - Boards Master List - Six Boards Needing Action.pdf](#)

Mayor Johnson gave an overview about the appointment of Boards historically and what matters were before the City Council today.

Mayor Johnson facilitated a nomination process for each of the six (6) boards considered.

**Chatham Area Transit (CAT):**

- Ald. Palumbo nominated Scott C. Anderson.
- Ald. Miller Blakely nominated Mary A. Snowden.

**Civil Service Board:**

- . Ald. Miller Blakely nominated Catherine C. Sykes.
- . Mayor Johnson nominated Amber N. Robbins.

**Cultural Affairs Commission:**

- . Ald. Wilder-Bryan nominated Catherine Killingsworth.
- . Ald. Lanier nominated Andrew Logan Lawrence.
- . Ald. Wilder-Bryan nominated Arthur F. Shuey.
- . Ald. Palumbo nominated Lawrence Jean-Louis.
- . Ald. Wilder-Bryan nominated Austin M. Rojas.
- . Ald. Wilder-Bryan nominated Boyer Bazelais.
- . Ald. Miller Blakely nominated Brett Williamson.

**Historic District Board of Review:**

- . Mayor Johnson nominated Dwayne Stephens.
- . Ald. Leggett nominated Sara L. Woodfield.
- . Ald. Purtee nominated William S. Coleman.
- . Ald. Wilder-Bryan nominated Mariel Hamer.

**Savannah Recreation Commission:**

- . Mayor Johnson nominated Utaff W. Gordon.

**Traffic Calming Committee:**

- . Ald. Wilder-Bryan nominated Larry Myers (District 3 appointee).

Ald. Miller Blakely indicated her interest to serve on the Traffic Calming Committee (Post 2 appointee), and she stated that the current member listed has moved out of town.

[2. City Manager's Agenda Review](#)

Mayor Johnson welcomed back City Manager Melder who was on an educational sabbatical, and expressed appreciation to Assistant City Manager Lloyd for his service during the City Manager's absence.

City Manager Melder expressed his appreciation too. He stated the City dodged the worst of what was expected in relation to Tropical Storm Debby, but the City did experience over 10 inches of rain over three days, dumping nearly 20 (19.7) billion gallons of water into our stormwater system. He acknowledged the heroic efforts of the Water Resources Department (Stormwater Team). The team responded with incredible poise and leadership, and kept all the pumps going for many hours. They worked around the clock clearing the water basins for over 2 1/2 days, and they are still working. Disaster pay is being continued for that team, and City Manager Melder encouraged everyone to give them a honk and a wave for working hard on the front lines.

City Manager Melder stated another big mission was the sheltering mission which is continuing. He thanked Taffanye Young, Brett Bell, and volunteers, along with the CEMA efforts.

Traffic safety was another big mission due to street and intersection flooding, and rescue efforts. Planning & Economic Development, Traffic, and Parking teams did an amazing job, along with our Purchasing team. The Fire Department responded to 154 calls for service, 18 water rescues, 8 from homes and 4 from cars. No medical transports and no injuries were reported, except for a slight cut on one of our firefighters chin. A new program was started during the storm, offering sand (150 tons) and sand bags to residents. Big credit was given to Heath Lloyd, Daphanie Williams, Lida Coleman and the Neighborhood Services team, Purchasing team, and firefighters. Police did an amazing job as well. They responded to 267 calls for service, helped staff and secure our shelters, and they were out on the street 24/7, including all regular police work.

City Manager Melder stated our efforts now turn to damage assessments, both city and resident properties. He stressed citizens should call 311, if they have damaged property they would like the city to assess, in an effort to capture all of the damage experienced from the Storm which will be reported up to the State and Federal governments. One neighborhood took the brunt of this storm a little more than others, Treemont Park, impacting 37 homes. The City will continue to support that neighborhood. A box drain culvert was invested last month for the Treemont neighborhood, and this effort will result in a better drainage system for that neighborhood in the future. Another important effort on the agenda later today is a feasibility study for a stormwater utility fee, as a dedicated stream of revenue.

City Manager Melder thanked the Communications team and the External Affairs & Policy team. They kept people informed and helped the city be transparent. He named Nick Zoller, Joe

Shearouse, Daphanie Williams, and Jeff Grant. He also thanked the Mayor and Aldermen for staying on their social media platforms, answering the press when they called, and walking through the neighborhoods.

Mayor Johnson stated he has worked every storm experienced by this community over the last 30 years. He thanked the prior administrations (Mayor and Councils), because he remembers smaller storms causing more damage than this one. This administration continues to put some money into the ground, just like previous administrations did. He stressed a stormwater fee (consistent funding source) will help us get to where we need to be given the amount of money it will take. He thanked the City Manager, Nick, and Joshua Peacock. We are still digging our way out of this storm, but our neighbors in Statesboro (Bulloch County) have a dam which is about to be breached.

Ald. Wilder-Bryan thanked Team Savannah, Mayor Johnson, Ald. Leggett, Katrina Bostic, and Malinda Hodge. She asked about clean-up efforts, branches and the like, and she asked about the revised schedules for sanitation and yard waste pickup. (One day behind) She thanked the community for the assistance given to Ms. Conner on Dundee whose home had a tree fall-in.

Ald. Leggett gave kudos to the City Manager and his team. He was out on the field, and maintained contact via phone with the City Manager and Georgia Power teams. He gained a partnership with Kroger's leadership also, especially in support of seniors and children. He then thanked Heath Lloyd and Daphanie Williams.

Ald. Miller Blakely thanked the City Manager for giving her a call and updating her with respect to the storm. She went on social media and let the constituents know what was happening. She thanked Heath and Azsha for their work in Treemont Park and Middleground Road. She thanked the County for providing sand at Lake Meyer. She asked how many vacor trucks the city has to clean out the debris. Three are owned by the city and three were contracted. She then asked about how often and when we clean our ditches, for future reference.

Ald. Palumbo passed along kudos to the team. We were lucky and blessed things were not worse. This experience helps us to determine where we need to place investments next. He supports a dedicated funding stream for stormwater utility. He would like to reboot an adopt the drain program, but there are other things we can do like the pervious paver expansion, rain gardens, rain barrel distribution, stormwater utility fee, and big infrastructure projects. Ald. Palumbo asked that we keep up the momentum.

Ald. Lanier stated Assistant City Manager Lloyd did a great job. With the onset of the storm, she got out into the community in the areas she often gets calls about, ditches and canals that normally flood. During breaks in the storm, water receded in areas where the systems were running. She recommended more maintainance in the areas where a majority of the complaints come from, based on what she was able to document where businesses were providing preventative measures and the water was receding. Since everyone pays for the maintenance, we have to look deeper to make sure that everyone benefits from the maintenance, to make sure there is an equitable return in the investments. Staff did an excellent job and she observed all-hands-on-deck.

Mayor Johnson noted the lion share of the drainage investments generated from this millage went to Treemont Park and Hudson Hill. Our assessments are spot-on and resources are on the way to help us address them. He thanked the Chatham Emergency Management Agency (CEMA), Director Dennis Jones. The Mayor and City Manager are a part of the Command Policy Group, which is made up of the managers and mayors from the cities within Chatham County, and the chairman. They coordinated their emergency orders, curfews, reopenings, and closures with each other, and the school system. He thanked the County and their team, the cities and their teams, and Bates Lovett who helped to create orders on demand. Mayor Johnson then thanked and recognized Georgia Power representatives Audrey King and William Mock.

Mr. Mock stated they recorded 60 straight hours of rain with Tropical Storm Debby. Crews worked continuously through the storm. 450 personnel were assigned to this district, including field crews, tree and vegetation management, and disaster assistance teams. They encountered over 300 spans of wires down, and over 30 broken poles. At its peak, the Savannah area experienced about 10,000 outages. Investments in new technology were in play during this storm, in some cases open/close and reroute power remotely. They are using drones in some cases to get into areas they can not reach. This is an early storm for them, but in the months ahead they will remain vigilant and try to provide the best service they possibly can (Georgia Power Machine).

Ms. King stated she is proud of the work Mr. Mock has done, she is very passionate about Savannah. She extended her thanks to the City for their partnership.

Mayor Johnson asked City Manager Melder to discuss the sheltering activities. Mr. Melder advised they are working with CEMA on it, and there is currently sheltering in two city facilities, being the Tompkins Center and Civic Center.

Regarding residents living in Housing Authority properties, Ald. Miller Blakely asked the process for reporting damages. Mayor Johnson stated they have to contact the Housing Authority.

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

At 1:02 p.m., Ald. Palumbo moved to close for an executive session regarding personnel, litigation, and real estate, seconded by Ald. Leggett. The motion passed unanimously, 7-0-2. Ald. Wilder-Bryan was away from the dais, and Mayor Pro Tem Dr. Shabazz was absent.

The executive session was held in the City Attorney's conference room on the 3rd Floor of City Hall from 1:18 p.m. to 1:58 p.m.

Ald. Palumbo moved to adjourn the closed executive session, seconded by Ald. Wilder-Bryan. The motion passed unanimously, 8-0-1. Mayor Pro Tem Dr. Shabazz was absent.

There was no action taken during the Workshop.

Mayor Johnson adjourned the workshop at **1:58 p.m.**

The 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=BlhqwiVadzGpN5wH>

Mark Massey, Clerk of Council

**Date Minutes Approved:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

