



FEBRUARY 22, 2024, 11:00 a.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 **11:08 a.m.**, in the 2nd Floor Media Room. **Mayor Johnson** called the meeting to order and recognized **Alderman Purtee** to offer a prayer.

PRESENT:

Mayor Van R. Johnson, II, Presiding
 Alderwoman Carolyn H. Bell, At-Large, Post 1
 Alderman Detric Leggett, District 2
 Alderwoman Alicia Miller Blakely, At-Large, Post 2
 Alderwoman Bernetta B. Lanier, District 1
 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 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. Annual Public Safety Update](#)

PRESENTED after Item #1.

Presented by Police Chief Lenny B. Gunther, Fire Chief Elzie L. Kitchen, Jr., and Community Services/ONSE Chief Taffanye Young.

Following the presentations, the Council Members asked questions and discussed the following:

- Mayor Johnson asked how many officers is the City down. Chief Gunther answered, 114, the attrition rate is 1.18%, down from 14% in 2023. Guns left in an unlocked car was discussed and how the City can decrease the numbers. The City Attorney is working with the Mayor on an ordinance to address unlocked cars with weapons (guns) inside. Mayor Johnson recommended

- the PAL's program expand to include boxing and karate. The field behind Cloverdale Library is a mud pit and needs to be worked on so the youth in the community will be able to use the field.
- Ald. Leggett expressed concern for domestic violence and if the City is partnering with other agencies to address the problem. Chief Gavin indicated they are working with the courts, offenders and victims to decrease the incidents. Ald. Leggett also would like PAL's to include tumbling and cheerleading.
 - Ald. Wilder-Bryan expressed concern and discussed several issues: numbers in the academy; mental health issues and getting families involved; shot spotter technology increased with more cameras further out into the City; HB 161, Pediatric Health, she encouraged residents to contact House Speaker Burns to support; and SIP's program and any differences or changes. Her concerns were answered by Chief Gavin and Assistant Chief Devon Adams.
 - Ald. Palumbo is pleased with the attrition rate (1%) and recommended keeping officers longer so they can take advantage of the City's pension/retirement plan.
 - Ald. Bell stressed the importance of working with other public safety agencies in the area. Chief Gunther agreed and discussed other local agencies the SPD has partnerships.
 - Ald. Miller Blakely asked if the old program 'scared straight' was still being used or a similar program. She recommended working with formerly incarcerated individuals to help deter young people from criminal activity.
 - Ald. Lanier discussed statistics of guns on the street and how the youth obtain weapons. Chief Gunther indicated the ATF is working on tracking guns. She recommended the City focus on incorporating entrepreneurial opportunities and programs that want to help youth stay away from criminal activity.
 - Mayor Pro Tem Dr. Shabazz commended the City Manager and police and fire departments on the outstanding job thus far, but recommended putting more dollars into the behavioral health program.
 - City Manager Melder thanked the Chiefs for decreasing part one crimes last year throughout the City.
 - Following the ONSE presentation, Ald. Bell recommended connecting with the Pan Hellenic Council, relating to the Greek-letter sororities and fraternities in colleges and universities. These organizations are mandated to do community service and submit reports. They work with and interact with youth in the communities. The City can create partnerships with those agencies.
 - Mayor Johnson stated he is getting a lot of calls from residents regarding 911. Since this is a county-wide service, he asked City Manager Melder to contact the County and share the recent data. The City has contributed assistance when possible, even using personal vehicles to transport patients.
 - Ald. Miller Blakely expressed concern for grants given to agencies and asked the name of the T.I.P. organization, how grants are disbursed, how do agencies qualify, and the grant amounts. T.I.P. is Talented Individuals with Power. Alderwoman Miller Blakely indicated there are agencies in areas of the City doing outstanding work and not receiving grant funds. She would like to see the grant allotments disbursed to those agencies doing a lot of the work in the communities. Ald. Miller Blakely asked if the program, Kid's Cafe, still exists. If not, she recommended the City consider establishing a program to feed youth, and a medical program such as Candy Strippers. Ald. Miller Blakely asked if the mentor program provides a stipend for the mentors. Chief Young indicated discussions are ongoing about paying mentors. Ald. Miller Blakely will meet with Chief Young to discussed the numerous program options.
 - Ald. Wilder-Bryan asked Chief Young how the determination is made that the target rate for youth served is reached. Chief Young indicated the programs are broad so as to reach a variety of youth on all levels. Ald. Wilder-Bryan requested feed back from the agencies receiving funds by submission of data to show numbers of residents served.
 - Mayor Johnson discussed the difference in the police programs, and the ONSE program. Youth and/or residents feel more comfortable talking with the ONSE program personnel versus police officers.
 - Mayor Pro Tem Dr. Shabazz and Chief Young discussed violence intervention and ways to further aid victims and their families. Moving forward, Mayor Pro Tem Dr. Shabazz recommended the City consider increasing funds for youth programs and violence reduction. She also requested additional information on fire prevention investigation. City Manager Melder and Fire Chief Kitchen will meet with Mayor Pro Tem Dr. Shabazz to further discuss her concerns.
 - Ald. Leggett expressed his appreciation for the program Path Forward and the techniques used to engage at risk youth in violence reduction activities. He asked what training is available to staff to prepare them for community advocacy. Chief Young stated, various agency partners who teach cultural, de-escalating, and meditation training. Demographic information is used to familiarize staff with the community they will serve. He recommended the ONSE program staff participate in more community initiatives.
 - Ald. Miller Blakely asked Chief Kitchen about the recruitment at Savannah State University and informed the public the services provided by the fire department can be found on the City's web

page.

Mayor Johnson stated he would still like to pursue a hospital intervention program.

[2. Appointments to Boards, Commissions and Authorities](#)

[UPDATED Available Appointments to Boards-2024 as of 02-20-2024.pdf](#)

Facilitated by Mayor Johnson, Council Members nominated the following individuals for appointments to Boards, Commissions and Authorities.

- . Miriam Munn - Chatham-Savannah Authority for the Homeless
- . Steven C. Morgan - Cultural Affairs Commission
- . Renee S. Rubens - Cultural Affairs Commission
- . Brian L. Judson - Cultural Affairs Commission
- . Sarah B. Smith - Cultural Affairs Commission
- . Kinte K. Taylor-Steverson - Cultural Affairs Commission
- . Gwendolyn Frazier-Smith - Cultural Affairs Commission
- . Guy M. Minick - Downtown Savannah Authority
- . Kevin Finley - Downtown Savannah Authority, 2nd Term
- . Zachary H. Thomas - Downtown Savannah Authority
- . Francis X. Hayes - Greater Savannah International Alliance, 2nd Term
- . Montana L. Tohm - Greater Savannah International Alliance
- . Colleen C. Cunningham - Greater Savannah International Alliance
- . Dr. Jose de Arimateia da Cruz - Greater Savannah International Alliance
- . Tanvi Chauhan - Greater Savannah International Alliance
- . Katrina Hornung - Historic Preservation Commission
- . Patricia Richardson - Historic Preservation Commission
- . Dr. Jose de Arimateia da Cruz - Hospital Authority of Savannah, 2nd Term
- . Austin M. Rojas - Hospital Authority of Savannah
- . Taqwaa F. Saleem - Hospital Authority of Savannah, 2nd Term
- . Dwayne Stephens - Metropolitan Planning Commission, 2nd Term
- . Laureen Boles - Metropolitan Planning Commission, 2nd Term
- . Stephen M. Plunk - Metropolitan Planning Commission
- . Charles E. Vilushis - Park and Tree Commission, 2nd Term
- . Paul C. Daniels - Park and Tree Commission, 2nd Term
- . G Randy Tate - Park and Tree Commission, 3rd Term
- . Jeffrey M. Notrica - Park and Tree Commission
- . Boyer Bazelais - Park and Tree Commission
- . Robert D. Sutter - Park and Tree Commission
- . Frederick Bailey – Pension Board
- . Lowell Kronowitz – Savannah Airport Commission
- . Stephanie D. Zeigler - Savannah-Chatham Council on Disability Issues
- . Gia Boulos - Savannah-Chatham Council on Disability Issues
- . Vondell Norman - Savannah-Chatham Council on Disability Issues
- . Michael C. Willis - Savannah-Chatham Council on Disability Issues
- . Joseph P. Serpa - Savannah Recreation Commission
- . Raven George - Savannah Recreation Commission
- . Louise D. Phelps - Savannah Recreation Commission
- . Armand J. Turner - Savannah Recreation Commission
- . Scott C. Anderson - Traffic Calming Committee
- . Kristen Ravenel - Traffic Calming Committee

The following Boards, Commissions and Authorities will require nominations and a vote by Council during the regular meeting.

- . Historic District Board of Review
- . Savannah-Chatham Historic Sites and Monuments Commission
- . Savannah Economic Development Authority (SEDA)

Civil Service Board and Savannah Zoning Board of Appeals will be readvertized for applications.

Mayor Johnson encouraged residents who want to engage in the City's work to apply by visiting the City's web page and clicking on Boards for the application.

Ald. Miller Blakely asked for the Ethics Board to be placed on the agenda for consideration of adding an additional two people. Mayor Johnson indicated this will need to be discussed with the City Attorney before any action is taken.

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

FORGONE/FORWENT.

There was no action taken during the workshop and agenda review.

Mayor Johnson adjourned the pre-meetings at 1:32 p.m.

The video recordings of the Workshop can be found by copying and inserting the link below in your url:

<https://savannahgovtv.viebit.com/player.php?hash=4VJrAF4M0kOSxh8d>

Mark Massey, Clerk of Council

Date Minutes Approved: _____

Signature: _____

