



JANUARY 11, 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 11:02 a.m., in the Council Chambers. 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
 Alderman Nick Palumbo, District 4
 Alderwoman Dr. Estella Edwards Shabazz, District 5
 Alderman Kurtis Purtee, District 6

ALSO, PRESENT:

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

Workshop Agenda Items

[1. A Presentation by the City Attorney - City Charter Review.](#)

PRESENTED by City Attorney Lovett.

Following the presentation, there was discussion by Council Members:

- Ald. Miller Blakely would like to see more equity in the Civil Service Board and recommended five members instead of three including an African American. Mayor Johnson indicated there is an African American on the Civil Service Board (Dr. Nicole Cannonier). Ald. Miller Blakely would also like to see more equity on the Ethics Board.
- Ald. Wilder-Bryan recommended forbidding the use of cell phones during meetings. Mayor Johnson indicated this subject can be discussed during organizational items.

[2. Discussion of Organizational Items.](#)

PRESENTED by City Manager Melder and Mayor Johnson.

Nominations of Officers by Mayor and Council:

1. Ald. Leggett nominated Ald. Dr. Shabazz to be elected as Mayor Pro-Tem, Ald. Wilder-Bryan seconded.
2. Ald. Purtee nominated Ald. Palumbo to be elected as Chair of Council, Ald. Dr. Shabazz, Ald. Leggett and Ald. Wilder-Bryan seconded.
3. Ald. Palumbo nominated Ald. Wilder-Bryan to be elected as Vice-Chairman of Council, Ald. Dr. Shabazz seconded.

Adoption of Council Meeting Procedure and Rules:

- City Attorney Lovett and City Manager Melder explained the reason for the Council Meeting Procedures and Rules. Overall there are no major changes.
 - Minor changes were made by City Manager; language changes in the development of the draft agenda.
 - Changes were made by City Attorney; minor technical changes to give Council more flexibility. No new policy changes.
- Ald. Miller Blakely expressed concern for having five Members' approval to have an item placed on the agenda. She would like to have the number changed to three. City Manager Melder indicated the stipulation is in Section 11.4, and Mayor Johnson explained the reasoning for five Members; this constitutes the majority of Council wanting an item on the agenda. Ald. Miller Blakely can request the change at the regular meeting.
- Ald. Lanier expressed concern on the issue of having five Members of Council agreeing to have an item on the agenda. After research, she did not find another municipality requiring five Members for an item to be placed on the agenda. During the past four years, she was never able to get an item on the agenda. She asked for the intent of having five. Mayor Johnson answered the intent was to create opportunities for Council Members to be involved in getting an item on the agenda. (In prior years, an item on the agenda was at the discretion of the Mayor).
- Ald. Dr. Shabazz, Ald. Wilder-Bryan, and Ald. Palumbo expressed support of how Council Members can request an item to be on the meeting agenda.
- Ald. Miller Blakely has requested a spreadsheet of other District's issues of concern and she has not received the spreadsheets (requested of City Manager's office). City Manager Melder indicated the monthly spreadsheets are public information for anyone to access.

Mayor Johnson requested the approval of City Council to affirm Savannah as a City of Ethics and a City of Civility: Mayor Johnson asked Clerk of Council Massey to prepare the Resolutions for all Council Members' signature.

Mayor Johnson requested Council approval to reaffirm the appointments of City Manager Joseph 'Jay' Melder, City Attorney R. Bates Lovett, and Clerk of Council Mark Massey.

Meeting Times of Council:

- There was discussion among the Mayor and Aldermen on the times for meetings. Currently the first meeting of the month was 2:00 p.m. and the second meeting of the month was 6:30 p.m.
- After a consensus, the majority of Council recommended both monthly meetings to be at 2:00 p.m., except for the required evening meetings for the millage rate, the budget hearings, etc.

Day Meetings

Ald. Bell

Ald. Leggett

Ald. Wilder-Bryan

Ald. Dr. Shabazz

Ald. Palumbo

Day/Evening Meetings

Ald. Miller Blakley

Ald. Lanier

Ald. Purtee

- An official vote will be taken at the regular meeting.

- Workshops (1-1/2 hours) will take place at 11:00 a.m. with a public notice posted for each meeting.
- Some type of evening meeting will be scheduled for citizens to interact with Council/staff.
- Ald. Bell recommended a separate meeting for ceremonial issues. This is open for further discussion by Council at a later date.

Mayor Johnson announced Council salaries have increased by \$10,000.00 (\$5,000.00 for salary and \$5,000.00 for supplies). The Mayor's office will no longer provide Council Members with supplies. The per diem check to cover incidentals is higher for Council than other staff. Moving forward, any changes/upgrades to flights are the responsibility of the individual. Any charges for cancelation on attending classes will require you to reimburse the City.

Ald. Lanier requested a second sheet for Council stationery; updated business cards for Council Members; and replacement of the council chambers executive chairs. Mayor Johnson indicated Ald. Lanier's concerns will be addressed.

Ald. Wilder-Bryan and Ald. Miller Blakely expressed concern for not receiving the list of tasks generated by 311. City Manager Melder will check with staff on distribution of the list.

Mayor Johnson will send Council Members an email on workshop items and information concerning the Council Retreat. The Retreat is postponed due to the loss of Mayor Johnson's father.

[3. City Manager's Update.](#)

PRESENTED by City Manager Melder, following the agenda review.

[4. Added Item: Closed Executive Session Regarding Personnel, Real Estate, and Litigation.](#)

At 12:45 p.m., Ald. Dr. Shabazz moved to recess the workshop and hold a closed executive session (3rd Floor conference Room) regarding personnel, real estate, and litigation, seconded by Ald. Wilder-Bryan and Ald. Leggett. The motion passed unanimously, 9-0-0.

At 1:27 p.m., Ald. Dr. Shabazz moved to adjourn the closed executive session, seconded by Ald. Leggett. The motion passed unanimously, 9-0-0.

[5. Added Item: Agenda Review.](#)

At 1:44 p.m., the City Council held an agenda review in the 2nd Floor media room.

City Manager Melder reviewed items on the agenda.

Item #33:

City Manager Melder recommended the following wording on a ground marker for Taylor Square:

- Taylor Square laid out in 1851.
- 1851 named for John C. Calhoun, Seventh U.S. Vice President.
- 2022 City Council removed the name Calhoun, a staunch defender of slavery.
- 2023 named in honor of Susie King Taylor, a formerly enslaved woman, nurse, educator, and the first African American to openly teach in the State of Georgia.
- Ald. Palumbo requested Mayor Johnson read the recommendations and make the motion at the regular meeting.

Item #12

Postponed for two weeks due to issues within the community and with the District Alderman.

There was no action taken during the workshop and agenda review, which were followed by the City Manager's Update. Mayor Johnson adjourned the pre-meetings at 2:00 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=q9KJml62R2diGcCu>

Mark Massey, Clerk of Council

Date Minutes Approved: _____

Signature: _____

