



NOVEMBER 21, 2023, 12:00 noon - 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. Mayor Johnson recognized Alderman Purtee to offer a prayer.

PRESENT:

Mayor Van R. Johnson, II, Presiding
 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
 Alderman Nick Palumbo, District 4, Vice-Chairman
 Alderwoman Dr. Estella Edwards Shabazz, District 5, Mayor Pro-Tem
 Alderman Kurtis Purtee, District 6

ABSENT:

Alderwoman Kesha Gibson-Carter, At-Large, Post 1

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. City of Savannah's 2024 State Legislative Agenda](#)

[2024 State Legislative Agenda pp.pdf](#)

City Manager Melder indicated the City had the most successful legislative session last year due to the hard work of Council, the City Lobbyists, and Director of Policy and Intergovernmental Affairs Joe Shearouse.

The 2024 State Legislative Agenda was formulated by City Council. Joe Shearouse gave the presentation followed by questions and comments from Council Members:

- Mayor Johnson served on the study committee for GMA and ACCG on housing. He will send Council Members the report when concluded.
- Alderwoman Wilder-Bryan asked when the new contract for housing discrimination goes into effect. City Manager Melder indicated, it currently is in effect. Alderwoman Wilder-Bryan asked for the status of any programs for guns in unlocked cars. Mayor Johnson indicated he is working on an ordinance with the City Attorney for Council's review. She expressed interest in SB151, hygiene taxation, and would like open discussion on the subject. She offered her assistance. City Manager Melder indicated if Council would like to add the item on the legislative agenda, staff could look at options.
- Mayor Pro-Tem Dr. Shabazz expressed her appreciation for how the City's priorities are sent to Atlanta (the Capital), it is centered around a national issue, shortage of housing inventory. She is in total support of Judge Colbert's Homeless Court.
- Mayor Johnson emphasized the importance of having good Lobbyists to move the City's legislative agenda through the Capital.
- Alderman Palumbo noted this is a solid legislative agenda and he looks forward to getting the job done.
- Alderwoman Miller Blakely asked City Manager Melder for the City's poverty rate (19%), she recommended the City also focus on income-based housing. Alderwoman Miller Blakely asked Mr. Shearouse to read the definition of blighted houses. Mr. Shearouse did not have the full definition available, but indicated the staff is recommending removing the word structure, so the property is blighted not just the structure. Mr. Shearouse will read the definition of blighted houses and the City's recommended amendment at the regular City Council Meeting at 2:00 p.m.
- Alderman Purtee stated the legislative agenda has quite a lot of major priority issues related to housing. The West and South sides of Savannah are prime for development and the City should look at leveraging that development for low-income, income-based, and affordable housing. Alderman Purtee expressed how the Homeless Court is a good idea, but where is the County and other agencies in the conversation and in their commitment?
- Alderwoman Lanier asked City Manager Melder if workforce housing was included (yes). She indicated the enterprise zones have gentrified the fastest, so in expanding programs the City should be mindful of the residents currently living in those areas. She asked City Manager Melder and Mr. Shearouse will inclusionary zoning be considered (yes, presenting to Council in January); and in regards to tort reform, is there a limit (\$500,000.00 is the limit for State and County and the City would like to match that amount). Alderwoman Lanier asked if the Homeless Court would require a homeless person to enter into one of the programs. City Manager Melder and Assistant Police Chief Gavin explained the quality of life crimes (panhandling, trespassing, loitering, indecent exposure, begging on the streets, etc.).

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

[2. FY2024 Budget Retreat Follow Up Discussion](#)

City Manager Melder thanked City Council for participating in the budget retreat on Tuesday, November 14, 2023. The Parking Lot items were appreciated and will be addressed. Feedback is open for City Council Members as well as the public.

The City Manager' Office, the Office of Management & Budget, and the Finance Department are available for any questions, comments or concerns from Council Members.

There will be two (2) public hearings on the Budget with the first hearing today at 2:00 p.m. for citizen comments.

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

City Manager Melder reviewed the Regular City Council Meeting Agenda with updates/changes:

- Item #8 continued to December 7, 2023, meeting at Petitioner's request.
- Items #12, #13, #16, and #18 continued to the January 11, 2024, meeting at Petitioner's request.
- Item #21 continued to the December 7, 2023, meeting at Petitioner's request.
- Item #34 continued to the December 7, 2023, meeting.
- Item #27 - two (2) actions requested by Council. 1) to allow Land Bank Authority to use up to \$220,000.00 to purchase 1826 Florance Street; and 2) for CHSA to use up to \$480,000 to renovate 4 apartments. The renovated apartments will be use for homeless individuals recovering from surgery or major illness to have a place to stay while recuperating. City Manager Melder is requesting Council approval.

Alderwoman Miller Blakely asked City Manager Melder, in Item #31 what will be the use of the building. City Manager Melder answered for ITS team for hardware storage and workspace.

Alderwoman Wilder-Bryan expressed concern for the City having a cap on suit amounts. City Manager Melder indicated this will be accomplished through tort reform legislation.

Alderwoman Wilder-Bryan asked for the Savannah-Chatham Day in Atlanta. Mayor Johnson indicated the information will be sent to Council Members. (possibly, Wednesday/Thursday, January 31 and February 1, 2024).

Alderwoman Miller Blakely asked, under the budget funded priority capital request what is the status of the Broughton Street project. City Manager Melder indicated Broughton Street has maintenance items that will be on-going. Landscaping/plantings will be completed when permitted. Alderman Leggett stated additional landscaping/planting will take place after the ground has settled to alleviate any future problems.

Alderwoman Wilder-Bryan expressed interest in a program for storing household items for evicted tenants. She would like to continue dialogue with the City Attorney, Joe Shearouse and the Sheriff's department to see if a program can be established.

Mayor Johnson stated Savannah-Chatham Day in Atlanta will be Wednesday/Thursday, January 31, and February 1, 2024, in Atlanta (the week after GMA). An event on Wednesday evening and the roundtable on Thursday with maybe a breakfast. Council Members will be informed as arrangements are finalized.

Mayor Johnson adjourned the Workshop at 1:06 p.m.

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

<https://savannahgovtv.viebit.com/player.php?hash=hGZtJ4acDg9Hds8N>

Mark Massey, Clerk of Council

Date Minutes Approved: _____

Signature: _____

