



SAVANNAH CITY GOVERNMENT
SUMMARY/FINAL MINUTES
COUNCIL WORK SESSION & CITY MANAGER'S BRIEFING
OCTOBER 22, 2020 – 4:00 p.m.

Due to the Coronavirus Pandemic, the City Council work session and City Manager's Briefing was held via Zoom video communications at 4:00 p.m. Following the roll call, Mayor Johnson asked Aldерwoman Wilder-Bryan to offer an invocation.

PRESENT: Mayor Van R. Johnson, II, Presiding

Aldерwoman Keshа Gibson-Carter, At-Large, Post 1, Chairman

Aldерwoman Alicia Miller Blakely, At-Large, Post 2

Aldерwoman Bernetta B. Lanier, District 1

Alderman Detric Leggett, District 2

Aldерwoman Linda Wilder-Bryan, District 3

Alderman Nick Palumbo, District 4, Vice-Chairman

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

Alderman Kurtis Purtee, District 6

OTHERS PRESENT:

City Manager Pat Monahan

City Attorney Bates Lovett

Clerk of Council Mark Massey

Workshop Agenda Items

[1. Litigation \(4:00 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.\)](#)

Mayor Pro-Tem Dr. Shabazz moved to recess into executive session for litigation and personnel, Alderman Leggett and Alderman Palumbo seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

The executive session began at 4:05 p.m.

There was no action taken.

The executive session ended at 4:45 p.m.

Aldерwoman Wilder-Bryan moved to exit the executive session and rejoin the work session, Alderman Palumbo and Alderman Purtee seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

The work session restarted at 4:51 p.m.

[2. 100% Savannah Plan \(Sustainability\) - 4:30 p.m.](#)

[Exhibit 1: Presentation - 100% Savannah Plan.pptx](#)

City Manager Monahan introduced Director of Sustainability Nick Deffley for the presentation. Mr.

Deffley outlined the Plan during the PowerPoint presentation. Following the presentation:

Alderman Palumbo is a big fan of the comprehensive City wide sustainability plan. It is not only about energy usage, it also entails weatherization strategies, walkability, and the City's tree canopies. He envisions the plan enhancing over time.

Alderman Leggett asked how the City will get the word out. Mr. Deffley responded, using the City, the press, and focus groups to distribute flyers throughout neighborhoods.

Mayor Johnson indicated there are some budget implications. If the City is serious about sustainability, the office of sustainability will need more employees. This will be discussed during the budget process.

Alderwoman Wilder-Bryan thanked Mr. Deffley for creating greenspace in the 3rd District and the plants for the elderly.

Alderman Purtee acknowledges the need for additional staff for Mr. Deffley and will commit his time and efforts for support any public gatherings and public education.

Mayor Pro-Tem Dr. Shabazz thanked Mr. Deffley for all his hard work for the City and asked for possible dates for Council Members schedules. Mr. Deffley will send out an email outlining a schedule for the first week of November.

Mayor Johnson asked Mr. Deffley if a task force of Council representatives would be helpful as an advisory group and to help get the word out to the public. Mr. Deffley answered it would be a great benefit.

Alderman Leggett asked Mr. Deffley to supply the 2nd District with plants for the elderly residents and for beautifying the Waters Avenue corridor if any more plants become available.

Alderwoman Miller Blakely thanked Mr. Deffley for the presentation and asked if he gets any more plants to not forget the 6th District (Southside).

Mayor Johnson asked Council Members to think of a member to serve on the sustainability task force

[3. Rebalancing Alternatives for the FY2020 Budget](#)

[Exhibit 1: Presentation - FY2020 Budget.pptx](#)

City Manager Monahan gave a brief summary of the FY2020 Budget and introduced Chief Budget Officer Melissa Carter for a PowerPoint presentation and Chief Financial Officer David Maxwell for questions.

Mr. Carter presented Mayor and Council with the 2020 Budget Update via a PowerPoint presentation. Following the presentation:

City Manager Monahan reported the CARES Act Funding has disappeared per Governor Kemp's recent order. The City has returned to the tier structure presented to Council. Tier 1 and 2 suggest using the property sales account totaling approximately \$17 million. The primary use is to fund the renovation of the Gamble Building which is a \$14 million capital project. \$1.5 million for design and engineering will be needed within the next ninety days. The RFP for design and engineering will be released sometime within the next couple of weeks. The \$12.5 million for construction will not be needed until mid 2021 depending on the time needed to complete the design services. The City Manager suggested issuing a bond of \$12.5 million with interest only payments for the construction phase of the Gamble Building ending in the Fall of 2022. At that time, the lease on the Savannah Morning News will be ending and that lease payment will become the debt service payment on the Gamble Building bonds which avoids any negative impact on the Budget. This strategy would allow for the transfer of \$4 million from the property sales account to rebalance the FY2020 budget, then set aside the \$11 million from the property sales account to help balance the FY2021 Budget. Doing this will also keep the Sales Tax Stabilization Reserve in Tier 3 and the GF Unreserved Fund Balance in Tier 4. With the uncertainty of the pandemic, this process will allow a reserve for the City.

Mayor Johnson expressed his disappointment in Governor Kemp's order to discontinue the CARES Act Funding. The City Manager's recommendation gives the City an opportunity to address immediate needs realizing the pandemic affects might go through 2022. The City wants to preserve its reserve. Getting the Gamble Building renovated will allow the City to discontinue lease payments at other locations.

Alderwoman Wilder-Bryan asked Ms. Carter if the 1% - 3% reduction in service will be taken from a specific department. Ms. Carter answered, the 1%-3% reduction has already been taken and is across the board in each department on non-essential services. City Manager Monahan shared there is a position vacancy freeze to maintain a balanced Budget. He is not looking for a vote today, just a concurrence from Council.

Alderwoman Miller Blakely asked Mayor Johnson if he has exhausted all measures with Governor Kemp to see if the City can recoup some of the CARES Act Funding. Mayor Johnson responded, the City took \$3.1 million (80%) of the round one CARES Act Funding and put it back into the community. The City Manager is looking into other options to reach those individuals not receiving any of the round one CARES Act Funding.

Alderwoman Gibson-Carter asked Ms. Carter if cutting funding for festivals was considered. Mr. Carter answered, yes. Alderwoman Gibson-Carter asked City Manager Monahan to repeat the real estate information on the Savannah Morning News (SMN) lease. Mr. Monahan outlined the lease which expires in 2021 with a one year option for renewal. The City will need six months design and eighteen months construction time for the Gamble Building. The Gamble Building is net approximately 35,000 s/f and the SMN space net is approximately 35,000 s/f, but older buildings renovated do not allow for efficient space. The City will need to work out the details. The total renovation project and relocation of staff should take place within two years. Council has the option to make a decision on the relocation of staff, and looking at purchasing land to build or purchase an existing structure for renovations. Alderwoman Gibson-Carter asked the City Manager when the SMN lease was signed, Mr. Monahan and Ms. Carter answered 2018. Alderwoman Gibson-Carter stated that makes it \$2.3 million dollars in payments for a three year lease. When looking at the numbers, it makes no sense for the City to continue in leasing, when the option of purchasing land and building or purchasing a building and renovating for the entire staff at the City.

Alderwoman Lanier stated in her search to generate revenue, she came across a new program developed through the Trump Administration's Tax Cut and Jobs Act. This program will allow pre tax wellness dollars to come back to the City which will save money by reallocation through the General Fund. A particular company did a proposal and shared the program with her. She asked the City Manager for a cost benefit analysis to see if this program is a fit for the City. City Manager Monahan responded, staff is currently still looking at the proposal. Alderwoman Lanier will share the information from other cities who benefited from the program.

Alderwoman Miller Blakely asked the City Manager if the Civic Center could be used for the 85 staff members at SMN and use the lease payments to SMN to help balance the Budget. City Manager Monahan answered, it is a possibility at the end of the year, the lease at SMN ends at the end of 2021. The lease is unilateral, so both the City and SMN would need to agree to terminate the lease. Also, the space at the Civic Center would need to be renovated to accommodate the 85 staff members. Mayor Johnson reminded Council of the operating agreement with OVG, so the City would need to lease their own space from OVG. Alderwoman Miller Blakely asked if there was any available space at the Georgia Coastal Center. City Manager Monahan answered that is a lease between the City and the Board of Regents and there is no space available.

Mayor Johnson stated all the leases were signed during prior administrations and he, along with Mayor Pro-Tem Dr. Shabazz did not agree with the decision. Mayor Johnson agrees with the current Council that the City needs to terminate some of the lease agreements and get staff into buildings the City owns. The City will move towards the goal of owning their own building.

Alderman Leggett asked if the City owned space on Waters Avenue could be utilized.

Mayor Pro-Tem Dr. Shabazz wants Council to realize it will take time to move staff back into City owned buildings. With COVID-19 still very active, the City must be mindful of keeping staff safe.

Alderwoman Gibson-Carter suggested having a work session to fully discuss the City's leasing non-City owned space. She informed Council the City can terminate a lease at will. Alderwoman Gibson-Carter apologized and stated her purpose was not to break a lease, but to prepare the City for the time of lease renewal. Some of the staff (approximately 1/3) at SMN work in community services and could be moved to the neighborhood/community centers. The City should look at all options to create benefits to balance the Budget.

Mayor Johnson acknowledged Alderwoman Gibson-Carter's suggestions and reinforced the City Manager, and Acting City Manager Brown, will be working diligently to place staff in City facilities, where it makes the most sense.

Alderwoman Gibson-Carter reminded Council of Alderman Purtee mentioning an empty building in the 6th District that would be an ideal location for City operations. The City could use the current lease monies to purchase the building and renovate it for City use.

Alderwoman Wilder-Bryan reminded Council there will be spill overs from the current administration to the next. Since the leases were approved by the prior administration and will not expire until 2021, she asked Attorney Lovett if the City could break the leases. Attorney Lovett will look at the lease (SMN) and inform Council of the content.

Alderwoman Miller Blakely asked City Manager Monahan and Ms. Carter the status of the Judicial Center at Waters Avenue, the "It's Amazing" building. Is the building currently being used by the District Attorney and if so, would not the City have used it to place staff at that location. The building

is equipped and could be utilized for City staff. Ms. Carter was not aware of the status. After speaking to the Director, Alderwoman Miller Blakely was informed the programs used by the District Attorney had ended.

Alderman Leggett reported the prior administration approved an Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA). It is now being used as a family justice center by Chatham County District Attorney Meg Heap.

Mayor Johnson added the City will look at all City owned facilities to make efficient decisions on where to place staff.

Alderwoman Wilder-Bryan reminded Council the City has staff housed at the County.

Mayor Johnson said the City will look at opportunities and different paths for an ultimate goal for all City staff to be housed in City owned facilities.

[4. 311 System Upgrades](#)

[Exhibit 1: Presentation - 311 System Upgrades.pdf](#)

Not presented. Moved to the next meeting date, November 12, 2020.

City Manager Monahan reported the 311 System is currently live with a new smart phone and new apps.

Mayor Johnson adjourned the Work Session at 5:54 p.m.

The audio recordings of the work sessions can be found by copying and inserting the below links in your url:

<https://savannahgovtv.viebit.com/player.php?hash=vj0eUNgLro5X>

<https://savannahgovtv.viebit.com/player.php?hash=X30YzjkxXeTy>

Mark Massey, Clerk of Council

Date Minutes Approved: _____

Initials: _____

