



Meeting will begin at 3:00p.m.

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May 7, 2020 City Council Workshop

SAVANNAH CITY GOVERNMENT
SUMMARY/FINAL MINUTES
COUNCIL WORK SESSION & CITY MANAGER'S BRIEFING
May 7, 2020 – 3:00 p.m.

The work session was held at 3:02 p.m., via Zoom video communications.

PRESENT: Mayor Van R. Johnson, II, Presiding
 Alderwoman Kesha Gibson-Carter, At-Large, Post 1, Chairman
 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

OTHERS PRESENT:

City Manager Pat Monahan
 City Attorney Bates Lovett
 Director of Finance David Maxwell
 Director of Budget Melissa Carter
 Clerk of Council Mark Massey

Alderman Purtee offered the invocation followed by the Pledge of Allegiance which was recited in unison.

Workshop Agenda Items

[1. 2020 Adopted Budget and Capital Plan Discussion](#)

[Exhibit 1: 2020 Adopted Budget and Capital Plan Discussion- Agenda Detail.pdf](#)

Mayor Johnson extended condolences on behalf of the Council, to the families of Captain Kelly, Savannah Fire Department; Ms. Avalon Jenkins, Savannah Sanitation Department; Mr. Prince Johnson, Retired Director of Records Court; and Alderwoman Wilder-Bryan on the passing of her sister Phyllis Wilder Lewis.

Mayor Johnson gave an update on the COVID-19 statistics in the coastal health district.

Mayor Johnson turned the meeting over to City Manager Monahan to begin the Work Session. Mr. Monahan gave a brief outline of the Budget process before introducing Director of Budget Management Melissa Carter and Director of Finance David Maxwell.

Ms. Carter began with a presentation of FY2020 Operating Budget and Capital Plan. She gave information on how the public can access the 2020 Budget information on the City's web page (www.savannahga.gov/budget). The following was presented for Council:

- **Budget Introduction** - presented
 - Budget Information Timeline
 - Fiscal Officers - City Manager, Senior Director Finance, Senior Director Budget and their explanation of duties
 - Budget Highlights
 - Phases of the Budget Cycle - four phases
 - Preparation
 - Legislative Approval
 - Executive Implementation
 - Financial Reporting
- **Structure & Policy Overview**
 - Budgetary Guidelines & Principles
 - Fund Structure
 - Financial Policies
 - Budget Process

Questions/Discussion Break:

Mayor Pro-Tem Dr. Shabazz questioned the 1.8% tax revenue increase and if the increase is viable. In light of the current unemployment rate due to the pandemic, she asked if this will have an impact on the tax collection rate, the current, and delinquent tax collection rate. She further asked when the current Council will be able to have a retreat to establish a priority strategic plan.

Alderwoman Miller Blakely expressed concern if the City will be collecting impact fees from developers given the pandemic situation.

Alderman Palumbo requested clarification on collection of impact fees and the prior naming of those impact fees. He commented the ramifications, if the City increases taxes, it may drive businesses away from the City.

Alderwoman Lanier questioned the different strategic plans, the spending, and the priorities of the plan. Since the year is close to a half way point, Alderwoman Lanier asked if there will be an opportunity for adjustments to the priority spending plan.

Alderwoman Gibson-Carter inquired if there was an agenda item addressing impact fees and if the City Manager has established policies on impact fees.

Staff continued their presentation as follows:

- **Coronavirus & City Budget**
 - Only four months of data
 - Too soon to make any financial predictions
- **General Fund Overview**
 - Financial update
 - No adjustments at this time related to property tax
 - Currently see caution in the area of hotel/motel tax collection
 - Any adjustment to Budget may not come before August
 - Stimulus Tax Funds will be considered
 - There will be limits on reappropriating funds
 - Reported on current tax collection (excluding April 2020), predicting under budget numbers
 - Explained how property taxes are calculated for the public
 - Explained outstanding debt service

Questions/Discussion Break:

Alderwoman Gibson-Carter requested explanations on the differences in FY2019 and FY2020 Vehicle Tax, Utility Tax and Blighted Property Redevelopment Tax.

Alderwoman Miller Blakely questioned if there was a City special tax district for water transportation (Hutchinson Island). She asked if the Downtown Savannah Authority (DSA) could issue bonds for areas outside of downtown.

Mayor Pro-Tem Dr. Shabazz requested a monthly update for Council on the impacted revenues.

Alderwoman Lanier stated the data shows the City will experience a short-fall. She stressed the importance of establishing a Community Benefits Policy.

Staff continued their presentation as follows:

- **Fiscal Planning Overview** - presented
 - General Fund Overview - sources of revenue
 - General Fund Expenses - expenditures
 - Explained Revenues by Source
 - Explained Expenditures by Type and by Service Center (departments)
 - 2020 Permanent Authorized Positions

Questions/Discussion Break:

Mayor Johnson explained the restructuring of the City's compensation plan as a major improvement in the FY2020 Budget.

Alderwoman Miller Blakely questioned the 'Mayor and Aldermen' line items as it relates to the use of Aldermen's working expenses.

Alderwoman Gibson-Carter questioned the pay increases of City regular and management staff, namely the sanitation workers pay scale and future increases for the same. Administrative expenses increased over the last fiscal year. She expressed concern for the amounts contributed to non-profits and social services throughout the City.

Alderman Palumbo questioned the City Manager as it relates to the historic increase for the pay and compensation study, and if the approved nine million dollar increase applied to all classifications including sanitation workers. It is the single largest increase in the City's history.

Aldermen Purtee recognized the public service workers and their contributions to the City's success/development.

Mayor Pro-Tem Dr. Shabazz advocated for the DBE's and minority/female owned businesses in the City to receive contracts from the City. She reiterated her dissatisfaction for the issuance of bonds for public improvement projects. She stated the Council must recognize other districts throughout the City to receive these bonds for public improvements projects other than downtown. She informed the City Manager there were numerous amounts of dry trash lined up on the streets and residents would like to know when the debris will be collected.

Alderwoman Lanier addressed the coming shortfall this Fall, due to the pandemic. The City will need to make hard decisions as it relates to staffing level initiatives (restructuring, top heavy staff) for savings. She has concerns for the non-profits and social services receiving funding.

Alderwoman Miller Blakely inquired about community partnership program federal grants and the City's support in distribution of those funds. She questioned if all of the public service employees are paid to the proper levels (supervisors paid less than their subordinates).

Alderwoman Gibson-Carter requested the City Manager to perform a survey of the top ten paid professionals within the police department including their pay, education and tenure for differences in pay. She identified and discussed cuts within the social services funds from the City. She requested the City to submit a Resolution to House Speaker Ms. Pelosi and Governor Kemp for assistance in the wake of the pandemic.

Mayor Pro-Tem Dr. Shabazz commended the City Manager on correcting his statement regarding the funds that decreased to social services as identified by Alderwoman Gibson-Carter.

Alderwoman Lanier questioned if the forty-five million dollar bond issue for the Arena was for the drainage project at the northern end of the Springfield Canal.

Staff continued their presentation as follows:

- **Capital Improvements Program**- presented
 - Identification of revenue stream
 - Capital Plan Budget Process
 - 2020 - 2024 Funding Summary
 - Reviewed the financial strategy
 - SPLOST Program projects identified
 - Capital Budget Overview outlined
 - Capital Investment Challenges

Questions/Discussion Break:

Alderwoman Miller Blakely questioned the activities of the City's Lobbyist to secure funds for the City.

Alderwoman Lanier thanked Ms. Carter and Mr. Maxwell for the presentation and asked for understanding/explanation on the SPLOST VI funding.

Mayor Pro-Tem Dr. Shabazz thanked Ms. Carter and Mr. Maxwell for an informative presentation.

Alderwoman Gibson-Carter questioned if any reprioritizing of capital projects was done in the wake of the pandemic. She asked City Attorney Lovett to detail the options of unused SPLOST dollars and the steps that need to be taken by the City to acquire any of those funds.

Alderman Palumbo thanked Ms. Carter and Mr. Maxwell on the budget information. He questioned Ms. Carter's statement with respect to drawing from any of the reserve funds.

Alderwoman Miller Blakely addressed Alderman Purtee regarding a neighborhood (Mohawk) meeting.

Mayor Johnson thanked the Finance and Communication teams for all the hard work displayed for the meeting.

Mayor Johnson informed the Council, the next meeting will be Thursday, May 14, 2020, Work Session and Regular Meeting.

Hearing no further business, Mayor Johnson adjourned the meeting at 5:53 p.m.

The audio recording of the Council Meeting can be found by copying and inserting the below link in your url:

<https://savannahgovtv.viebit.com/player.php?hash=LKB6lSn43gKi>

Date Minutes Approved: _____

Initials: _____

