

AUGUST 17, 2021
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
GOVT. CTR. – RM. 100 (Virtual and in-person Meeting)

PRESENT: Mayor Bo Dorough
Mayor Pro Tem Matt Fuller (virtual)
City Commissioners: Jon Howard, BJ Fletcher Chad Warbington (Demetrius
Young and (Bob Langstaff, Jr - virtual)
City Attorney: C. Nathan Davis
Interim City Mgr.: Steven Carter

Mayor Dorough called the (virtual) meeting to order at 8:32 a.m., confirmed the attendance of those on the virtual conference call, and opened the public hearing.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

1. Joint Public Hearing for Landmark Designation

Paul Forgey, Planning Director, discussed information (copy on file) regarding the establishment of a historic landmark (CB King Law Office located on N. Madison). He introduced Valerie Buchanan, Bryant Harden, Angie Gibson, and Molly Swan, members of the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) who are present, with other members being on the virtual call. He explained the process to include HPC reviewing/making recommendations to the Commission with a Commission vote scheduled for September.

Ms. Gibson briefly spoke in favor of the change and discussed reasons for the property being designated as a historic landmark, including the role played during the Civil Rights Era, mentoring, and employing many lawyers, etc.

In reply to Commissioner Howard regarding the flood plain, Mr. Forgey advised that much of south Albany is in the flood plain. Commissioner Howard thanked Ms. Gibson for her remarks and agreed that this is a good idea.

Commissioner Fletcher also agreed that this is a good idea due to the historical significance.

Commissioner Warbington also agreed with comments regarding the historical significance, adding that his concern is that the property does not comply with code standards, needing major repair; asking if there are options/plans. Ms. Gibson stated that advocates are being courted with Albany Technical College and Turner Job Corps committing to use the building as a training opportunity to help students hone their skills by renovating the building. Commissioner Warbington asked if there are immediate actions that should be taken with Mr. Forgey advising that the property is structurally sound; however, it needs to be secure to keep people from gaining entry. He discussed flood plain requirements, rehab, etc., to keep the property historic and financially feasible, adding that the recommendation is that the City should not pursue demolition of the building. He stated that this project will bring tourism to Albany and said he feels it is a win-win project. Discussion followed regarding demolition and the City taking it off the list to preserve the property.

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Commissioner Young also agreed that this project is of historical significance, adding that it has personal significance for him as his mother started her legal career there and his parents met at the office. He commented on the civil rights movement and having this designation will increase civil rights tourism, etc.

Mayor Dorough clarified the process of designating the property as a historical landmark, including HPC meetings/recommendation, the City Commission having the final decision on this project. He also suggested that a plan is needed to preserve the building including expenses, maintenance costs and the title of the property must be transferred and recommended the Civil Rights Museum being involved. He commented on his research of Mr. King's accomplishments and sacrifices during the Civil Rights Era and recognized Chevene King (son of CB King) who thanked all on behalf of his family.

This portion of the public hearing was closed and the following public hearing was opened.

2. Albany Sign Ordinance Case# 21-038

Mr. Forgey discussed information (copy on file) regarding the proposed changes to the sign ordinance and the process, advising that public hearings were held, comments from stakeholders were received and the author of the original sign ordinance reviewed the proposed changes. Suggested changes include: 1) increase allowable number of multi-message signs (currently capped at 100) with the recommendation to add more signs as the City will run out of permits (recommended increasing to 150); 2) additional and clarified definitions; 3) billboard rules and maintenance standards; 4) a variance procedure (currently no appeal process is in place); 5) other changes including minor wording and legal nature/small editorial updates. He advised that the recommendation is to have cap multi-message signs at 150 and allowing these type signs in other districts if further than 250 ft from residential zoned property. He explained that multi-message signs are allowed to occupy 50% or less of a total sign face, with a request made to change it to 100%, allowing the entire sign to be a multi-message sign (the Planning Commission did not approve this request). Regarding billboard rules, he discussed recommendations to 1) inspect every two years rather than yearly, 2) add C-1 as an allowable district, 3) replacement of multi-message billboard increased from 2.5 (times same square footage) to 3.5 (times same square footage) and must come down from regular billboards and, 4) increase the number of multi-message billboards from eight to ten. Regarding maintenance, he advised the recommendation is to remove or repair signs in poor condition at the owner's expense. Regarding the variance procedure he said it will allow owners to request a variance from the rules, which comes to him as the Planning and Development Director; however, if he denies the variance, it is taken to the Planning Commission

Commissioner Howard questioned political signs with Mr. Forgey stating that the sign ordinance does not distinguish political sign from other signs, with a political sign allowed to stay up year-round provided it is on private property/not on public property, etc. Regarding utility poles, Mr. Forgey agreed that it violates City code if posted on one.

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Commissioner Fletcher commented on small businesses placing signs in places that are not allowed and asked to focus on signs that are defaced, not in service, broken, etc., they are unattractive. Mr. Forgey advised that letters are sent to owners of signs that are in disrepair.

Commissioner Warbington questioned the appeal process with Mr. Forgey explaining that this is administrative within his office and the Planning Commission; if he denies the variance, the Planning Commission considers the request and if they deny it, the matter will go to court. Commissioner Warbington questioned churches and schools which applied for zoning to erect signs and asked how this is addressed. Mr. Forgey explained that signs must be at least 250 ft. from residential property; in the case of St. Theresa school, residences were more than 250 feet away, while Deerfield Windsor is right across the street from houses and rezoning was required and will continue to be needed in some cases, based on the location of the sign.

Regarding the variance, Mayor Dorough expressed concern of the billboard proximity to residential neighborhoods with Mr. Forgey explaining that the distance requirement only applies to multi-message signs, not billboards. Mayor Dorough asked the minimum amount of time for a display on electronic billboards with Mr. Forgey stating 10 seconds, adding that other multi-message signs are 20 seconds. He also commented on the high number of violations. Mayor Dorough noted that those that change every ten seconds are distracting and asked for a summary of the presentation.

SPEAKER APPEARANCE

Terry Lucas discussed the lack of successful African American businesses in Albany on the east, south and west side of Albany, adding that people come from other countries and get loans, (i.e., Indians) for stores, etc. He commented on slavery and giving people resources and tools to survive re: African American businesses, investing monies, caring whether the business succeeds, etc.

Commissioner Howard commented on a news article he read recently regarding the shift in black-owned businesses and population, etc.

Commissioner Fletcher referred to comments of Mr. Lucas, adding that most of the businesses that he referred to were privately owned and asked what can be done in his opinion. A brief discussion ensued.

Commissioner Young thanked Mr. Lucas for his comments and agreed that more should be done to assist black businesses in Albany. He mentioned the hit that was taken due to the pandemic last year and many businesses going out of businesses, adding that a proclamation will be scheduled next week honoring black-owned businesses. He commented on the suggestion to use monies of the federal government to aid businesses.

OPIOID ABUSE IN ALBANY

Phyllis Rolle, Dougherty County Public Health Department Analyst., discussed information and

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statistics regarding the Opioid epidemic and the impact on Albany.

Commissioner Howard thanked Ms. Rolle for the information, agreeing that this is a huge problem in Albany/Dougherty County.

Mayor Pro Tem Fuller thanked Ms. Rolle for the information asking if there is anything the Commission can do to support the efforts. Ms. Rolle stated that she asked Commissioners to meet with her regarding their areas.

Commissioner Fletcher stated that the public safety committee has discussed the situation and asked to meet with Ms. Rolle to continue discussions.

Commissioner Young thanked Ms. Rolle for the information, the resources that are provided to the community and asked to meet with her as well.

Mayor Dorough asked to get the numbers so that the public can be aware of the number of overdoses and deaths in 2019/2020 with Ms. Rolle stating that she will forward the information to Mayor Dorough.

Commissioner Howard suggested educating the public by putting information in the newspapers to include the type of drugs that people overdose on.

PUBLIC SAFETY MATTERS

ALCOHOL LICENSE APPLICATIONS – TRANSFER OF OWNERSHIPS

Marshal Walter Norman, Business License Director/Interim Code Enforcement Director, discussed information (copy on file) regarding the following:

1. Lil Whiskey River Inc; d/b/a Lil Whiskey River Lounge; 2900 Sylvester Rd.; D. Hart/Agent; Liquor, Beer and Wine Consumption (WARD I)

In reply to Commissioner Howard, Marshal Norman commented on the proximity of the nearest church and advised that requirements were met.

Marshal Norman noted the typo and advised that the location is in Ward 4 and not Ward 5 as noted on the agenda. He then discussed information (copy on file) regarding the following:

2. Shree Dhan Investment Inc; d/b/a Save Rite; 427 S. Westover Blvd; B. Porter/Agent; Beer and Wine Package (WARD 4)

Commissioner Warbington asked how the issue is addressed when the owner listed (on the application) and person listed on tax records are not the same person; Marshal Norman explained

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that the purchaser of the building, Amit Barot leased it to Dineshchandra Barot, advising that he is not aware of them completing the contract with the previous owner of the property. Commissioner Warbington asked the closing date and the actual owner with Marshal Norman stating that he has the lease that is signed by the applicant.

PUBLIC WORKS MATTERS

SPEED TABLES RE: 800 BLOCK OF LIPPITT DRIVE

Bruce Maples, Director of Engineering, discussed information (copy on file) regarding the request to install traffic speed tables.

In reply to Commissioner Howard, Mr. Maples stated that he will provide information regarding the process.

Commissioner Fletcher stated that this is in her ward and thanked staff for their assistance and the neighborhood/school which signed off on this matter.

In reply to Commissioner Warbington, Mr. Maples advised that only the 800 block of Lippitt Dr., will have the speed tables.

Commissioner Young thanked staff for bringing this forward and commented on the public safety factor and the process of obtaining signatures, etc.

PUBLIC FUNCTION MATTERS

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FIVE YEAR UPDATE

Mr. Forgey discussed information (copy on file) regarding the submission of the five-year update of the Albany/Dougherty Comprehensive Plan to DCA for review and as required by State rules must be adopted by both governments prior to October 31st. He briefly discussed what is reviewed by the State including accomplishments, Community Work Program, the broadband element and the updated Needs and Opportunities. He mentioned another public hearing scheduled for next Monday, August 23 at 5:30 pm and advised that the City will have the opportunity to vote on this August 24, with County voting on August 30. The report will then be submitted to the State for review and by the end of October, Commissioners will consider adopting the Plan.

There were no questions/comments on this matter.

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCE MATTERS

PURCHASES:

Yvette Fields, Central Services Director, discussed the following (copy on file)

1. Heavy Duty Lifts (Fleet Management); Sourcewell Contract
Estimated exp. \$47,559.83

In reply to Mayor Dorough, Peter Bednar, Fleet Management Director, discussed use of the lift equipment, which is portable.

Joshua Williams, Buyer, discussed the following (copy on file):

2. Professional Services and Hardware; Synchronet, Inc.,
Total exp. \$165,777.00

In reply to Commissioner Warbington, John Dawson, Interim IT Director, stated that staff is recommending this proposal and explained scheduled down time for maintenance, with the information relayed to customers

Mayor Dorough commented on this being a single source bid with Mr. Dawson agreeing and explained reaching out to other vendors, however, they were unable to provide a complete quote.

Ms. Fields discussed the following (copy on file):

3. Alamo Tractor w/Boom; Flint Equipment Co., Albany, GA;
Estimated exp. \$172,599.52

In reply to Commissioner Warbington, Utility Operations Director Stacey Rowe stated that this is the equipment they have been waiting on for the last several months; it is a highly utilized piece of equipment for maintaining canals, holding ponds, ditches, clearing overgrowth in alleys, etc.

Commissioner Young questioned this being part of storm water maintenance with Mr. Rowe, explaining that the equipment is for vegetation/right-of-way maintenance and used for several applications.

In reply to Mayor Dorough, Mr. Bednar stated that the resale value may be approximately \$3500, adding that surplus property is auctioned on GovDeals.

Regarding the following item, Mayor Dorough recognized William Wright to discuss.

Mr. Wright distributed information (copy on file) and referred to a four-year old letter addressed to former Mayor Hubbard. He stated that everything the City is proposing is already Federal law;

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the City is not updating but merely reaffirming what the law requires and this is called ‘rope-a-dope’. He stated that on August 27 at 9:00 AM, citizens will be meeting here to celebrate the 58th anniversary of the 1963 march on Washington, which predated the 1964 Civil Rights Act. He advised that there are 11 titles to the Act, with the City of Albany violating nine of them. He discussed transportation grant funds the City has received since 1974 and black-owned businesses not benefitting from those funds; laws prohibiting discrimination and, the travesty of Eagles of America. He advised that because the City is not following the 1964 Civil Rights Acts, between now and August 27, it will be notified about this in Federal court.

Commissioner Fletcher noted Mr. Wright’s claim of not one African American receiving a \$1.0 million contract and mentioned Harry James, Glenn Singfield, Senator Winfred Dukes, etc., and asked to look into his claims. Mr. Wright stated that his claim specifically refers to DOT funding.

Commissioner Warbington asked Mr. Wright if he supports this policy that will be discussed next and if he is encouraging Commissioners to approve or deny it. Mr. Wright stated that Commissioners do not have to do that, it is already law; the City was supposed to be doing it all along, suggesting that four years later, the City decides to comply.

Commissioner Young asked that Mr. Wright suggest some of the updates he would like to see, based on his point that this is already Federal law. Mr. Wright mentioned a 60-page packet that was sent to the Federal and State level and discussed issues with DOT employees, and suggested instituting ‘circuit riders’ who perform random checks and ‘due process’. Commissioner Young stated that he and Commissioner Howard have been lobbying to do all that can be done to ensure that the City complies with Federal law, but to also give African American businesses an opportunity to be successful and help them to qualify for those contracts. He referred to Atlanta/Hartsfield International Airport in which Maynard Jackson used transportation funds to build the airport and was instrumental in securing work for skilled African Americans to be a part of the project suggesting that Albany should take the same approach and push for more participation of African Americans in local projects.

TRANSIT PROCUREMENT POLICY

Ms. Fields discussed information as noted (copy on file) regarding the request to approve a revised Procurement Policy and advised that this is required when federal funds are used in a purchase.

David Hamilton, Transportation Director, added that the policy adopted in 2018 was not specific to Albany Transit, it was adopted by all transit agencies.

Mayor Dorough recognized William Wright to comment on the following item.

UPDATE RE: DOWNTOWN MASTER PLAN AND MARKET ANALYSIS

Mr. Wright stated that there have been approximately ten-12 master plans, which he has reviewed. The one from 1996, the City paid Peter Drey over a million dollars and the other 11 were almost

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as worthless as the one from Peter Drey. He commented on that plan, economic development, having an anchor tenant downtown (i.e., Costco), time he spent as a WG&L Commissioner, changes he made while on that board, reasons businesses fail (undercapitalized, not having good managers, etc.) with Albany not changing the dynamics and until that happens everything will remain the same.

Lequrica Gaskins, Downtown Manager, discussed the impact of the bankruptcy of the selected consultant, Lord Aeck Sargent, and asked for direction due to this situation.

In reply to Mayor Dorough, Mr. Davis clarified that the project would need to be rebid or an evaluation of proposals by the other two consultants who originally bid.

In reply to Commissioner Howard, Ms. Gaskins advised that staff was not aware of the bankruptcy, adding that she would like to get the plan completed. Commissioner Howard suggested rebidding.

Mayor Pro Tem Fuller asked if any payment has been made to the firm; Ms. Gaskins advised that no funds have been issued thus far.

Commissioner Fletcher agreed with Commissioner Howard to rebid.

Commissioner Warbington clarified that number two could be chosen with Ms. Gaskins advising that number two or three out of the ten proposals could be considered with the recommendation to choose either of those. Commissioner Warbington asked to review the minutes when the Commission interviewed the top three with his recommendation to go with number two or three rather than rebidding. Ms. Gaskins stated that it was in March 2021 when the Commissioners conducted the interviews. She asked that when Commissioners look at the top two, if the top candidate (#2) is not available they are permitted to go to the next consultant versus coming back before the Commission asking for permission.

In reply to Commissioner Langstaff, Ms. Gaskins stated that the contract was awarded but no documentation was executed. When Procurement contacted Lord Aeck Sargent, regarding executing the contract, at that time they advised that they were going through the bankruptcy process. Commissioner Langstaff referenced Chapter 11, with the purpose of allowing the company to continue in existence and conducting business while reorganizing. He commented on public policy, etc., as it pertains to bankruptcy law and suggested waiting to award another bid. He asked Mr. Davis to consult a bankruptcy specialist (locally) to make sure all options are on the table, adding that he finds it odd that the City would be able to rebid it or get out of it.

Mayor Dorough noted that some firms are absorbed by national firms and discussed information as referenced. In reply to Mayor Dorough, Mr. Davis stated that he will consult a local attorney regarding bankruptcy. Commissioner Langstaff asked to have an opinion from a bankruptcy attorney before moving forward. Mayor Dorough stated that his suggestion is to get information (minutes to review) and decide on number one or two to keep this item moving.

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Additional discussion followed with Mayor Dorough asking Mr. Davis to send the letter from Lord Aeck Sargent regarding this matter, adding that the minutes and proposals/presentation will be provided beforehand for Commission review so that a vote can be taken next week.

508/510 PINE AVE., RE: (FORMER LIBERTY HOUSE)

Ms. Gaskins discussed information (copy on file) regarding the request for direction for the disposition of 508/510 Pine Ave. (formerly the Liberty House), which reverted back to the City January 20, 2021. She advised that staff recommends disposing of the property and using the proceeds for renovation of another downtown building owned by the City or to assign it to the Land Bank.

Commissioner Warbington suggested putting the property on the market and determining where the money goes once it is sold. In reply to Commissioner Warbington, Mr. Davis opined that the property will be declared surplus and can be sold at auction or the city can accept sealed bids. Commissioner Warbington clarified that this will be on the next agenda with Mr. Carter stating that his suggestion is to allow staff to proceed and bring it back.

Additional discussion followed on whether to sell the property at auction with Mayor Dorough agreeing that the option to sell the property, getting the best price and then deciding what to do with the money is his suggestion. He added that Ms. Gaskins' continual struggle, contrary to comments made today, is that the City is not responsible for businesses not being successful and investing in downtown is a speculative venture. He mentioned 'white box' (getting buildings ready for someone to come in) makes a lot of difference, which can be addressed later. He said he could support Ms. Gaskins premature request for the funds, permission to sell the property.

At this time, Mayor Dorough confirmed with Commissioners that executive session will begin at 11:15 in room 120.

CITY MANAGER'S UPDATE

Mr. Carter asked for permission to apply for grants and to add this to the agenda next week, as the window for opportunity closes August 31. In reply to Mayor Dorough, he advised that the projects are for: 1) CSO project, 2) broadband expansion, and 3) Civil Rights Institute.

Mayor Dorough stated that a letter was sent regarding meeting with the three principals of Government Solution and state lobbyists regarding monies that are allocated to the State with recommendations to local governments regarding allocations throughout the state. He advised that the first priority is the separation project, with funds for broadband, economic development and tourism. The consensus was to have this on the next agenda for vote.

Commissioner Warbington asked to consider earmarks from Congressman Bishop's office and monies for a teen center at Albany High, Henderson and Bill Miller and asked if a packet should

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be developed to ask for funds for these items. A brief discussion followed with Mayor Dorough clarifying discussions with the lobbyists and their recommendations.

Commissioner Young stated that this is another part of the American Rescue Plan and mentioned that during budget discussion the Commission was aware that there would be more funds for infrastructure and other projects including those mentioned by Commissioner Warbington. He commented on the City having discretion to use the other funds for projects, i.e., allocating funds for recreation which may require a budget amendment. He commented on increasing Albany Utilities broadband services for citizens, discussing the current service, which leaves a lot to be desired.

Mr. Carter briefly discussed the uptick in COVID cases and stated that he will keep the Commission updated on this health issue as it affects the employees. In reply to Mayor Dorough, Mr. Carter explained the hybrid situation whereby employees can work from home, etc., adding that all services/offices are open and operating.

In reply to Commissioner Howard, Mr. Carter stated that there is a mandate that anyone entering City buildings are to use masks, adding that the Government Center Building is sanitized (fogged) on Tuesday and Thursday each week.

Commissioner Warbington commented on incentives for vaccinations for City employees. Regarding state applications, he advised that it is not just municipalities that can apply for funding; counties and non-profits can make application to receive funds as well, including broadband and COVID impacts.

In reply to Mayor Dorough, Mr. Davis advised that executive session will be pending litigation in which a proposed tolling agreement will be discussed along with the lawsuit.

EXECUTIVE SESSION (pending litigation)

At 11: 15, Commissioner Fletcher moved to enter executive session to discuss pending litigation, seconded by Commissioner Howard, and following a roll call vote the motion unanimously carried as follows:

Ward I	yes
Ward II	yes
Ward III	yes
Ward IV	yes
Ward V	yes
Ward VI	yes
Mayor	yes

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At 11:35 AM, Commissioner Howard moved to exit executive session, seconded by Commissioner Warbington and, following a roll call vote the motion unanimously carried as follows:

Ward I	yes
Ward II	yes
Ward III	yes
Ward IV	yes
Ward V	yes
Ward VI	yes
Mayor	yes

The meeting reconvened at 11:35 AM, with Mayor Dorough announcing that in executive session a proposal regarding the lawsuit was discussed from the plaintiff, South Georgia Rails to Trails, to agree that the statute of limitations will be tolled while an application for a State grant to fund the Rails project is submitted and being considered with the understanding that the lawsuit will be dismissed during that time.

Commissioner Warbington move to approve the tolling agreement, seconded by Commissioner Howard and, following a roll call vote the motion unanimously carried.

ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDA

Commissioner Fletcher mentioned a serious situation going on in the Avenues regarding dangerous dogs, suggesting that this needs to be addressed. She also mentioned the speed bump policy which she suggested should be amended to make it easier on citizens.

Commissioner Warbington recommended that the Commission terminate use of Facebook Live for Commission meetings, adding that he learned at the GMA conference no other city is using that platform. He discussed the Commission's responsibility for being transparent, but not responsible for providing an avenue for citizens to attack Commissioners or posting false/misinformation. He referred to comments being currently posted that underscores taking action and ending it and clarified that his agenda item is to terminate livestreaming meetings on YouTube and Facebook. Mr. Carter advised that other options can be explored and brought back.

Mayor Dorough stated that this matter would be considered under Other Business if Commissioner Warbington wants to act on it today.

Commissioner Young stated that without detailed discussion, he would not want to act on Commissioner Warbington's request, explaining his reasons.

Mayor Dorough stated that his item for a future agenda is to reconsider the policy regarding purchases under \$200,000 made by the Utility Board not requiring Commission approval;

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however, there is an exception for SPLOST projects, adding that he sees no reason for Commission approval being required and is one less hurdle.

OTHER BUSINESS

Commissioner Howard asked that the Public Information Officer (Phyllis Banks) post on the Access Channel and social media that it is illegal for dirt bikes/4-wheelers to be operating on sidewalks/roadways. APD Chief Michael Persley stated that this information will continue to be posted.

Commissioner Fletcher mentioned Board vacancies and receiving calls from interested citizens, adding that she thinks Ms. Tolbert is working on this.

Commissioner Warbington advised that Commissioners need to provide Mr. Carter direction regarding his proposal to end the platform of Facebook and YouTube live feeds and to use a neutral live feed on the City's website to include no comments. In reply to Commissioner Fletcher, he advised that a straw vote would provide Mr. Carter direction.

Commissioners Howard, Fletcher, Langstaff, and Mayor Pro Tem Fuller expressed support for looking at another platform.

Commissioner Young stated that comments can be disabled on Facebook/YouTube and discussed Commission meetings being available for the public to see/hear.

Commissioner Warbington countered that only 65% of people are on Facebook, meaning that 35% do not have access to meetings. He contended that having a platform/link on the City's website provides access to everyone and not just those on social media.

Commissioner Young interjected that the City has other platforms beside Facebook; however, it is the most popular, suggesting broadcasting meetings multiple times on Channel 16.

Mayor Dorough suggested putting this as an agenda item and agreed with Commissioner Warbington regarding the nasty comments. He advised that the City of Albany does not have to air meetings, but the decision was made, and rightly so, to air them. The issue being the lack of censorship in which the public can take potshots and make derogatory comments; it is not an issue of transparency and is not positive for the City. If comments can be suppressed on Facebook, that should accomplish the Commission's goal, if not, another platform is needed. He asked Commissioner Warbington if he agrees for this being on the first agenda in September, with a presentation from staff with alternate options.

Commissioner Warbington noted that five Commissioners were in support of whatever Mr. Carter determines to be the best platform for broadcasting City meetings. The key issue is to not allow public feedback; our TAC department is the subject matter expert. Mr. Carter stated that there are

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many options 1) suppress comments, 2) use a different platform; 3) stream it from the website; 4) and meetings are always on Channel 16, adding that direction from Commissioners is needed.

Commissioner Young mentioned the lack of public input and changing platforms making it more difficult for the public to view meetings, suggesting that the prudent thing to do is disable the ability for public comments.

Mayor Dorough countered that the public does not have the right to make comments/narratives during meetings or interrupting them, adding that he needs direction regarding the wishes of Commissioners.

Commissioner Warbington stated that with five Commissioners supporting the request, Mr. Carter has direction and maybe by next Tuesday, the method of broadcasting meetings can be brought back. Addressing Mr. Davis, he said that it was his impression that comments could not be disabled as it is considered censorship to do so. Mr. Carter advised that comments can be turned off; however, he does not know the legal ramifications.

Mayor Dorough stated that his two issues are 1) alcohol licenses, with two discussed today, he asked how many of the approximate 215 alcohol licenses were issued to restaurants. The other issue 2) a policy that if any member of the public wants to speak on any item on the agenda, they are allowed to speak, clarifying with Ms. Tolbert. Ms. Tolbert replied that this is within the Mayor's discretion, adding that a policy is being developed. Mayor Dorough stated that it is not a good policy to allow anyone to speak just because something is on the agenda, especially when someone becomes a 'regular'; a policy is needed to clarify and make it equal for all the public.

Commissioner Fletcher mentioned that quite often, when speakers address Commissioners, it becomes a debate and agreed with Mayor Dorough regarding the same speaker appearing over and over again. However, Commissioners have the right to shut down the negative comments and false narratives.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 12:08 p.m.

SONJA TOLBERT, CMC
CITY CLERK