

AUGUST 2, 2022  
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE  
GOVT. CTR. – RM. 100 (Virtual and in-person Meeting)

PRESENT: Mayor Bo Dorough  
Mayor Pro Tem: Vilnis Gaines (virtual)  
City Commissioners: Jon Howard, Jalen Johnson and Demetrius Young  
Virtual Attendee: Chad Warbington  
City Manager: Steven Carter  
City Attorney: C. Nathan Davis

Mayor Dorough called the meeting to order at 8:32 am, followed by attendance roll call.

## **AGENDA ADOPTION**

Commissioner Howard moved to adopt the agenda, seconded by Commissioner Johnson, and following a roll call vote, the motion unanimously carried.

## **REPORT OF THE CITY CLERK**

The Clerk reminded the Commission of the upcoming retreat scheduled for September 24-26.

## **REPORT OF THE CITY ATTORNEY**

Mr. Davis reminded the Commission of the Historical Preservation Appeals Hearing regarding certificates of appropriateness scheduled for Tuesday, August 16 at 8:30 a.m. He stated that he will provide the minutes once he gets them from Planning and, in reply to Mayor Dorough, he was advised that the staff report will be included along with recommendations.

## **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

Public Safety: (Alcohol Study)

It was noted that the presenters were on their way and that this item will be discussed later. (see pg. 3)

Planning/Engineering:

1. Road & Alley Closure (Benjamin Ave)

Robert Griffin, Interim Director of Engineering, discussed information as noted and showed a map of the location, (copy on file) regarding closing the road and alley on Benjamin Ave. In reply to Commissioner Howard, Mr. Griffin stated that a car wash will be in the area; however, plans have not been submitted.

In reply to Commissioner Warbington, Mr. Griffin advised that the easements will be kept by the City for maintenance and access to infrastructure. Bruce Maples, Asst. City Manager, explained that to abandon the easement, City infrastructure must be relocated; once that is complete, they would ask for abandonment of the easements. Commissioner Warbington clarified that the City is not abandoning, only closing the alley at this point; Mr. Griffin agreed.

In reply to Mayor Dorough regarding utility easements with no infrastructure: Mr. Maples advised that if there is no infrastructure, the easement can be abandoned at the same time the alley is closed.

## 2. Vacant Property Registration

Paul Forgey, Planning Director, discussed information (copy on file) regarding the implementation of the program, adding that once a vendor is chosen, it will be brought back to the Commission for approval. He noted that the current vacant property ordinance is not enforceable due to State law and explained the registration process, which includes a one-time fee of up to \$100.00, providing a contact name for those owning the property and allows Code to immediately move forward with the process. He stated that he will look at what other cities are doing, with most having a program in place and most are in the Atlanta area.

Commissioner Warbington stated that this is only for properties that owners have abandoned and are vacant, adding that these properties have the potential to put the City at risk because of gang activity/crimes, homeless people, etc. Mr. Forgey agreed and explained that property classified as vacant has been without utilities for over 60 days, however, certain properties can be excluded (i.e., those listed for rent/sale) and will be added in the ordinance.

Commissioner Young commented on out-of-town owners and the process, with Mr. Forgey agreeing that some owners will be difficult to contact, and that the vendor will make contact the owners, adding that a fine of up to \$1000.00 can be imposed on violators, with some ordinances providing for jail time. Regarding vacant property, he advised that options can be 60-100 days without connected utilities.

Commissioner Warbington stated that standards must be met, which is part of the registration process; Mr. Forgey stated that per other cities requirements, there is no requirement beyond registration. Commissioner Warbington suggested that this could be a tool for Historic Preservation.

Mr. Carter explained that the request is whether to move forward with staff's recommendation.

It was noted that Mayor Pro Tem Gaines was on the call at this time (8:57).

Commissioner Young mentioned weighing the consequences as it relates to people not being contacted for whatever reason, adding that he assumes the City's current ordinance requires vacant property to be boarded up, etc.

Mayor Dorough stated that reducing slum and blight is a priority, adding that this tool being available to assist an outside vendor makes it worthwhile to pursue.

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In reply to Commissioner Warbington, discussion followed regarding a straw vote today or a resolution to approve the request at the business meeting (August 23<sup>rd</sup>). The Clerk advised that after speaking with Mr. Davis, it was decided that the item can be listed on the August 23<sup>rd</sup> meeting agenda as a recommendation from staff for vote.

Public Safety:

1 Alcohol Study

At this time, Aunjrae Barnes, Intern from GA Tech, reviewed a power point presentation (copy on file) regarding Alcohol Establishments (AE). He advised that Natera Perkins, his partner, is not present and stated that he is presenting data only for analysis and noted the purpose of the research project, to determine pros and cons. Reviewing an AE location and ward map, he reported that most establishments are in wards 3 & 5, with gas stations being the largest number of AE's. Ward 1- most gas stations; Ward 3 - most bars/pubs/clubs/convenience & package stores; Ward 5 – most restaurants; Ward 3 - most DUIs (total number of DUIs citywide – 235); and, wards 1, 2, 3, 6 - highest areas of poverty compared against DUI rates. He noted that he used Albany's GIS map for his research which indicated that 27.3% of Albany's population fall below the federal poverty rate (\$15,000/annually) with most DUIs occurring in those areas. He thanked City staff, which assisted him in gathering the data.

Commissioner Howard asked if the location of AE relates to the poverty level with Mr. Barnes stating that he would have to look into the data but agreed that this is his personal opinion. Commissioner Howard stated that the data confirms that there is a problem in Albany/Dougherty County and asked that a committee be formed to discuss the issues (poverty, etc.).

Commissioner Johnson thanked Mr. Barnes for the presentation and commented on various parts of the presentation suggesting that there should be a level of personal responsibility and providing tools and resources for people to make decisions and thrive. However, he suggested that individuals must take personal responsibility for their actions instead of shifting the blame onto those selling alcohol.

Commissioner Warbington thanked Mr. Barnes for the presentation and noted the DUI heat map with there being no way of knowing who these people were. Mr. Barnes stated that he used information on the incident report from the police department, with there being no way to determine where the person lived as opposed to where they received the DUI. Commissioner Warbington asked if his research included violent crime or family violence., Mr. Barnes explained that he did note where the most accidents occurred, but did not include violence/crime in order to prevent the data from having a more subjective point of view. Commissioner Warbington asked if an analysis of proximity to residents and AE was done with Mr. Barnes replying negatively.

Commissioner Young asked if the research was in line with other research models, with Mr. Barnes stating that the model was based on his instructor at Georgia Tech. Commissioner Young mentioned the CDC research model regarding alcohol density that gives a framework for density of AE and if it has an effect on crime, DUIs, etc. Mr. Barnes stated that he did not have time to come up with a correlation, but there were no comparisons to other cities.

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Mayor Dorough thanked Mr. Barnes for his presentation and said he is interested in breaking down the map of the city by census tracts based on poverty and suggested staff mapping this information regarding AEs to determine if there is an over-concentration in certain areas.

Commissioner Young again referred to the CDC guidelines/correlations/effects of alcohol on the community, adding that an RFP was requested that this be done to give a model following those guidelines, i.e., how many outlets per population as measured by the CDC, etc., and asked Mr. Carter to provide this information for review. Mr. Carter asked to have a copy of the research data.

Public Administration/Finance:

Joshua Williams and John Dawson were available to discuss information as noted (copy on file):

1. Internet Bandwidth re: Contract Renewal – GA Public Web

In reply to Commissioner Johnson, Mr. Dawson stated that there were two options and discussed changing providers, which is labor intensive and will negatively affect customers.

Commissioner Warbington commented on the sale of GA Public Web with Mr. Carter explaining the sale process, adding that contracts will be honored.

Mayor Dorough commented on cost for services reducing on the utility side.

2. FY 2023 Millage Rate

Derrick Brown, Chief Financial Officer, discussed information (copy on file) regarding the roll back of the millage rate to 9.957.

Commissioner Warbington thanked staff for due diligence in rolling back taxes for the eighth year.

Commissioner Young agreed with Commissioner Warbington, adding that he hopes the taxpayers recognize this.

In reply to Commissioner Howard, Mr. Carter stated that language is included as information is gathered to notify the public regarding the millage rate.

Mayor Dorough mentioned the unproductive meeting [re: SPLOST negotiations] with the Chairman, Commissioner Johnson and County Administrator in which he tried to point out that the rollbacks have mitigated the financial burden on taxpayers for eight straight years, adding that one of the County's commissioners said that the City makes money off the sewer, which until last year was false as it had operated in a deficit for years. He stated that he plans to put information together to address misunderstandings and misrepresentations regarding the CSS project and why it is necessary to separate the sewer.

## **CITY MANAGER'S COMMENTS**

Mr. Carter stated that a presentation is ready regarding the sanitary sewer project, adding that the information will be on the website (copy on file). Mr. Griffin discussed lift stations rehabs as noted on the color-coded maps, including pipe rehab (phase 1-5), 8<sup>th</sup> Ave Basin (phases 1-4) and miscellaneous projects. He advised that updates will be posted monthly on the website. In reply to Commissioner Warbington, Mr. Griffin stated that the information will be on the website this afternoon.

## **ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDA / MEMBER COMMENTS**

Commissioner Howard asked that the retirement information be on the next agenda with Mr. Davis advising that he and Mr. Brown are working on the item. Commissioner Howard asked the City Manager to invite SNAP (supplemental foods) to layout the census tract and poverty levels by ward.

Mayor Pro Tem Gaines asked for a copy of the presentation regarding alcohol establishments.

Commissioner Warbington asked for direction on pricing for Carver and Turner Gyms, i.e., cost estimate. Mr. Carter stated that local vendors will be used and that information is forthcoming and agreed that bids should be let by the end of the month re: Driskell Park.

Commissioner Young commented on gyms being priorities and asked that it encompasses all gyms with Carver not being a priority and suggested using the master plan from the consultant (Wood) re: Turner, Henderson and Bill Miller.

Mayor Dorough referenced his email regarding the gyms that he sent yesterday that will be on the next agenda to including funding, remediation, etc., recommending an RFP, looking at the program at Turner Gym and whether a handball court will be used, etc. [Regarding redistricting], he mentioned Ward maps and asked that the Clerk coordinate a date to look at the three maps to bring back to the Commission.

Commissioner Howard asked to have public safety announcements to the public that school will start on August 15<sup>th</sup>.

Yvette Fields, Asst. City Manager mentioned the 'Meet the City' activity at the Civic Center on Saturday and invited the Mayor and Commissioners to attend Saturday from 9 – 12 noon.

Commissioners Howard and Johnson stated that they will be unable to attend.

## **EXECUTIVE SESSION (Potential Litigation and Property Acquisition Matters)**

At 9:55 am, Commissioner Howard moved to enter executive session to discuss matters as noted, seconded by Commissioner Warbington and following a roll call vote, the motion unanimously carried as follows:

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

At 11:24 a.m., Commissioner Howard moved to exit executive session, seconded by Commissioner Johnson 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	absent
Ward VI	yes
Mayor	yes

At 11:25 a.m., Mayor Dorough reconvened the meeting and announced that discussion in executive session was on property acquisition and potential litigation [re: SPLOST negotiations] with a recommendation to hire outside council. Commissioner Johnson moved to hire Attorney Dan Lee, seconded by Commissioner Howard, and following a roll call vote, the motion unanimously carried. (it is noted that Mayor Pro Tem Gaines was not on the call at this time.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 11:26 a.m.

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SONJA TOLBERT, CMC  
CITY CLERK