

OCTOBER 4, 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, Chad Warbington and Demetrius Young  
Virtual Attendee: Bob Langstaff, Jr. (virtual)  
City Manager: Steven Carter  
City Attorney: C. Nathan Davis

Mayor Dorough called the meeting to order at 8:33 am, followed by attendance roll call. Mayor Dorough suggested that DA Greg Edwards speak first which will be followed by the Special Call Meeting

## **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

### SPEAKER APPEARANCE

1. Greg Edwards, Dougherty County DA, stated he will answer five questions regarding drug use in Albany/Dougherty County as follows:

The percentage of citizens in Albany/Dougherty County using drugs is estimated at 35-40%, including recreational drugs and ASU's transient student population. The most prevalent drug in Albany is marijuana and the number two drug is methamphetamine. Fentanyl is used in drugs as a 'cut' and added to enhance other drugs, i.e., cocaine and meth with the overall use becoming a source of addiction. The most concentrated areas in the city are Wards 1, 2, 3, and 6 regarding arrests.

Arrest figures in Albany: last year 409 arrests for drug offense of various natures: marijuana, cocaine and meth being the top three with highest arrests in May-June.

What can the Commission do to assist in the fight against drugs: the Drug Unit advised that the best tool for fighting drugs is having good informant pay and sufficient tech tools, i.e., pole cameras for surveillance, training of officers to use equipment, maintaining a supply of vehicles to carry out operations, providing a secure/secluded place for the drug unit.

Commissioner Howard clarified information that was presented, i.e., percentage of the population using drugs, most concentrated areas in the city and cost of cameras. Mr. Edwards discussed each item in detail and regarding arrests last year, he noted that 40 individuals were arrested under the RICO Act with the challenge being a sufficient number of defense attorneys to represent those on trial, adding that this is a statewide issue. Commissioner Howard commented on areas in Albany where mental health issues are concentrated as it relates to drug activities.

Mayor Pro Tem Gaines thanked Mr. Edwards for the job that he does and asked if there is a shortage of employees in his office. Mr. Edwards agreed and again noted that this is something statewide, adding that he has a staff of 16, that is now down to ten, but he is working to fill vacancies.

Commissioner Warbington referenced pay for informants, with Mr. Edwards stating that this is budgeted in the Albany/Dougherty Drug Unit, which has officers from the City and County. Commissioner

OCTOBER 4, 2022  
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE  
GOVT. CTR. – RM. 100 (Virtual and in-person Meeting)

Warbington asked Mr. Carter to provide information regarding this. He referenced pole cameras with Mr. Edwards advising that APD and Dougherty County use pole cameras, adding that cell phones are another piece of technology, with police officers needing sufficient technological assistance in using cell phone information that is taken. Discussion continued regarding DA investigators use of cell phone technology to determine where people are going/where they have been, which helps enforcement. Commissioner Warbington asked Mr. Carter to provide information on this, with Mr. Carter stating that he will discuss with Chief Persley. Commissioner Warbington noted that Albany's drug unit is located on a prominent street and asked Mr. Edwards if he is advocating that their office be relocated to a more isolated area. Mr. Edwards elaborated on his opinion advising that at a minimum, protective tarp and other measures are needed to obscure drug dealer's counter-surveillance of drug enforcers.

Mayor Dorough commented on the original location of the drug unit on Highland, adding that he was on the Commission when it was moved to the Pine Ave., location. Chief Persley noted that the second location of the unit was on Westgate before moving to the current location. Mayor Dorough stated that his concern is the number of cars at the current location and discussed social media, concerns include ensuring sufficient training and other measures. Mr. Edwards agreed that training and equipment, but specifically the training, are necessary.

Commissioner Howard asked the prediction for ten years from now, with Mr. Edwards stating that there will probably be a new drug and that there will continue to be problems based on trends.

At 9:14 a.m., the work session was called to order.

## **AGENDA ADOPTION**

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

## **REPORT OF THE CITY CLERK**

Mayor Dorough discussed the following (copy on file):

A. Reschedule November & December Meeting Dates from November 22 to November 29 and having the work session on December 6 with the business meeting on December 13.

There were no questions/comments on this item.

## **REPORT OF THE CITY ATTORNEY**

A. 201 Talafax Road

Mr. Davis advised that the church would like to purchase the property as noted (copy on file) and discussed the process.

OCTOBER 4, 2022  
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE  
GOVT. CTR. – RM. 100 (Virtual and in-person Meeting)

Commissioner Warbington clarified that anyone could purchase property once it is out for bid, with Mr. Davis agreeing that it will be for sale on the courthouse steps and advertised as such to the public.

Mayor Dorough commented on the legal requirements/processes, adding that bids are not required to be accepted; Mr. Davis agreed, adding that the Commission has final approval.

Commissioner Warbington commented on involving the Land Bank, i.e., City donating it [the property] to the Land Bank with Mr. Davis agreeing that both ways are viable options. In reply to Commissioner Warbington, Mr. Davis stated that Mr. Forgey can explain the process.

Commissioner Young stated that this property is in S. Albany and is in the flood plain, adding that it will be an asset to the church and he supports this.

Mayor Dorough stated that this will be handled inhouse, with Mr. Davis agreeing. Mayor Dorough asked to pursue the option of using the Land Bank and being paid fair market value.

Commissioner Warbington commented on the Land Bank's donation process, sell of the property and include the City having first right to repurchase the property should it ever come up for sale again.

## **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

### **I. Public Administration/Finance:**

Ricky Gladney, Central Services Material Specialist; Peter Bednar, Fleet Management Director; and Chad Arnold, Facilities Management Superintendent, were available to discuss the following:

1. Auto Bay Door Operators: Door & Window Co., Total exp. \$59,445.00

In reply to Mayor Dorough, Mr. Bednar stated that this is similar to a garage door opener.

In reply to Commissioner Young, Mr. Bednar gave a brief breakdown of what is provided in the purchase, i.e., the electric motor and remotes. Mr. Carter stated that the purchase includes the motor as well, adding that the doors, etc., are in place with the request for 16 motors to open the doors electronically.

In reply to Mayor Dorough, Mr. Carter noted that when the building was remodeled, the wires were added with the intent to buy the motors, however, monies ran out and now this will complete the project. In reply to Mayor Dorough, Mr. Arnold stated that the numbers are not readily available regarding the original cost of the project.

Commissioner Young asked if this is budgeted, with Mr. Carter agreeing.

OCTOBER 4, 2022  
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE  
GOVT. CTR. – RM. 100 (Virtual and in-person Meeting)

## **CITY MANAGER'S COMMENTS**

Mr. Carter mentioned Government 101 at Community Development and commented on the retreat from last weekend and moving forward with the action items.

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

Commissioner Warbington said he has two neighborhood watch meetings tonight and asked if there are documents ready for use regarding the upcoming SPLOST VIII vote that is on the ballot next month. He asked if plexi-glass and covers from the seats can be removed. Mr. Carter stated that he will discuss with Dougherty County if there is a consensus. Mayor Dorough cautioned that COVID numbers are rising again.

Commissioner Howard agreed with Mayor Dorough regarding the virus and being in the midst of flu season, Mayor Pro Tem Gaines stated that he is agreeable with either decision, Commissioner Langstaff said to keep as is, Commissioner Young said he agrees with Mayor Pro Tem Gaines. The consensus was to leave as is.

Commissioner Young said he is holding town hall meetings as well this month; one at Alice Coachman on Thursday at 6:30 and the other on Monday at ASU-East at 6:30 located in Orene Hall.

Mayor Dorough reminded the City Manager to get with the County regarding LOST.

Commissioner Howard asked that public works look at the entrances coming into Albany for cleanup (cutting grass and litter pickup) efforts regarding the upcoming ASU homecoming.

Mayor Dorough commented on GMA's HUB Cities meeting last week and noted that discussion included information on the spike in crime in various cities, what the City of Athens is doing to address homelessness and mental illnesses, two separate issues, but with significant correlation. He stated that in some cities, members of the community, including the homeless population, are compensated for collecting trash. Regarding the appearance of Albany, he suggested that it is the fault of citizens, not City staff, as they are doing all that they can. At one time, he stated that inmates were used to clean right-of-way, but various factors caused that program to be disbanded; however, it may be time to take a look at reinstating it.

## **EXECUTIVE SESSION** (Personnel Matter and property)

At 9:45 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 carried as follows:

Ward I	yes
Ward II	absent
Ward III	yes

OCTOBER 4, 2022  
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE  
GOVT. CTR. – RM. 100 (Virtual and in-person Meeting)

Ward IV	yes
Ward V	yes
Ward VI	yes
Mayor	yes

At 10:27a.m., 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	absent
Ward III	yes
Ward IV	yes
Ward V	yes
Ward VI	yes
Mayor	yes

At 10:28 a.m., the meeting was reconvened, with Mayor Dorrough announcing that no action was taken in executive session.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 10:28 a.m.

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SONJA TOLBERT, CMC  
CITY CLERK