

MAY 16, 2023
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
GOVT. CTR. – RM. 100 (Virtual and in-person Meeting)

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

Mayor Dorough called the meeting to order at 10:07 am, followed by attendance roll call.

AGENDA ADOPTION

Mayor Dorough moved to adopt the agenda with the addition of a presentation from Mr. Davenport regarding Dogwood Trail, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Warbington and following a roll call vote, the motion unanimously carried.

REPORT OF THE CITY CLERK

Commission Travel

1. Commissioner J. Johnson; Annual Chamber Meeting with Federal Delegation; Washington D.C.; May 7-11, 2023; \$1,325.94

Commissioner Howard moved to approve, seconded by Commissioner Gaines and following a roll call vote, the motion unanimously carried.

2. Changing June and July Meeting Dates

The consensus was to change the June 27 regular meeting to June 28 and to have only one work session in July on the 18th.

3. GA Municipal Association Cities of Civility Recognition

Mr. Carter discussed information (copy on file) regarding civility as presented and promoted by GMA. He discussed civil discourse, using appropriate behavior and the need for a collective effort to achieve an environment in which civility is practiced among the entire team and asked for consideration to adopt the draft resolution.

Commissioner Young asked if GMA has a transparency policy and provided comments regarding his view of civility. In reply to Commissioner Young, Mr. Carter explained the resolution, which mainly is about how the Commission as a body will treat each other, adding that there are no punishments levied on the Commission by adopting the resolution.

Mayor Dorough questioned the necessity of this action, adding that he treats people with respect, even when he is disrespected and suggested that this extends beyond Commissioners legislative duties when at meetings. Discussion continued regarding disagreements at the table, which is the nature of the

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governmental process, working on having a better relationship with each other with Mr. Carter advising that if it is adopted, there will be a GMA recognition in June.

2. GMA Voting Delegate & Flag Bearer

Mayor Pro Tem Warbington volunteered to be the voting delegate and Commissioner Gaines was designated to be the flag bearer.

At this time, Mayor Dorough asked Mitch Davenport with Dogwood Trails to make his presentation regarding tax credits and having two developments in Albany.

Mr. Davenport discussed Dogwood Trails phase 2 and asked that the letter of support be submitted to the Department of Community Affairs (DCA) so that he can receive tax credits for this project.

John Hawthorne, Director of Community & Economic Development explained the process, since 2013, to provide letters of support to projects which are competitive, adding that in the future, the process will be modified so that the letter of support would be presented to the Commission first. In reply to Mayor Dorough, Mr. Hawthorne stated that a team is selected to determine the project, with the Mayor sending a letter of support without the Commission's approval. In reply to Mayor Dorough, Mr. Davenport agreed that he needs the GHIC letter and the Mayor's letter by Friday to put with the DCA application, with the deadline being Friday afternoon. The Commission agreed with Mayor Dorough signing the letter and ratifying at the night meeting.

REPORT OF THE CITY ATTORNEY

1. Real Estate Acquisition: 603 N. Jefferson St.

Mr. Davis discussed information (copy on file) asking that the City Manager sign the document. In reply to Commissioner Howard, Mr. Davis explained the process and options.

In reply to Commissioner Langstaff, Paul Forgey, Planning Director discussed the process regarding items presented to HPC for approvals and agreed that demolition is necessary, recommending replacing the building with something that is appropriate. Mr. Davis agreed with the demolition process, which does not need HPC approval.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

1. Public Safety Alcohol License (New)

Marshal Walter Norman, Code Enforcement Director, discussed the following (copy on file):

- EL Taco Mexican LLC; d/b/a EL Taco Loco, 703 S. Slappey Blvd., X. Morris/Agent; Liquor/Beer & Wine Consumption)

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In reply to Mayor Pro Tem Warbington, Marshal Norman explained that there was another license for this location, etc.

In reply to Commissioner Young, Marshal Norman explained the location and surrounding establishments currently in the area. Commissioner Young expressed concern of having too many establishments in the area pertaining to the ratios/density, etc.

Marshal Norman discussed the following (copy on file):

- SSS 108 Inc; d/b/a Rubos Food 1308 Clark Ave. A., Shah/Agent; Beer/ Wine Package

Mayor Dorough recognized Pastor Rance Pettibone to speak in opposition to the license.

Dr. Tate, Pastor of New Resurrection Church of God by Faith, spoke in opposition to the license.

Henry Mathis spoke in opposition to the license.

In reply to Commissioner Young, Marshal Norman explained the difference between this grocery store vs. convenience stores.

Commissioner Howard spoke in opposition to the license and addressed crime rates, poverty, etc.

2. Planning/Engineering

- East Broad Street Sidewalk Project

Commissioner Howard discussed information (copy on file) and commented on areas needing sidewalks in E. Albany, asking that money be allocated.

Mayor Pro Tem Warbington asked when the list of the next round of sidewalks will be distributed. Mr. Maples advised that this will be in TSPLOST since monies have been expended at this point. In reply to Mayor Pro Tem Warbington, Mr. Maples explained funding allocations, (Washington extension project to be used for this because the Build Grant was not awarded).

Mayor Dorough stated that this is a safety issue and a major project with right of way being questioned by those living in the area.

Interim Engineering Director Robert Griffin and Traffic Engineering Director Ken Breedlove presented a power point presentation (copy on file) with recommended options regarding the following:

- Traffic Calming Measures

In reply to Mayor Dorough, the cost increase of speed tables was discussed.

3. Public Administration/Finance

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Corey Gamble, Buyer I, discussed the following (copy on file):

- 2023 Ford Mavericks; Wade Ford, Inc. – Total exp. \$108,680.00

Mr. Gamble discussed the following (copy on file):

- 2022 Ford E-Transit Vans; Creative Bus Sales, Inc. – Total exp. \$204,502.78

Joshua Williams, Interim Manager/Central Services, and AFD Chief C. Scott were available to discuss the following (copy on file):

- Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus; Ten-8 Fire & Safety LLC; Bradenton, FL; Total exp. \$205,073.68

Commissioner Johnson discussed the following (copy on file):

- Medical District Housing Plan

He suggested using monies from the discretionary fund.

In reply to Mayor Dorough, Mr. Johnson stated that Phoebe has been in touch with the project manager. Mayor Dorough stated that it is important to know if Phoebe is sharing in the cost of this project. Commissioner Johnson stated that after the City completes Phase I, Phoebe and other entities are willing to help with funding.

4. Other Matter(s)

- Continued Discussion: Dougherty County Tennis Complex

Mayor Dorough noted changes that he made to the initial MOU Dougherty County presented to the City, which proposed that the tennis center be located on the National Guard property and the City proposing locating the tennis center/pickle ball court on the First Tee property. He stated that the City can use that property and retain it for use as a golf course at a later date and discussed the third option with Albany State and the possibility of adding more tennis courts and construct pickle ball courts. He discussed the change the City made to the MOU to send to the County, the hiring of WSP to look at three sites, and referred to paragraph one regarding WSP being paid \$8,700, with the cost being equally divided between the County and City, the six months to complete the report, with two members from both Commission's appointed to consult with representatives of ASU to ascertain if ASU is an option, and if so, what contributions ASU will make for operation/maintenance of the Tennis Center, if selected. Once the report is in, a second committee will meet with WSP to review the report and, the committee will make a recommendation to both Commissions with a 60-day timeline to accept the Committee's preferred site and, if both Commissions mutually agree on the plan the project moves forward.

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Commissioner Langstaff questioned if the County has reviewed the MOU with Mayor Dorough providing update, adding that the original MOU has not being presented to the City Commission for discussion.

Commissioner Gaines said he did not think the First Tee location is viable.

Mayor Pro Tem Warbington stated that he thinks this is a good idea and suggested moving forward.

Commissioner Langstaff recommended having two people from the Commission discuss the MOU with the County's Recreation Committee before drafting it and explained that the intent is not to construct a Tennis Center adjacent to ASU's, but to utilize what they have and add more courts for use by everyone. He also recommended the agreement be flexible, as well as not boxing in the consultant, adding that he would not recommend building something new, but to upgrade/modernize the Center at ASU. Regarding the National Guard property, he stated that the City wants to house the Recreation Center there regardless of where the Tennis Center is located.

Commissioner Young stated that he too, does not see the Armory and Tennis Center being a consideration, adding that a member on the County Commission also said that he does not see it that way. He suggested that the other process seems convoluted.

Mayor Dorough countered that he does not think it is convoluted and expressed his views of locating it adjacent to ASU Tennis Center and that this has been at the starting line for almost 30 years. He agreed that two members of each Commission can meet with ASU and if they are onboard, it will be one of the three sites to be considered. Another scenario is three Commissioners from each board can meet with WSP to present recommendations.

Mayor Dorough recognized Errol Hart.

Mr. Hart stated that he is representing Community Builders, a grassroots group organized to speak for a part of the community, which feels is not being heard. He addressed the new Transit Center, which does not accommodate Greyhound, adding that the terminal closes at 2:00 pm and passengers must vacate the building and wait until their bus comes; one did not arrive until 8:00 pm. He noted the small space they must wait in that is outside, with no toilets or covering over the waiting area and stated that he is concerned and hopes other share his concern.

- Albany Transit System Update

David Hamilton, Transportation Director, introduced Shawn Barron, Transit Superintendent, and discussed information regarding the Greyhound Bus schedule and providing City staff at the new Transportation Center to assist with securing the building after the last bus arrives. He stated that Greyhound no longer has on-site staff at the Transportation Center as an operations cost-saving measure, hence, the Transportation Center closes at 2:15 pm, and passengers must board on the Jackson Street side of the facility. He advised that the City does not have staff to accommodate customer service needs of Greyhound passengers and commented on conversations he has had with Greyhound, adding that they have no interest in bringing in on-site staff, with the City's hands being tied. He commented on the

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impact of the pandemic and challenges of the Transit Center, i.e., driver shortage, available vehicles, dispatching software and passenger readiness, with solutions being sought/tried to mitigate/alleviate these factors.

In reply to Commissioner Howard regarding the Greyhound lease, Mr. Hamilton stated that they have two parking areas and a shared lobby, at a cost of \$1,000/month with a new agreement being negotiated. Commissioner Howard expressed disappointment that the City's new, \$11.0 million Transit Center does not accommodate passengers, suggesting the treatment of passengers is inhumane, i.e., waiting outside for buses in inclement weather and no restroom access.

Commissioner Gaines also expressed concerns and suggested that the City may need to exit its agreement with Greyhound if they only pay \$1,000/month and commented on bus schedules and the winter months when it gets dark at 6 pm.

Commissioner Young stated that the total cost of the Transit Center was \$15.0 million and expressed concerns as a transit passenger, adding that he knew the gravity of the situation from the beginning as well as the system not being reliable. He discussed Greyhound's benefits by having a terminal here, with this no better than cities where Greyhound pulls up to convenience stores, suggesting passengers would be better off being dropped off at Homerun Foods where there is access to restrooms and snacks.

Mayor Dorough acknowledged the struggles Mr. Hamilton mentioned and suggested the City be clear with Greyhound that they are using our transit system and the City is not responsible for having staff there when their buses arrive. In reply to Mayor Dorough, Mr. Hamilton explained that construction on the Center was underway when he received word from Greyhound that they would not have staff on-site, causing the City to reconfigure the space they would have used. In reply to Mayor Dorough, Ms. Barron provided Greyhound's schedule.

Commissioner Howard stated that the City must take action ASAP. Mayor Dorough noted that Albany is the destination for Greyhound passengers arriving at 8 pm, and suggested they make arrangements to be picked up. He stated his concern is the Transit passengers who depend on the system to get them to work, appointments, etc., with the Greyhound issue being a different situation. Discussion continued on the differences between the Transit Center and the Airport regarding staffing.

2024 BUDGET PRESENTATION

Using PowerPoint (copy on file), Mr. Carter stated that today's presentation is an introduction and highlights about the 2024 budget and provided an overview, with this year's budget estimated to be approximately \$314.0 million, which is approximately \$14.0 million more than the previous budget. He encouraged Commissioners to send any questions/concerns to him for clarity and advised that the budget's public hearing is scheduled for June 6th, with the adoption of the budget at the June 28th meeting. Commissioner Howard recommended that department heads of critical departments come to a meeting and discuss their budget. Mr. Carter explained that the budget has been laid out and all questions will be answered. Commissioner Howard advised that he would like to hear from Public Safety, Code Enforcement and Utilities.

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Commissioner Johnson asked for the list reviewed at the retreat regarding critical areas of employment and referred to the 2% (increase) for the general population of employees, asking where it takes those in critical areas. Mr. Carter commented on the pay study currently underway, adding that it will be part of the final budget that will be brought back, and critical areas will be identified, and compensation designed specifically for them will be included.

In reply to Commissioner Gaines regarding the current budget, Mr. Carter stated that whatever budget Commissioners pass, nothing will be spent beyond what was approved, adding that this year's budget is expected to be under.

Mayor Dorough asked the effect of the budget to give all other employees a 4% raise and agreed with Commissioner Howard regarding that a presentation from public safety, especially because of the 15% raise for that department. He asked the possibility of reviewing the pay study after the budget has been adopted and suggested that it has become obvious that local government employees will have to be paid more generously than in the past to prevent a mass exodus of trained/skilled employees. Discussion continued regarding the pay study.

Commissioner Howard asked that the presentation also include the Finance Department.

CITY MANAGER COMMENTS/UPDATES

Mr. Carter advised that the pension fund contributions discussed earlier this year will be on the May agenda, adding that if action is not taken this fiscal year, the City will fall out of compliance with State requirements. He mentioned the trip to D.C. and thanked those who went and advised that the City was approved for the \$25.0 million GEFA loan.

Commissioner Young asked if the City will get a legislative update on the EPD as discussed with the congressional delegation.

Mayor Dorough mentioned meeting in Sen. Warnock's office, and discussion regarding the \$105.0 million authorization, and the requested \$30.0 million. Mayor Pro Tem Warbington advised that it is on both Senators Warnock, Offsoff, and Congressman Bishop's radar, adding that they feel confident that the \$30.0 million the City requested should be appropriated at the end of the year.

Commissioner Young stated that his concern is the deadline; Mayor Dorough explained that the State set the deadline, not the federal authorities. Asst. City Manager Bruce Maples advised that he and Jeff Hughes went to Atlanta to meet with EPD to provide a status update and explain obstacles the City encounters, which may affect meeting the June 2025 deadline, adding that they were told that they cannot imagine the City not being granted an extension as long as it continues due diligence, but cannot grant one at this time.

MEMBER COMMENTS/FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Commissioner Howard related that recently his security light went out and commended Jimmy Norman, Director of Utility Construction, and staff for the quick response. Because of this, he discovered that the

newer LED lights are very bright and recommended that individuals with the old lights be given an upgrade.

Commissioner Gaines mentioned the sports events held in Albany this past weekend and recommended that the City make Albany more welcoming/hospitable/friendlier. He asked about trash pickup with Mr. Carter explaining the difference in pickups i.e., the City handles commercial, with Express Disposal contracted to collect household waste. He stated that they should be called when issues arise. Public Works Director Stacey Rowe explained that the City does not serve all commercial entities, they have the option of using the City or utilizing another disposal company.

Mayor Dorough mentioned the ARPA funds, which he believes had some sunset obligations, with funds having to be spent within 24 months. He recommended sequencing the funds that were received to ensure that the City does not jeopardize the funds and recommended that Mr. Carter meet with Mike McCoy, County Administrator regarding TSPLOST to ascertain if the County is agreeable to continue with the present arrangement. He discussed Letters of Support regarding development, which as mayor, he routinely signs. However, going forward, he asked if the Commissioners should weigh in. He commented on Dougherty County being 1% of Georgia's population, with money allocated based on population and, when the City makes a request for funds, and signs Letters of Support that is congressional directed spending, this appears as the City competing against itself due to the finite amount of funding that will come to Dougherty County. He referred to the letter he sent Mr. Carter regarding the house on N. Valencia, asking to have it addressed, adding that it was a problem when he was a commissioner 20 years ago. Mr. Carter stated that he will send Mr. Rowe's response. Mayor Dorough mentioned the \$2.0 million allocation for Carver Gym, which will not do what needs to be done at Turner and asked to have a vote since it will be significantly more for Turner.

EXECUTIVE SESSION – Personnel Matter

At 1:16 p.m., Commissioner Johnson moved to enter executive session to discuss personnel matters seconded by Commissioner Gaines 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

At 1:57 p.m., Mayor Pro Tem Warbington moved to exit executive session, seconded by Commissioner Langstaff and following a roll call vote, the motion unanimously carried as follows:

Ward I	yes
Ward II	yes
Ward III	yes
Ward IV	yes

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Ward V	yes
Ward VI	yes
Mayor	yes

There being no further discussion, the meeting adjourned at 1:58 pm.

SONJA TOLBERT, CMC
CITY CLERK