

AUGUST 1, 2023  
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE  
GOVT. CTR. – RM. 100 (Virtual and in-person Meeting)

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

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

## **AGENDA ADOPTION**

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

## **SPEAKER APPEARANCE**

1. Scott Steiner, CEO, Phoebe Putney Hospital, presented a power point (copy on file) that is presented to the County yearly. He discussed the economic impact (number of employees and monetary impact), FY 22 Charity Care by the County, Dougherty County Taxes (2013-2022), Community Investments, Phoebe E. renovations, partnerships/investments in education to expand programs in healthcare careers, investment in cultivating healthcare careers, investing in innovative solutions/goals, future impact re: investment/economic impact. In conclusion, he stated that the projects are on target, on time and on budget.

The Commissioners thanked Mr. Steiner for his presentation and the progress Phoebe is making in the community. Mayor Dorough commented on the living/learning center and recruitment with Mr. Steiner commenting on the partnering with Albany Tech in training students. Discussion continued regarding the demands for nurses, people being more uncivil, etc., with Mr. Steiner providing information regarding virtual nursing used at the hospital. Mr. Steiner mentioned the Jefferson Avenue construction and the projects Phoebe has underway, adding that it was suggested that the construction on Jefferson Avenue be done in phases.

## **REPORT OF THE CITY CLERK**

1. Commission Travel

Commissioner Howard moved to approve the following, seconded by Commissioner Gaines, the roll call vote unanimously carried:

- Mayor B. Dorough; 2023 GMA Annual Convention; Savannah, GA; June 22–25, 2023; \$2,302.74
- Commissioner J. Howard; 2023 GMA Annual Convention; Savannah, GA; June 23-27, 2023; \$2,612.08
- Commissioner J. Johnson; 2023 GMA Annual Convention; Savannah, GA; June 23-27, 2023; \$2,424.70

AUGUST 1, 2023  
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE  
GOVT. CTR. – RM. 100 (Virtual and in-person Meeting)

- Commissioner V. Gaines; 2023 GMA Annual Convention; Savannah, GA; June 23-27, 2023; \$2,553.37
- Mayor Pro Tem C. Warbington; 2023 GMA Annual Convention; Savannah, GA; June 23-26, 2023; \$2,120.91
- Commissioner D. Young; 2023 GMA Annual Convention; Savannah, GA; June 22-27, 2023; \$3,715.69

## COMMITTEE REPORTS

### 1. Public Safety

- Mutual Aid Agreement with MCLB Fire Department

AFD Chief Cedric Scott discussed information (copy on file) regarding the request to approve the agreement. In reply to Mayor Dorough, Chief Scott stated that he is unaware of the number of firefighters at MCLB.

- MOA between Albany/Dougherty EMA and MCLB-EMA

Chief Scott discussed information (copy on file) regarding the request to approve the agreement with MCLB-EMA. He stated that the agreement will also be signed by Dougherty County, the City and MCLB

- Merger Of Albany/Dougherty Drug Unit and APD Gang Unit

Chief Michael Persley discussed information as noted (copy on file) regarding the merger. He introduced DA Greg Edwards, who stated that the Drug Unit was established in 1989 for inter-agencies communications. He described the trend in the 80's vs what is happening now, with drug transactions now being via cell phone, internet, operating from a particular location, obtaining drugs from overseas, bypassing homeland security that brings drugs to the streets of Albany. Because of the modern trends, he explained that a new process must be employed to address the drug trade all the way to prosecution and advised that gangs are more of a prolific problem today, especially as they are involved with the security of drug sales, recruiting, international connections and infiltrating via USPS to bring in drugs. He suggested appropriate adjustments needing to be made, with local governments bringing resources together, i.e., tracking devices, cash app transactions, new trends, etc. Regarding guns, he said people trade guns which is a commodity on the streets with emphasis being made on drugs, gangs and gun activity, adding that the merger should be able to address and the need for adjustments due to technology and trends.

Sherrif Jeff Sproul commented on retaining law enforcement, with positions being difficult to fill and is another reason to create a cohesive unit, which would allow those highly specialized positions to be filled today, adding that the merger will be beneficial. Dougherty County Chief Kenneth Johnson echoed comments already made.

In reply to Commissioner Howard, Chief Persley stated that they will need 20-22 positions for enforcement and advised that a mindset will have to change, with this being more tactical and strategic

AUGUST 1, 2023  
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE  
GOVT. CTR. – RM. 100 (Virtual and in-person Meeting)

in the approach, adding that commercializing drug/gang/illegal weapons, require being more effective and trained in what is trending. Fentanyl was discussed, etc., drugs of choice and location. Commissioner Howard commented on his constituents and the elderly being afraid to report incidents and asked what can be done. Chief Persley stated that the APD app allows people to submit information anonymously.

In reply to Commissioner Gaines regarding camera placements, Chief Persley advised that monthly reports will be provided, adding that they are nearly 100% complete on installing cameras, etc.

Mayor Pro Tem Warbington thanked the speakers for explaining the process, which he supports.

In reply to Commissioner Young, Mr. Edwards stated that homeowners and businesses can post signs of “no firearms”, to prevent firearms being brought on their property. Commissioner Young commented on fear due to gun violence, which makes people feel unsafe. Mr. Edwards explained the Constitutional Carry Law, with no license required, and everyone, except for certain restrictions (convicted felons) being able to purchase/carry. He mentioned the strong lobby and the right as individual citizens still in place; however, property/business owners have the right to prohibit firearms on their property. Commissioner Young questioned what the merger will look like regarding enforcement? Chief Persley explained partnerships, intelligence gathering/sharing and working with state partners, with a focus on the local level, adding that criminals understand that law enforcement ends at city or county limits.

Mayor Dorough referenced the Right to Carry Law and the apprehension officers have when approaching anyone, assuming the person is armed. Discussion followed regarding compelling reasons for the merger due to informants, investigative procedures and expanded responsibilities with the merger re: human trafficking and prostitution. In reply to Mayor Dorough, Mr. Edwards stated that gangs provide security to drug dealers, transport and maintain territories, adding that individual drug dealers are in the minority in this community with 80% involved in both gang and drugs.

Chief Persley asked to seek approval from the City and County to work with attorneys to provide intergovernmental agreements.

## 2. Planning/Engineering - Update re: Combined Sewer Separation Project

Project Manager Jeff Duplantis, PE Ardurra, used a power point (copy on file) to update the status of the CSS project, including looking at separating the systems, localized flooding, reducing inflow/infiltration, facility upgrades/improvements, a map of the current program (phase 1) boundaries, remaining unseparated basins (future Phases), other projects (eight listed), program schedule (2022-2025), program budget and advised that the numbers/schedules, etc., are on the City’s website.

In reply to Commissioner Howard, Mr. Duplantis, discussed community outreach and other presentations to the Commission, and discussed ways to educate the community and outreach to gather interest in local participation by working with churches and community organizations within the community. Butch Gallop, Ardurra sub-consultant, provided additional information re: outreach to include going into the school system, civic organizations and church groups, adding that each Ward will have a presentation. In reply to Commissioner Howard, it was noted that Ardurra will work with the

AUGUST 1, 2023  
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE  
GOVT. CTR. – RM. 100 (Virtual and in-person Meeting)

public information officer to get information to the public. Discussion continued on construction on East/West Broad Ave., with Bruce Maples, Asst. City Manager, stating that concerns will be addressed. Commissioner Howard commented on ensuring information is provided to constituents and asked if the June 2025 deadline will be met? Mr. Duplantis expressed certainty that projects will meet the deadline and that information will be provided on the upgrades, etc. Jeff Hughes, Sewer Maintenance Engineer, discussed what will be replaced (mechanical/electrical, etc.). Mr. Duplantis stated that they will be providing updates quarterly, with Mr. Gallop stating that they will be providing educational information as well.

In reply to Commissioner Gaines regarding areas that flood, and being put on hold, Mr. Maples explained that the areas are in the long-range plan, and discussed the appropriation process with federal representatives to include \$30 million to handle flooding. Commissioner Gaines stated that he feels the answer given is not fair to the citizens who have been put off in the past.

Mayor Dorough asked if lift stations are being replaced or rebuilt? Mr. Duplantis stated that they are rebuilding (pumps/valves, guts of the plant) with there being a warranty on the work. Discussion continued regarding the annual maintenance in perpetuity as long as there is a budget. Mayor Dorough noted that the executive summary from Constatine contains three phases; this is only Phase I (\$105 - 130 million), which does not resonate with the public. Phases II and III are comparable cost-wise and account for the increased maintenance. Discussion continued regarding the area of Whitney/Highland Avenues.

Commissioner Young asked for more clarity on who is responsible for what and getting the word out to the public. He asked if Ardurra has certification with the Army Corps of Engineers? Mr. Duplantis stated that they are approved to work with the Corps of Engineers. Mr. Maples explained that information is on social media, the website, etc., and asked for suggestions on ensuring the information is distributed.

3. Public Administration/Finance

Corey Gamble, Buyer I, discussed information (copy on file) regarding the following.

- a. Ford Super Duty Trucks; Wade Ford, Inc. – Total expenditure \$193,299.00

Mayor Dorough advised that the following was pulled from the agenda:

- b. Driskell Park Consultant; Lose Design, Lawrenceville, GA - \$164,185.39

Steve Belk, Recreation Director, discussed the following information (copy on file).

- c. City/County Tennis Complex

In reply to Commissioner Howard, Mr. Belk stated that he reached out to ASU's President, who wants to be engaged with the process, adding that Dr. Fedrick requested additional information including evaluation of the property, etc.

Mayor Dorough stated that a vote is needed from the County regarding funding with Mr. Belk advising that the committee voted to make ASU West the site with the concurrence from ASU. Mayor Dorough

AUGUST 1, 2023  
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE  
GOVT. CTR. – RM. 100 (Virtual and in-person Meeting)

asked for a commitment and resolution from the County before expenses are incurred to include selection of a consultant. Mr. Carter stated that a consultant at the meeting proposed to do the work (layout and design), adding that this will be a concept to propose to ASU's President. Mayor Dorough questioned having the Board of Regents involved and other issues, i.e., drainage, etc. He asked for a plan moving forward, a resolution from the County and a plan from a consultant or other entity; possibly the Albany Tennis Association. Mr. Belk mentioned the National Tennis Association with Mayor Dorough asking for a response from them regarding funding.

Mayor Pro Tem Warbington stated that he feels the agenda item was inappropriate and suggested that the committee make a final recommendation. He mentioned pickleball and funding for the design, asking that Mr. Carter provide an agenda item so proper funds are allocated from the City. Mr. Carter stated that it is premature to ask for funds at this time; however, it will be brought back as an agenda item later, adding that today's purpose is to get consensus on the committee's recommendation of Albany State West as the site.

Commissioner Young commented on the location if that is the recommendation from the committee.

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

Mayor Pro Tem Warbington mentioned the issue Mr. Steiner spoke about, and asked staff to communicate what is going on with Jefferson St., regarding the closing and concerns of Phoebe. Mr. Carter stated that a plan is in place to work with the hospital and local businesses, adding that information will be sent to those in the area and will have signage in place to include social media through the public information office. He mentioned having detour signs in place for the duration of the project and keeping 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue open as much as possible. Mayor Pro Tem Warbington stated that he feels Mr. Steiner is not in agreement with the plan and asked if they (hospital leadership) are in agreement. Mr. Carter stated that he will work with the hospital to address issues/needs while maintaining the integrity of the project. Mayor Pro Tem Warbington suggested having departments (fire, public safety, etc.) involved in the plan.

Commissioner Young thanked Albany Parks/Rec for assisting with the event at CW Heath Park in E. Albany on Saturday.

Regarding Jefferson Street, Mayor Dorough stated that staff can make recommendations if it is the will of the Commission. The three entities may or may not be satisfied with what the City will do as it pertains to closing Jefferson. He stated that no contractor would be willing to go one block/100 yards at the time and discussed large signs regarding detours, and Mr. Steiner's point is well taken, but with signage that large, it cannot be missed by even those in an emergency situation. He asked to get information out and to discuss options to bring back to the Commission for decision. Regarding a survey at Henderson Park, he asked to see the survey, results and number of residents with names and responses, adding that the majority of people who responded preferred outdoor gyms. Regarding IDP, he said that he asked for information from Ms. Gaskins, but has received nothing and is requesting it again... Mayor Pro Tem Warbington interrupted and stated that Mayor Dorough is asking for information, not 'we' [the commission]. Continuing with his comments, Mayor Dorough mentioned on the situation at Eames Park

AUGUST 1, 2023  
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE  
GOVT. CTR. – RM. 100 (Virtual and in-person Meeting)

regarding the restrooms being closed and asked for a report, adding that the School Board pays no rent, the City provides utilities and it is unacceptable to have games at Eames Park with no restrooms. He suggested and asked for a partnership with the school system to share the expenses.

Mayor Pro Tem Warbington stated that IDP was voted on in May, with Mayor Dorough asking for additional information and to not communicate it as though IDP did something wrong. Mayor Pro Tem Warbington suggested this be done privately with Mayor Dorough and IDP. Mayor Dorough took issue with the comments, adding that we will go forward.

## **CITY MANAGER’S REPORT**

Mr. Carter stated that 1) the issue with Greyhound has resulted in an announcement that they will move to a store located in the area of Clark/Maple on August 4<sup>th</sup>, and, 2) Jimmy Norman is retiring and something will be prepared to recognize him at the August 15 meeting.

There being no further discussion, the meeting adjourned at 12:44 p.m.

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SONJA TOLBERT  
CITY CLERK