

AUGUST 13, 2024

SPECIAL CALLED MEETING OF THE BOARD OF CITY COMMISSIONERS OF THE CITY OF ALBANY, GEORGIA
GOVERNMENT CENTER
ROOM 100

PRESENT Mayor Bo Dorough
Commissioners: Jon Howard, Vilnis Gaines, and Chad Warbington,
Virtual Demetrius Young
City Attorney: Michael Custer
Interim City Mgr. Derrick Brown

Mayor Dorough called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

The City Clerk read the call as follows:

There will be a Special Called City Commission meeting on Tuesday, August 13, 2024, at 6:00 p.m., in room 100 of the Government Center Building located at 222 Pine Ave. The purpose of the meeting is to conduct a public hearing regarding the FY 2025 Millage Rate and to discuss and/or approve the following:

- Resolution: Authorizing submission of Grant Application to the National Park Service for the Underrepresented Communities Grant Program; should the Grant be awarded to City, such grant is awarded
- Ordinance: Changing Regular Meeting time for the August 27, 2024, meeting from 6:00 pm to 7:00 pm

Sincerely,

/s/ Derrick Brown
Derrick Brown
Interim City Manager

/s/ Bo Dorough
BO DOROUGH, MAYOR

/s/Jon Howard
JON HOWARD, WARD I
CITY COMMISSIONER

NOTIFIED VIA EMAIL
JALEN JOHNSON, WARD II
CITY COMMISSIONER

/s/ Vilnis Gaines
VILNIS GAINES, WARD III
CITY COMMISSIONER

NOTIFIED VIA EMAIL
CHAD WARBINGTON, WARD IV
CITY COMMISSIONER

NOTIFIED VIA EMAIL
BOB LANGSTAFF, JR., WARD V
MAYOR PRO TEM

/s/ Demetrius Young
DEMETRIUS YOUNG, WARD VI
CITY COMMISSIONER

PUBLIC HEARING – re: FY 25 Millage Rate

Mayor Dorough said six had signed up to speak at the public hearing and called names in the order that were listed (copy on file).

Ann Mitchell spoke against property tax increases, asked what the benefit is of a property tax increase, mentioned paying taxes to school system even though not having children in school, the storm from years prior and not having much done despite the City being given monies for residents and what was repaired in her neighborhood does not match (light poles) making it look cheap, no curb for her handicap son in a wheelchair, dilapidated sidewalks, public safety and not having enough police officers, dilapidated neighborhoods, trash, etc., with her son asking if children are playing in a war zone. She complained that tax dollars are not being used appropriately.

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Joe Leblanc agreed with Ms. Mitchell's comments and mentioned that the recent tax assessment is the first in 20 years, asking the plan is to decrease pain that will be seen financially, how funds will be used, mentioned pay increases for police officers, disadvantages Albany faces and asked that information be put out for citizens to understand what is being done with the money and how to soften the blow.

Speaking against the proposed property tax increase, Henry Mathis commented on the mission statement. He stated that sales and use tax are not intended to run local governments, which are basically operated with property taxes and are the largest funding sources for local governments. Local spending keeps the community running (providing – police departments; housing subsidies; recreation, which is basically non-existent and now charges for services; public transportation is a mockery, roads and alleys in deplorable condition. He mentioned the layers of bureaucracies making a lot of money. He reported that in previous administrations, there was the one City Manager and one Administrative Assistant. Now, the City Manager makes over \$200,000; two asst. city managers making over \$150K; a downtown manager (\$130K) and asked what is going on downtown. He asked if his Commissioner is on the line, and asked Commissioner Howard to offer a motion for a forensic audit to determine what is going on with tax monies.

Martha Alexander said she is almost 84 yrs old, and spoke against tax increases, adding that senior citizens are paying school taxes and should not have to pay if it is not affordable for them. She mentioned being in Albany since 1969 and having no children/grandchildren, adding that she pays school taxes, providing a history of being in the school system and involvement in the latchkey program. She urged the Commission to create a way for senior citizens to be exempt from school taxes.

Burton Newcomb provided statistics from January - June 2024 with unemployment rates going down, census showing a drop in population, significant rise of homeless people, beggars, drive by shootings, industries leaving Albany, property crime, murder rate, violent crimes, Dougherty County School System being at the bottom regarding those economically disadvantaged, owners/renters saying that they are 'renting in Albany and living in hell'. He suggested that taxes be reduced, sell the utilities company and get out of that business, and to review the tax roll for properties not paying taxes.

Harry James had questions regarding the tax increase and when it takes place, the County increasing taxes in 2025, asking if in the next three years will there be a tax roll-back and mentioning his 30 investment properties, which he sees as being hit 30 times.

Rosa Harris, who had a death in the family, apologized for being late and unable to sign the speaker's list. She asked if the 12.17% has already been agreed upon by the board or is it being considered? If the decision is already made, what is being asked of citizens is to pay more money to this city than to the God they worship. She asked Commissioner Gaines (declined to speak) if he is ok with the vote and said citizens should have the right to know how their Commissioner will vote, adding that she is speaking on behalf those who cannot be present today. She mentioned people leaving due to not being able to pay taxes and houses will be boarded up, businesses will be forced to close and those remaining will be forced to pay more taxes. She asked the Commission to reconsider the decision to increase taxes.

There being no one else desiring to speak, Mayor Dorrough adjourned the public hearing.

RESOLUTIONS

Lequira Gaskins, Downtown Manager, discussed information (copy on file) and asked for approval to apply for the grant.

In reply to Commissioner Howard, Ms. Gaskins said information will be coming no later than October/November whether the grant is awarded.

In reply to Commissioner Young, it was noted that there is no matching fund required.

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Commissioner Howard moved to adopt the resolution, seconded by Commissioner Gaines; the motion unanimously carried.

A RESOLUTION NO. 24-R187

Supporting a Homeownership Incentive Plan; Utilizing American Rescue Act Funds as allocated in Resolution 22-R193

ORDINANCE

Mayor Dorough mentioned that the regular meeting is the fourth Tuesday of each month at 6:00 pm; however, there is an event also at 6:00 pm on August 27, a proposal is to change the meeting time from 6:00 pm to 7:00 pm.

Commissioner Howard introduced

AN ORDINANCE NO. 24-119

Amending Article II of Chapter 2 of the Code or Ordinances of the City of Albany to provide for the change in time for the regular meeting in August 2024

Commissioner Howard then offered the ordinance and asked for unanimous consent to dispense with the second reading and asked for its adoption, second by Commissioner Warbington.

City Clerk Sonja Tolbert explained that Phoebe has an event starting at 5:30 with Commissioners desiring to attend the event. Because of the change, the City must amend the Code to reflect this change.

Commissioner Howard asked if changing the time of the notice re: millage rate will be advertised in the newspaper, Mr. Brown agreed, adding that it will also be posted on the City's website.

Hearing no further discussion, the motion unanimously carried.

There being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned 6:41 p.m.

MAYOR

ATTEST:

CITY CLERK