

JULY 2, 2024  
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE  
GOVERNMENT CENTER BUILDING  
ROOM. 100

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

Mayor Dorough called the meeting to order at 8:43 a.m., followed by attendance roll call.

## **AGENDA ADOPTION**

Mayor Dorough stated that he would like to add an executive session to discuss a personnel matter at the end of the meeting. Commissioner Warbington moved to adopt the agenda with the addition of executive session, seconded by Commissioner Howard, the roll call vote unanimously carried.

## **SPEAKER APPEARANCE**

1. Bob Washington re: Code Enforcement – was not present

## **OUTSIDE ENTITIES**

Property Revaluations re: Overview of the tax assessor's process

Larry Thomas, Board of Tax Assessors Vice Chairman, provided an update of the re-evaluation taking place in Albany/Dougherty County. He mentioned guidelines, certifications, etc., required by the State of GA with there being a mandate that 40% of properties be assessed or the State takes over and brings in additional resources to assist. He advised that because Dougherty County fell outside the acceptable range, there is a contract with GMASS, (Georgia Mass Appraisal Solutions & Services) which has people engaged in the reassessment.

Adam Bridges, Chief Appraiser, reported that approximately 6,000 parcels in Dougherty County, mostly on the north/northwest side and approximately 600 commercial properties have been evaluated at this point. He said the process will be lengthy and will take approximately two years.

Mr. Thomas noted concerns and discussed notifications being made available to the public, which were done in May to include 911 and 311, and at this point this update is to assist with getting the word out. He explained that the appraisers have photo IDs, badges, and the vehicles are identified with 'Dougherty County Appraiser' on the side.

Commissioner Warbington asked the last time an appraisal was done, with Mr. Thomas advising that it was in 2007, adding that this appraisal takes into consideration all properties, businesses, schools, commercial, industrial, etc., and is a comprehensive evaluation of all Dougherty County. He advised that the cost was over \$1.0 million. Commissioner Warbington mentioned other counties where over time, a full assessment

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is done and thus are constantly re-evaluating properties. Mr. Thomas agreed that counties do things differently and that all are guided by the state. If the ratio is below 30-40% an evaluation is required at some point. Commissioner Warbington expressed his concern of property owners, especially those who have owned property and/or are legacy properties that will be affected, suggesting that 2026 will increase property taxes substantially. Mr. Thomas noted 'sections' (locations) that come into play as it pertains to evaluations of each property's characteristics. Commissioner Warbington mentioned homestead exemptions and new information from GMA regarding state policy which will come into play, adding that he is hearing concerns regarding those evaluating properties and asked if citizens can refuse to allow them inside their homes. Mr. Thomas said citizens have inherent rights and control of their property; however, an assessment is required by the state. If not allowed on the property, the accessor can stand outside of the property to evaluate due to not being allowed inside of the property, adding that he stood outside of properties to evaluate due to property owners not allowing him inside. He provided additional information regarding it not being 'necessary' for assessors to go inside the property, reiterating that notices are provided with those appraisers having state guidelines to follow, adding that that if an accessor demands to be let inside, resident should call the police.

In reply to Commissioner Young, it was noted that the assessment is required by the state of Georgia and that evaluations are a guideline with many factors. Mr. Thomas explained the assessment process, which includes square footage, age, those needing updating, depreciation, etc., that is involved and required by the state, adding that mathematical formulas are used to ensure equity in all evaluations. Commissioner Young asked if information can be posted on the website, adding videos, with Mr. Bridges stating that they are working with the County PIO.

Discussion continued regarding the State providing the guidelines to include the Department of Revenue, making the process readily available to citizens so that they understand how this relates to their properties. Mr. Thomas advised that they will do all they can to get information out, with the State requiring 'reasonable notice' be given to property owners, adding that mass communications are sent to property owners in advance.

## **REPORT OF THE CITY CLERK**

Staff Travel:

- D. Brown, Interim City Mgr., 2024 MEAG Power Annual Meeting; July 27-31, 2024; \$1,738.90

Commissioner Howard moved to approve the above noted travel, seconded by Commissioner Warbington, the roll call vote unanimously carried.

## **REPORT OF THE CITY ATTORNEY**

1. Take Out Alcohol re: Restaurants

Ms. Custer discussed information (copy on file) regarding complying with state law regarding open

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containers and the local ordinance matching state law regarding take-out alcohol.

In reply to Commissioner Howard, Ms. Custer agreed that this only applies to restaurants. Regarding requirements, she explained that convenience stores do not have on premises consumption license and this amended ordinance does not include them.

Commissioner Warbington asked if the container is sealed, it is legal (pertaining to having open container law and driving).

In reply to Commissioner Young, Ms. Custer noted the amendment to the ordinance includes highlighted language regarding definitions that clarifies the rules. The City's ordinance had gray areas and did not comply with state law, adding that the Downtown Entertainment District is a separate part of the ordinance and will not change.

2. Sunday Alcohol Sales re: Package

Ms. Custer discussed information (copy on file) regarding Sunday sale of alcohol which is off premise consumption and purchasing alcohol from convenience/liquor stores, which mirrors what Lee County has in place.

In reply to Commissioner Warbington, Ms. Custer agreed that this will be included in the November referendum, if approved by the Commission, adding that voters will decide whether Sunday Sales passes.

In reply to Commissioner Young, Ms. Custer explained that business owners brought the matter up to Albany elected officials due to Lee County passing an ordinance because of the loss of business by Albany businesses.

Discussion continued regarding sales outside of city limits, allowing the voters to decide by putting it on the ballot with the County being allowed to sell alcohol, time of sale being consistent with the County and/or Lee County, etc.

## **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

A. Public Administration/Finance

1. Airport Cargo Ramp Expansion; Summers Concrete Contracting, Inc., Hahira, GA - Total exp. \$4,183,120.90

David Hamilton, Transportation Director, discussed information (copy on file) regarding the cargo ramp expansion. Discussion included use of concrete, facilitating expansion for UPS to bring larger planes, having more ramp space during their busy season and is not exclusive for UPS, but for other cargo planes as well.

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2. Vacant Lots Mowing; LRL, Albany, GA; Total exp. \$41,800.00

Don Gray, Facilities Manager, discussed information (copy on file) and asked for approval.

Discussion included mowing twice a month, speaking with the vendor regarding the cost, small/larger lots taken into consideration regarding cost, not cutting the grass twice a month during winter months and providing a list of the 403 properties at a cost of \$41,800.00. Deeding properties in the flood zone was discussed, with John Hawthorne, Community and Economic Development Director, explaining the process to determine whether property donation/purchase is possible.

3. Microbusiness Center Waterproofing; Waterproofing Contractors Inc., Norcross, GA – Total exp. \$108,960.00

Mr. Gray discussed information (copy on file) and asked for approval.

There were no questions/comments on this item.

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

Commissioner Howard asked Chief Persley to provide an announcement, including regulations, about the July 4<sup>th</sup> fireworks. Chief Persely stated that the PSA from last year will run again. Commissioner Howard mentioned forming a task force to address poverty in Albany/Dougherty County.

Mayor Dorough discussed the following:

- LRL billing the City for cutting grass at Chehaw and the RiverQuarium for the past couple of years, asking for information about this and whether it is an oversight
- a problem with road resurfacing materials being dumped on private property
- asked for minutes from meetings with Woods and staff (re: recreation/Henderson Gym)
- employees with P-Cards and asked for a list of employees with P-cards for the last year
- Pickleball with ASU not partnering with the City/County and to reactive the committee with Commissioners Langstaff, Gaines and Howard reconvening to discuss.

Commissioner Warbington stated that a meeting was held with ASU and the Board of Regents, and that the MOU is with the Board of Regents at this time.

## **REPORT OF THE CITY MANAGER**

Mr. Maples:

- reminded all of July 4<sup>th</sup> road closing, information re: concert and fireworks times
- congratulated Chief Persley for being appointed to the House Study Committee, which studies alternatives to opioids for pain management
- the ground-breaking ceremony for Gillionville Woods subdivision will be held July 11<sup>th</sup>;

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- ribbon-cutting set for August 5<sup>th</sup> for Living and Learning Center at 5:00 p.m., Governor Kemp will be attending.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION (personnel matter)**

At 9:56 a.m., Commissioner Warbington moved to enter executive session to discuss a personnel matter, seconded by Commissioner Howard, the roll call vote unanimously carried as follows:

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

At 10:24 a.m., Commissioner Howard moved to exit executive session, seconded by Mayor Dorough, the roll call vote unanimously carried as follows:

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

At 10:25 a.m., Mayor Dorough reconveyed the meeting, advising that no action was taken on the personnel matter discussed in executive session and adjourned the meeting.

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SONJA TOLBERT  
CITY CLERK