

JANUARY 10, 2017
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
GOVT. CTR. – RM. 100

PRESENT Mayor Dorothy Hubbard
Mayor Pro Tem BJ Fletcher (arrived at 8:40)
City Commissioners: Jon Howard, Bobby Coleman, Roger Marietta,
Bob Langstaff, Jr., and Tommie Postell (arrived at 8:50 am)
City Manager: Sharon Subadan
City Attorney: CN Davis

Mayor Hubbard called the meeting to order at 8:31 a.m., stating that this is the first meeting of the year, with a lot happening thus far. She advised that Ms. Subadan will give a storm update.

STORM UPDATE

Ms. Subadan said a video will be shown regarding the storm and named those who will be providing updates.

Following the video Ms. Subadan reported that over 85% of utility customers have had power restored and a large percentage of roads cleared. She thanked those who have worked eight days in-a-row to help bring the community back to its original condition. She then asked Phil Roberson, Asst. City Manager, to give an update. (Following the video – Mayor Pro Tem Fletcher entered the meeting at 8:40)

Mr. Roberson discussed preparation for the storm on Monday before the storm hit that night, which was a lot worse than anticipated due to the straight line winds, which were reported as the cause. Triage was setup at the hospital with a concentration to get Jefferson Street back open, and, in spite of the extensive damage, Albany did not suffer any deaths as a direct result of the storm. Roads were opened to get first responders in/out of neighborhoods with the Avenues being heavily damaged, along with other areas. The first day was spent trying to get to affected areas to assess the damage. He discussed the power outage, with 2/3 of the City's 35,000 customers having no power. The Electric Cities of Georgia (ECG) were the first on site to assist in restoring power. By the weekend, over 300 linesmen were making a concerted effort to restore power, as well as trying to help the public understand why it could take some time for some areas to have their power restored. He mentioned storm damaged in older areas with dense tree coverage, blocked alleys that need immediate attention, adding that most of E. Albany's power has been restored with staff working to restore power and re-energize the rest of the city. He thanked employees, ECG, other utility companies and those who came to assist from out of town, adding that every city that came to assist brought supplies with them, which made it easier to get areas cleared. Citizens have stepped up, as they did in the flood of 1994; volunteers have praised Albany's citizens for their gracious treatment of offering food, support/assistance, etc.

John Giles, Electric Cities of Georgia (ECG) President/CEO, gave a brief update and explained the process to help Albany, adding that there are 52 cities in Georgia similar to Albany. He said they are strategic and not overwhelming to the community, however getting into affected areas was challenging, adding that the biggest concern was safety. He introduced John Beasley, ECG Director to explain the strategic process of helping the City during the recovery, and mentioned

the Mutual Aid Agreement, which is how they address issues and work with the City. Mr. Beasley said that he has a 38-year background of helping provide relief for areas hit by natural disaster and mentioned that he helped with relief following Hurricanes Hugo and Katrina, with the damage in Albany being on that scale of those storms. (Commissioners Langstaff and Postell entered the meeting at (8:50)

Chief Persley discussed the various phases of efforts, adding that other entities were immediately contacted (Sheriff's Office, Dougherty County Police, Georgia State Patrol, etc.) with the aim to support first responders, including Public Works, and to help access damaged areas. Additional law enforcement is here now to assist, including all local enforcement areas including GEMA Homeland Security, etc. There were approximately 45 officers per shift, with night shift officers increasing to 51 for an average of 125 officers per day. Numerous calls related to suspicious people, etc., with only nine reported burglaries. Security was provided at Red Cross shelters and, outside law enforcement agencies have offered support for the duration of the recovery. Traffic congestion has been a concern with citizens being asked to avoid affected areas, since that affects the movement of utility crews. He cautioned that scamming will be a major issue, which will be investigated. He asked that citizens not put up homemade barricades as they will hamper emergency vehicles.

Chief Ron Rowe credited the team effort that has expedited the recovery process. He reiterated Mr. Roberson's statement regarding advance storm preparations, watching the storm's progress last Monday evening and provided an overview of operations. He said there were only five structure fires, a very low number for an event of this magnitude and mentioned state and federal reps who have been to Albany to assess the 32 square miles of damage. The damage has greatly impacted the city and will take a while to recover. As of yesterday, Governor Deal declared a state of emergency in eight counties and required documentation is begin gathered to determine storm damage costs.

At this point questions were posed by the Mayor and Commissioners.

Commissioner Howard asked that Gary Rice, (currently employed by Phoebe Putney Hospital and retired GEMA official) also be available to answer questions and provide a view of what is needed at the next level. He recommended that Dougherty County officials be included during briefings. Ms. Subadan countered that Chief Rowe is the Emergency Manager for the entire county and he will address questions; she briefly discussed her goal in the process, adding that briefings went out to all City/County officials. Chief Rowe stated correct information was being disseminated city-countywide and discussed the method information was disclosed to everyone, including meetings and the use of social media. He briefly discussed the defined structure under which the emergency manager operates per the organizational chart and assured the Commission that information was being dispensed. Commissioner Howard referred to FEMA and asked the type information required, i.e., \$14.0 million threshold in state-wide damages, etc. Regarding debris removal, Chief Rowe agreed that it will be challenging and explained the statewide threshold of \$14.0 million as it pertains to losses being recouped through state/federal monies, what is counted as a loss, programs to assist private property owners, adding that preliminary assessments indicate there will

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not be an issue in reaching the \$14.0 million threshold. He reported that more than 29 structures suffered at least 40% uninsured/underinsured loss. FEMA teams will be in Albany tomorrow to perform assessments and, if that program is turned on, which is a grant program, those who qualify can receive assistance for repairs/restoration. He said he was advised yesterday that so far, 30,000 cubic yards of debris had been collected – well under 5% of the total currently on the street.

Mr. Rice advised that this will be a long process and explained the difference between state declarations, which does not include monies vs. state of emergency/federal declaration, which frees up monies. He commended the video that was presented adding that it will be powerful in painting a picture of damage to FEMA. Commissioner Howard mentioned the presidential inauguration and asked if it will have an impact on federal assistance. Mr. Rice replied that the process, which he discussed as it pertains to sending info to FEMA Washington, should not be impacted and should be seamless. Commissioner Howard expressed concern regarding damages, especially that of rental property. Mr. Rice said that in moving forward, available housing should be looked at, which includes Section 8 Housing opening up.

Commissioner Postell asked Mr. Rice how long he worked with GEMA. Mr. Rice said he worked with Georgia Emergency Management and then with the state for over 20 years. Commissioner Postell why Albany was not declared to have been hit by a tornado, Mr. Rice explained it was wind damage regardless of whether it was tornado or straight line winds. He said the declaration is not declared on the type of event, but rather on the amount of damage; FEMA is coming in because it has been shown that recovery is beyond local and state governmental assistance. Commissioner Postell mentioned substandard housing being used as rentals, and discussed landlords deciding to not rebuild.

Mayor Hubbard said she has been in daily contact with the Dougherty County Chairman and that she understands that the emergency management plan falls under the County. She thanked the faith-based community and citizens for the help they have provided. She advised that Congressman Bishop was in Albany on Saturday; Jody Redding, Regional Director from Sen. Isakson's office, was in town early last week and others are aware and waiting for FEMA to get here for an assessment to get federal designation. The GEMA Director and a representative from Homeland Security were in Albany and toured the area; everything is falling into place to ensure Albany gets what is needed. She thanked the local state delegation in assisting as well and stated that Governor Deal will be here at noon today and will meet with the other counties to assess damage. She asked that citizens are kept updated, as well, and provided information to help ease their concerns. She thanked the Red Cross for providing shelter, staff, volunteers and all those who have worked together during this time.

Commissioner Howard asked that Congressman Bishop be contacted again because of the upcoming change of command in DC and that he plead with President Obama to see the devastation in Albany.

Commissioner Postell said there are problems with the Mayor and County Chairman's role in this situation. He said the County swore in elected officials and asked where we are with swearing in

officials. Mayor Hubbard advised Commissioner Postell that we did not have an election so there is no one to swear in this year. She said there is an emergency management plan in place, which outlines the role of the City/County. Discussion followed on getting information to the public, etc., role of City/County with Mayor Hubbard explaining the process, adding that she has been working together with the County. Commissioner Postell expressed concern about the lack of information and suggested that each Commissioner needs to be involved. It does not reflect well on a Commissioner to tell constituents ‘I don’t know’.

Commissioner Howard mentioned the need for more help in E. Albany and said that a 10:00 am volunteer effort has been scheduled to assist residents in that area. Volunteers are urged to meet at the church located at 1719 Owens Ave on Saturday, January 14th.

Ms. Subadan thanked the presenters; staff who worked tirelessly to bring the community back to a full operational condition; ECG; and the public for their patience.

Commissioner Marietta also thanked everyone for their work and support, adding that he heard Mayor Pro Tem Fletcher has been assisting in feeding those in need.

At this time, Mayor Hubbard mentioned the process for citizen comments and continued with a review of the agenda as follows:

2017 ANNUAL APPOINTMENTS

In reply to Mayor Hubbard, the Clerk advised that these appointments can be discussed at the next meeting. There were no comments on appointments at this time.

TRAVEL

Commissioner Howard moved to approve the following, seconded by Commissioner Marietta; the motion unanimously carried.

1. Mayor D. Hubbard – GMA Executive Committee Mtg; Greensboro, GA; Dec. 7-9, 2016 - \$250.38
2. City Manager Sharon Subadan – 2017 GMA Mayor’ Day; Atlanta, GA; Jan. 20-23, 2017

PUBLIC SAFETY MATTERS

ALCOHOL LICENSE APPLICATION – TRANSFER OF OWNERSHIP

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1. Bluegem Venture Inc., d/b/a Liquor Locker; 633 Oglethorpe Blvd.; S. Patel/Agent; Liquor, Beer and Wine Package; Transfer Ownership from M. Patel; WARD 3
2. Albany 2016 LLC, d/b/a Royal Express; 1701 E. Oglethorpe Blvd.; S. Thomas/Agent; Beer and Wine Package; Transfer Ownership from P. Chhetri; WARD 1

Discussion followed with Commissioner Postell asking for clarification on the transfers; the Clerk provided information as noted. In reply to Commissioner Howard, Mr. Davis explained the local residency requirement for owners or their agents.

There were no further comments on these items.

PUBLIC FUNCTION MATTERS

CONTRACT WITH GA DEPT. OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND CODE ENFORCEMENT

Paul Forgey, Planning Director, discussed information as noted (copy on file).

In reply to Commissioner Postell, Mr. Forgey advised that code enforcement is now a division of the Planning Department. In reply to Mayor Hubbard he listed boundaries of the targeted demolition areas, which are between the First Avenue alley on the north, Tift Avenue on the south, Madison on the east and Davis on the west. In reply to Commissioner Postell he said he believes that the areas are in Ward II.

Commissioner Howard referenced the \$20,000 grant and asked for a spreadsheet of demolished houses in each ward, to include the cost.

There were no additional comments on this item.

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCE MATTERS

TRANSFER TITLE TO VEHICLES

Yvette Fields, Director of Central Services, discussed information as noted – copy on file. In reply to Commissioner Postell, Ms. Fields explained the process of transferring title to vehicles; with this protocol in place, titles can be transferred even when Ms. Subadan is not available. Ms. Subadan advised that this is done every year.

There were no additional comments.

PURCHASES

Ms. Fields discussed information – copy on file, stating that the total cost is \$121,610.00.

1. Thermoplastic Striping & Roadway Signs - LMIG

Commissioner Postell mentioned signs being blown down due to the recent storm and asked if this was included in the budget. Ken Breedlove, Traffic Engineering Manager, replied in the negative and explained the process, with Ms. Subadan adding that this will be part of the discussions with FEMA.

SPLOST VI REALLOCATIONS

Commissioner Howard asked to table this item to give more time for review due to the recent storm. In reply to Commissioner Postell, Ms. Subadan explained that the information pertains to SPLOST VI projects that are complete/have been reconciled, as well as reallocation of funding for other projects, etc.

Discussion followed with comments on whether or not to table at this time to have more time to review. Mr. Roberson advised that alley paving is time-sensitive, however, it can wait until the January 24th meeting. Commissioner Howard moved to table, seconded by Commissioner Postell; the motion unanimously carried.

OTHER BUSINESS

Commissioner Coleman mentioned the increase of scams because of the storm and asked that a list of registered contractors be placed on the website as a way to help identify scammers. Commissioner Marietta said many do not have internet access and suggested using Utility bills as a way to provide information to citizens.

Commissioner Postell agreed with Commissioner Marietta and mentioned that renters are being told if they are behind on rent and the home was damaged, it may not be repaired. He asked if customers have been told by Utility personnel that those with unpaid utility bills will not have repair performed. Ms. Subadan said that Utilities is working with everyone; individuals were provided letters that power is off and how to get public assistance. There has been no pressure, threats, or punitive action toward individuals by the utility and, inserts have been included in bills to get information out.

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Commissioner Langstaff agreed with Commissioner Coleman about scammers, but disagreed with the method of providing a list, suggesting that some may be left off the list, some may not be currently qualified, etc. He suggested empowering citizens by giving information on how to check on a contractor, i.e., call to see if they have business license, etc. Regarding cutting trees and having insurance, he said this is also an issue, adding that he calls insurance companies to make sure contractors are insured. Commissioner Coleman countered that that the elderly who are preyed on are not equipped to investigate and identify would-be scammers.

Commissioner Marietta asked if we have an Outage Management System (OMS). Ms. Subadan said a consultant has been hired to develop a program for automated meter information which will be presented soon, adding that it is very expensive, however, very necessary, as well.

Commissioner Langstaff mentioned that a scammer had cleared a yard and dumped it in an alley, but heavy equipment will be needed to have it removed. He said this is a scammer and the contractor should be prosecuted because blocking an alley is illegal. Mr. Davis explained that gouging is state law and this incident should be turned over to Municipal Court for a summons to be issued. Commissioner Langstaff stated that gouging is not the issue, but rather illegal dumping in an alley.

Commissioner Howard mentioned that FOX reporter, Tosin Fakile, is relocating and will be leaving soon.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 10:17 a.m.

SONJA TOLBERT
CITY CLERK