

APRIL 7, 2015
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
GOVT. CTR. – ROOM 120

PRESENT Mayor Dorothy Hubbard
Mayor Pro Tem Bobby Coleman
City Commissioners: Jon Howard, BJ Fletcher, Roger Marietta, Bob Langstaff,
Jr. and Tommie Postell
Interim City Mgr: Tom Berry
City Attorney: CN Davis

Mayor Hubbard called the meeting to order at 8:31 am.

EDC UPDATE

Justin Strickland, Executive Director, Albany/Dougherty Economic Development Commission gave a brief update and discussed information as noted (copy of power point on file), which included: the P&G Biomass Plant, WebstaruantStore, Thrush Aircraft, Albany/Dougherty Industry Roundtable, Industry Week Awards (April 15th), Business After Hours, Annual GA Quail Hunt, The One Albany campaign, Albany/Dougherty Day at the Capitol and Locate South Georgia (marketing organization).

In reply to Commissioner Fletcher, Mr. Strickland stated that the One Albany merchandise is on sale at his office, the Civil Rights Museum and Welcome Center. Commissioner Marietta asked what else the Commission can do to help support EDC; Mr. Strickland asked that they all continue to be good ambassadors for Albany and to be involved in EDC activities. Commissioner Postell asked if EDC has combined resources with the Chamber. Mr. Strickland replied that they frequently partner with the Chamber and explained ways in which the two interact on projects. Mayor Hubbard thanked Mr. Strickland for the work that they do and getting this community to where it is.

APPOINTMENT:

1. One City and one joint City/County appointment to the Flood Plain Management Review Board for an unexpired term ending October 1, 2016 (City) and three-year term ending December 31, 2017 (joint)

In reply to Commissioner Postell, the Clerk explained the reappointment of Harry James and said the City Commission has a city vacancy to fill as noted (copy on file). Commissioner Marietta moved to appoint Commissioner Postell in the city's vacant position, seconded by Commissioner Fletcher; the motion unanimously carried.

Commissioner Postell moved to reappoint/ratify Harry James, seconded by Commissioner Howard; the motion unanimously carried.

TRAVEL:

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

1. Commissioner BJ Fletcher, Newly Elected Officials Training, Macon, GA; March 11-13, 2015 - \$805.65

ITEM FOR FUTURE AGENDA

Commissioner Fletcher mentioned downtown grants and asked to bring Jason Rogers to address the Commission about his efforts in revitalizing downtowns, as well as provide some assistance to Interim Downtown Manager Sharlene Cannon.

Commissioner Postell asked Mr. Berry if he knows Mr. Roger; Mr. Berry said that he only recently became aware of Mr. Rogers and explained that he created something similar to ADICA, but is totally private [501(c)3] and aims to incentivize downtowns, including a 15% guarantee on loans, adding that there are good opportunities with his company that could benefit ADICA, downtown, and the TAD.

Commissioner Marietta mentioned an energy/renters code that was discussed in the Albany Herald and asked that this be brought back to the Commission. Mr. Berry said he is putting together a focus group and asked that names of landlords be provided to serve on this group. Mayor Pro Tem Coleman asked if there is advertisement out there for landlords to know this group is being formed. Mr. Berry asked that the Commission submit names of people to serve on this group.

Commissioner Howard asked about the pool for E. Albany. Mr. Berry said conversations are ongoing with the Boys/Girls Club to partner with them. Mayor Pro Tem Coleman said he has been in communications with Boys/Girls Club reps and suggested a meeting will be forthcoming on this partnership.

Commissioner Postell stated that landlords in Albany had been discussed in the past, with solutions being reached, but were never implemented. He said that state legislators were not in agreement with the City's recommendations and suggested involving state reps in the process.

Commissioner Fletcher said she received many calls when the article ran and briefly discussed conversations she had with landlords who called her. She suggested educating people on paying low rent versus paying extremely high utility bills.

Mr. Berry again said he will get a focus group and bring back information/recommendations that will include input from the state delegation.

Commissioner Marietta mentioned the 'bed tax' that was previously discussed. Mr. Berry said this was looked at, and while the State passed the transportation bill, nothing was found except in specific situations, i.e. Savannah, which has a method to pay for their ferry. He said staff is still looking at the bed/room taxes.

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCE MATTERS

T-SPLOST

Commissioner Marietta stated that the new transportation bill provides a second chance at T-SPLOST; the condition of roads are deplorable and will become even more expensive to repair in the future. He suggested that regions that passed this benefitted immensely and suggested Albany could also benefit. He asked for a consensus from the Commission for the Mayor to ask the County Commission to ask for a second chance with the projected vote being in 2016; this will assist with addressing some of the issues we have in Albany/Dougherty County.

Commissioner Postell said this was brought before the Commission in the past with state reps being anti-T/SPLOST, which is why it did not initially pass. He asked the pulse of the state and if they want it in this area because they rigorously campaigned against T-SPLOST.

Mayor Hubbard suggested Commissioner Marietta discuss this with the City Attorney and then put it on an agenda.

Commissioner Postell said he is concerned about the bus station and asked for an update on where we are. Mr. Berry said it is moving along, and will be put on an agenda for an update.

Commissioner Fletcher asked to pursue the ‘bed tax’ to help out downtown and suggested that adding \$8.00; giving the State \$5.00 from the \$8.00 will provide \$3.00 to local, downtown institutions.

ADICA UPDATE

Mr. Berry said he and Sharlene Cannon will discuss. Mayor Hubbard recognized ADICA Board members, Thelma Johnson and Omar Salaam. Mr. Berry distributed information (copy on file) and discussed the formation of ADICA (1977) through 2014, the structure of ADICA, adding that the Commission appoints all members except the one appointed by ADICA Board members. He said there is a lot of additional information that he can distribute as the history is very interesting. Commissioner Fletcher asked for the additional information. Mr. Berry explained that over the years ADICA operated in an autonomous manner and until it becomes an ‘arm’ of the City Commission with a joint effort to establish visions it will not be effective. He mentioned New Town Macon, which is a good model because of the focus on incentivizing residential and the goal of retail following. Funds ADICA has left should be spent in accordance with the Commission’s vision.

Commissioner Marietta stated that the TAD was agreed to by the School Board and County, with both dropping out and sacrificing the additional tax income. He suggested that both entities have representatives at the meetings. Mr. Berry agreed that communications failed and said he will make sure both entities are brought up to date. He added that meetings are open to everyone and they are welcome to come, but certainly the information should be taken to them.

Commissioner Howard asked the amount ADICA still have available; Mr. Berry replied that there is approximately \$900,000. He distributed additional information regarding ADICA's accounting practices through July 2014 (copy on file). He said he feels ADICA expended the TAD funds in the best way that they saw fit, but now it is time to regroup. Commissioner Howard asked the status of Waffle House coming to Albany. Ms. Cannon said she does not have any other information other than what was said in the Albany Herald.

Mayor Hubbard asked if ADICA has a plan to get foot traffic/people downtown. Ms. Cannon replied in the affirmative and asked if the Commission has a plan to allow ADICA to do this as most downtown authorities can do only as much as the leadership allows. ADICA and the City need to have the same vision and be on the same page. Mayor Hubbard said she does not remember seeing a plan or being asked to present a plan. Mr. Berry said it has not been presented, but he will make sure it happens.

Commissioner Fletcher stressed that residential will have to kick start downtown. She challenged the Commission and citizens of this community to go downtown and watch young adults walking their children, dogs, etc. She suggested that they are the ones who will live in downtown apartments. She mentioned Valdosta in 1998, which had a limited downtown and with the vision of the city of Valdosta, apartments were constructed and the downtown area now thrives.

Mr. Berry said ADICA did not provide a concise plan and promised that he and Ms. Cannon will provide this before leaving Albany.

Discussion followed regarding apartments in downtown, pulling in developers, etc. Ms. Cannon said she just returned from a Downtown Conference in Atlanta where those present were working together and excited about their programs. She said that having the Commission involved with a 'can do/don't take no' attitude is necessary, but the key piece to the development of downtown is buy-in from the community and is what was missing from Albany's efforts. She suggested that having everyone involved is what make other cities successful and pledged to develop one of the best Main street programs in the state that will involve people from all walks of life.

Mayor Pro Tem Coleman expressed concern about the rhetoric of reaching out to people, and suggested that this is never done. He suggested expanding the circle and allowing everyone to have input. Ms. Cannon said she has been actively involved in reaching out to churches, civic clubs, neighborhood watch groups, etc., in trying to get everyone involved. She suggested that a structure, such as a Main street program with committees, will provide avenues for getting volunteers in place and putting them to work.

Commissioner Howard mentioned the Commission having a strategic plan and suggested that the demographics in Albany have changed and what works in other cities (Thomasville, Valdosta, etc.) may not work in Albany. While loft apartments are good in some areas, most of the time it is young people with parents who have money inhabiting them. He stated that ASU students do not have to leave campus to eat at the likes of Chick-fil-a, Pizza Hut, etc., which was unheard of

ten years ago at ASU. Turning downtown into an entertainment district, similar to Austin, Texas, would work. With the baby boomers dying off, there must be things that appeal to draw the younger generation in, adding that he feels they want after-hour entertainment as well.

Additional discussion followed on affordable housing in downtown, lack of entertainment, slumlords, property owners who are impossible to contact, etc.

Commissioner Marietta referenced the international building code that was adopted and asked if they are being enforced. Mr. Berry discussed the process pertaining to enforcement in downtown. Robert Carter, Chief Code Enforcement Officer, discussed code requirements, leasing, commercial buildings, random inspections, etc. Mayor Hubbard stated that the main street concept shows that we are all in this together; she asked at what point individuals have been brought in to share in discussions about the wants/needs of the public. Ms. Cannon said she has not had much success in getting property owners to the table.

Commissioner Langstaff said he spoke with Mr. Berry about the New Town Macon Director addressing the Rotary Club last week. He said he researched the statistics and feels that Albany is not that different from Macon, even though it is larger. He said that Albany's downtown is small enough to be manageable in comparison to Macon's larger downtown larger area. What is fascinating is the fact that New Town has existed since 1996, but they did not really get going until 2012; the tipping point was the 'loft fund', which is bond money that incentivizes people to develop lofts. Ms. Cannon interjected that their survey showed a demand of 150 units downtown; the young developer targeted the millennials/young adults and college students. Commissioner Langstaff added that for 15 years New Town Macon spent time focusing on storefronts, but they soon left; they then discovered that for every 10-15 lofts, they get one permanent storefront. He briefly explained the loft funds process. Mayor Hubbard agreed, adding that other cities (Macon and Columbus) have successfully done this

Commissioner Fletcher agreed with Commissioner Langstaff about a targeted area and plan, adding that a lien on properties may be an option. Commissioner Langstaff added that Macon has a vacancy tax, which is a huge incentive to motivate property owners/developers. Commissioner Howard stated that Macon has Mercer University, which is a great help to them as well. He agreed with Ms. Cannon about storefronts, but said the sidewalks in Albany are in a deplorable condition and asked Ms. Cannon to grade Albany. She gave Albany a D-

Ms. Johnson (Chairman of ADICA) said ADICA does not have incentives to offer, which could have helped them be further along. To help ADICA she suggested providing funding to incentivize downtown and working with ADICA to come up with a plan to come up with programs. She suggested ADICA meeting with the Commission to see how to move forward and mentioned the lack of support from local banks because property downtown has not sold for quite some time and they do not have confidence.

Commissioner Postell asked the status of the master plan. Ms. Johnson said it was presented to ADICA twice, but has not been presented to the Commission. Commissioner Postell agreed that a master plan is needed and commented on other projects as listed on their financials. Ms.

APRIL 7, 2015
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
GOVT. CTR. – ROOM 120

Johnson said this includes utility bills and upkeep at the Art Park including First Tee. Discussion followed on ADICA's expenses, cancelled projects, introducing the master plan to the Commission and citizens, and, the need to include the City Commission, etc.

Mayor Hubbard suggested looking at the strategic plan and bringing back something to the Commission for approval.

Ms. Johnson mentioned the TAD and having to address public infrastructure first in relation to the Old Northside and trying to get the environment ready for development. Commissioner Postell suggested that Arcadia and other areas are just as important as Old Northside. Ms. Johnson recommended that ADICA and Commissioners have discussions to determine boundaries and what is defined as downtown and look at the City's, not ADICA's, vision.

ITEM FOR FUTURE AGENDA

Commissioner Postell asked for an update on Westover Blvd lighting.

PUBLIC WORKS MATTERS

SPEED LIMIT ORDINANCE UPDATE

Commissioner Langstaff moved to approve, seconded by Commissioner Postell; the motion unanimously carried.

ITEM FOR FUTURE AGENDA

Commissioner Postell commented on potholes in Albany and stated that even though some have been worked on, they still present problems to drivers. Mayor Pro Tem Coleman asked to look at the railroad on Broadway and an update on the underpass, etc. Mr. Maples said he had a conversation with the railroad reps and will bring this up with them to see when it can be worked on.

Mr. Berry said he wants to meet with Commissioners Postell, Howard and Langstaff to review the City Manager hiring process.

Commissioner Fletcher mentioned APD's CARE Program and thanked Chief Proctor and his staff for implementing this program.

Mayor Hubbard reminded the Commission of the upcoming luncheon with the State GEMA Rep on April 21.

Commissioner Langstaff asked if the review of City Manager hiring process will be a closed meeting to enter into executive session. Discussion followed with Mayor Hubbard stating that

she is leaving the meeting and will not be part of the discussion at this time. Discussion followed on whether an executive session is required to have a meeting with Mr. Berry and the committee regarding the hiring of a City Manager. Mr. Davis advised that if there will be more than three people present, it would be appropriate to have an executive session to discuss a personnel matter.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

At 10:12 a.m., Commissioner Langstaff moved to enter into executive session to discuss a personnel matter, seconded by Commissioner Howard; 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 10:42 a.m., Commissioner Postell moved to exit executive session, seconded by Commissioner Langstaff, the motion unanimously carried as follows:

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

Mr. Berry advised that discussion included: city manager candidates, a review of resumes and the next step in the process. He stated that Mayor Hubbard and Mayor Pro Tem Coleman were not in executive session and that Commissioners Fletcher and Marietta was in the meeting briefly in the beginning and then left.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 10:43 a.m.

SONJA TOLBERT
CITY CLERK