

APRIL 14, 2020
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
GOVT. CTR. – RM. 100

PRESENT: Mayor Bo Dorough
Mayor Pro Tem Jon Howard
City Commissioners: Matt Fuller, Chad Warbington, Bob Langstaff, Jr., and Demetrius Young
City Manager: Sharon Subadan
City Attorney: C. Nathan Davis

Mayor Dorough called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m., and after attendance confirmation, it was noted that Commissioners Fuller and Langstaff were on the virtual teleconference call, with Commissioner Fuller advising that Commissioner Fletcher is not available this morning.

RE-INSTITUTING INVOCATIONS AT COMMISSION MEETINGS

Commissioner Warbington discussed information (copy on file) regarding invocations at regular City Commission business meetings, adding that he emailed information regarding the proposal. He suggested that this will set a positive tone at the beginning of meetings and a means to inspire, encourage and unify the community. He stated that he had discussions with the Clerk regarding back-up plans should anything fall through and recommended beginning this in May, with Ward I and rotate each month to the next Commissioner.

Commissioner Young commented on making it equitable and suggested allowing the public to have input as well. He expressed concern regarding the potential to open a ‘can of worms’ due to religious freedom and who could be chosen to lead the invocation. Commissioner Warbington stated that a notice can be put out for any member of the clergy/faith-based organizations interested in volunteering/participating with the Clerk keeping an ongoing list of those who are interested. Commissioner Young expressed concern regarding putting this responsibility on Commissioners, adding that it could appear that they [Commissioners] show favoritism as well as leaving out religions that are not part of the larger, faith-based community

Mayor Dorough stated that he would like to reach out, rather than reach in, while providing Commissioners the option to include Muslim, Jews, Catholics, etc. He advised that this will be on the next agenda for vote.

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCE MATTERS

PURCHASES:

Yvette Fields, Central Services Director, discussed information as noted (copy on file) regarding SPLOST VII Street resurfacing as follows:

1. Street Resurfacing, Oxford Construction, Inc., Albany, GA
Total exp. \$6,188,594.35

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In reply to Mayor Pro Tem Howard, Public Works Director Stacy Rowe, stated that he can send the list of streets via email, adding that there are a total of 78 streets in Phase III.

Commissioner Warbington mentioned the plastic speed bumps, which are condensed on Meadowlark and asked if other streets have this in place. Mr. Rowe stated that he thinks only Meadowlark has the speed humps on the list of streets. Commissioner Warbington stated that his issue is the plastic speed bumps on Meadowlark, which will be replaced with concrete ones when the street is resurfaced, adding that Meadowlark is a long street and he would like for the concrete speed bumps to be spread out and not placed back in the same spot. Regarding the issues on Stuart and Whispering Pines, Mr. Rowe stated that paving took place in September/October of last year. Commissioner Warbington expressed concerned regarding the outstanding issues and contracting new work with the same contractor before the issues are rectified/corrected. Ms. Subadan stated that dialogue is ongoing with Oxford regarding work that the City is not satisfied with, which has been documented by Ms. Fields, Engineering and Public Works. The expectation is that the issues will be resolved before a notice to proceed is issued on the contract.

In reply to Mayor Dorough regarding having assurances, Ms. Subadan stated that she will follow up with an email for the record. Commissioner Warbington said he routinely hears comments from residents on these two streets even though they are not in his ward. Ms. Subadan assured that no new work will begin until all issues are resolved. Regarding change orders, Ms. Subadan stated that some change orders will be issued because of conditions set by the City and briefly discussed the process. Mayor Dorough mentioned that in the past he has seen change orders result in the contractor no longer being the lowest bidder, adding that he does not want to see someone being paid to correct their own mistakes. In reply to Commissioner Warbington regarding any expected change orders, Ms. Subadan explained that \$4.9 million has been paid on the contract with the original bid exceeding \$6.0 million, meaning we are \$750,000 under on Phase II. Regarding Whispering Pines and Stuart, she advised that the additional leveling is \$152,000; Ms. Fields agreed. Ms. Subadan stated that the completed contract is expected to be \$5.59 million, with an original purchase order of \$6.4 million. A brief discussion followed on the contract (how change orders are calculated based on curb/gutter, raising/lowering manholes, etc.) with Ms. Subadan explaining the process and that often the City is under on contracts/budget.

Commissioner Fuller asked if the new bid includes the leveling which was not done on Whispering Pines and Stuart. Ms. Subadan stated that it does and explained that routinely in the past, due to limited funding only a minimum amount of leveling was approved, which was not the best practice, however, every street is now looked at and approved by engineering before moving forward.

Mayor Dorough referred to other items on the agenda and how contractors were directly solicited, but that was not the case on this bid and asked for an explanation. Ms. Fields stated that it depends on how the bid is written and explained the process of directly sending emails to some contractors; however, all bids are published. She said that four contractors were directly solicited; Jim Boyd Construction and Tractor Service were the other two. Mayor Dorough asked if funding is coming from SPLOST VII (approximately \$2.5 million) and T-SPLOST (slightly over \$2.0 million) and asked the reason for dividing it up this way. Ms. Subadan explained the plan and the process, which was implemented a few years ago to include three different funding sources and allows more streets

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to be resurfaced. Mayor Dorough said he wants SPLOST VII to be reallocated for recreation and Chehaw Park and asked that this be revisited as it pertains to road improvements, which is the purpose of T-SPLOST, i.e., put on the agenda for additional discussion. Ms. Subadan stated that the project list was specific for SPLOST VII and she has other ideas on funding reallocation. Mayor Dorough stated that this is a decision of the Commission and asked that it be on the agenda.

Ms. Fields discussed the following information (copy on file):

2. Public Works Crew Quarters, WJ Kirksey Construction
Total exp. \$788,900.00

Commissioner Young asked the location, with Mr. Rowe stating that it will be housed behind the City clinic on N. Monroe.

Commissioner Warbington stated that we are in the middle of Covid-19 virus and asked if this is something that can wait until we get a handle on the virus. Ms. Subadan stated that the financial status is closely monitored and evaluated and, we are in a position to face the crisis without knowing what the fallout will be; however, she said she thinks we can handle the expenditure at this time.

Commissioner Fuller asked for a copy of the full scope of work before the vote. Ms. Fields stated that she will provide that. Ms. Subadan stated that information (full set of architectural plans per Commissioner Warbington's request) was emailed to all Commissioners yesterday along with the bid.

Mayor Dorough commented on the current quarters, with Mr. Rowe stating that employees built their own quarters in the 1980/1990s. Mayor Dorough stated that he has additional questions regarding funding and how this will be paid, with Ms. Subadan stating that it is accumulated funds from fees paid by customers for stormwater sewer and solid waste. Mayor Dorough said he will get with Mr. Rowe to tour the current quarters, which he understands are in a deplorable condition, but keeping in mind complaints regarding high utility bills, etc., adding that the Clerk will facilitate the walk-through tour.

Ms. Fields discussed the following (copy on file):

3. Variable Speed Pump System, Benson Construction Co. Inc., Tifton, GA
Total exp. \$237,126.00

Mayor Pro Tem Howard asked if the vendor has been used before; Ms. Fields replied in the negative, adding that references were checked.

Commissioner Fuller commented on summer heat and asked if a repair can get us through the summer and pick this back up during the fall.

Joel Holmes, Recreation Director, stated that the pump is currently down and they are trying to keep it running until this item is approved, but the course in bad shape at this time. Commissioner Fuller

asked if it can last through the summer. Mr. Holmes said it is being patched, but there is no expectation that it will last through the summer.

Commissioner Warbington commented on the current situation and what is being done manually to keep the grass alive, adding that if the greens are not kept alive, it will entail more money in the future. He questioned funds from fees, use of tax dollars vs. fees, etc., with Ms. Subadan advising that this discussion will be added to the workshop budget.

Mayor Dorough clarified that the pump runs irrigation for all 18 holes and asked how long it has been in use. Mr. Holmes agreed and said that the pump has been in use there for approximately 25-30 years. In reply to Mayor Dorough, he stated that the pump under discussion has a six-year warranty that covers everything. Mayor Dorough noted that it is a budgeted expenditure, which he thought meant the expenditure was in the budget and the allocated money spent in the fiscal year in which it was budgeted. Ms. Subadan agreed and explained that it is in the R3M Budget for the golf course, adding that allocations for the golf course is approx. \$300,000. Mayor Dorough asked how much of the \$237,000 is left in the budget and, how much of the \$300,000 has been spent. He said that he had asked for this information; however, he was provided the cost of running the golf course and the revenue that is generated and asked that this be looked at during the budget process as it pertains to fees. He asked Ms. Subadan to circulate the email that was provided to him regarding golf course revenue/expenditures, adding that a little more of the expense to operate the golf course should be paid by those who use it.

Commissioner Warbington stated that there are other costs associated with the project and asked to have the cost of those items as well (roll-up doors, etc). Ms. Subadan said she will provide that information, adding that of the \$300,000 budgeted, Finance Director Derrick Brown just texted he that only \$10,000 has been expended. Don Gray, Facilities Director, stated that the lump sum total for the additional items mentioned by Commissioner Warbington is approximately \$8,000 to complete the project.

TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVES PROGRAM (TAP GRANT)

Lequrica Gaskins, Downtown Manager, discussed the following information (copy on file) regarding the acceptance of a Federal DOT TAP Grant award in the amount of \$800,050.00 (federal contribution of \$680,000.00, local contribution of \$170,000) toward the \$5.0 million project

Commissioner Young asked if this specific part of the project connects with that of the trails. Ms. Gaskins stated that this is not a trails project, but is for streetscape/ sidewalk improvements, adding that there are seven areas of focus.

Commissioner Warbington asked if acceptance of the grant is what is being approved at this time. Ms. Gaskins agreed and explained that written acceptance of the grant for preliminary engineering and design work is mandatory. In reply to Commissioner Warbington, Ms. Gaskins explained the process to advertise, accept bids, etc. Regarding the deadline, Ms. Gaskins stated that we are in a holding pattern waiting for approval, which hopefully will be at the next meeting. Commissioner Warbington asked if there is a deadline that determines when the grant is forfeited. Ms. Gaskins said

that she will check and confirm for a deadline. Commissioner Warbington stated that the actual cost is \$5.0 million, which will lead to an additional grant, etc., and commented on the City's portion and how this will be funded. He also asked if it will all come from SPLOST VII with Ms. Gaskins explaining that monies were allocated for sidewalk improvements and funding was considered when the grant application was submitted. She said that prioritized projects will not be superseded by other projects and mentioned maximizing all available funding and doing more with federal funds in conjunction with local funds.

Mr. Brown discussed sidewalk funding that is set aside in SPLOSTs and that a combined total of \$1.7 million was identified and other monies were set aside for the \$5.2 million. Commissioner Warbington confirmed that the City's total sum will be the \$1.7 million, with Mr. Brown agreeing and giving additional clarifications to the amounts. Ms. Subadan explained that this funding identified for downtown improvements.

Mayor Dorough commented on consultants/plans, etc., and ATI plans/proposals that downtown sidewalks were to be a different surface to look like water flowing, etc., stating that this is something that needs to be pursued. He said that there will be approximately 75% for completion, with Ms. Gaskins clarifying that 80% will be funded through alternative funding. Mayor Dorough commented on the process to include engineering/design, with Ms. Gaskins explaining the process and requirement required by GDOT, including timeline, additional grant opportunities, etc. Ms. Subadan stated that public input is involved in the design/engineering process along with public and Commission input.

BUDGET WORKSHOP (PUBLIC SAFETY)

Ms. Subadan discussed information (copy on file) and the process regarding budget matters for crime, policing & blight, adding that the purpose of the workshop is to inform the Commission and the public of staff's planned inclusions in the areas as noted in the development of the FY '21 budget, adding that she will be presenting a balanced budget. She advised that this is the first of four workshops that will be on different topics which will give her feedback on the budget presentation in May.

Mayor Pro Tem Howard noted page 23 regarding a 6% salary increase for police personnel/recruitment. Ms. Subadan stated that Chief Persley can explain the proposal.

Chief Persley mentioned that discussion of recruitment and a salary increase at the retreat resulted in researching six regional police departments (including Valdosta, Thomasville, Columbus and Macon), revealing that a 6% increase of policing personnel would result in an additional cost of over \$717,000. He advised that discussions with the Finance Dept., led to an idea of a higher starting salary as a recruitment tool and allowing Albany to compete with other southeastern police departments. Regarding code enforcement, he stated that the intent is to increase personnel (two additional inspectors) to provides more proactive enforcement. Input from the community suggested a mitigation process in order to reduce demolitions and allow more rehabbing of properties

Mayor Pro Tem Howard asked if the 6% increase is just for new recruits or all sworn officers. Chief Persley replied it would be a 6% increase for all personnel with the rank of patrolmen, corporals and

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sergeants being primarily affected. Mayor Pro Tem Howard questioned the need to install a major in Code Enforcement; Chief Persley explained that the position would work with non-profit groups based on the success of other code enforcement departments in the US using this format, with a focus on revitalization. Mayor Pro Tem Howard suggested revisiting this item to include a Captain/Lieutenant and keeping majors for more legwork. Chief Persley countered that a person with more authority, which may not be a sworn officer, is needed in this role. Mayor Pro Tem Howard reiterated that a lieutenant or captain should be installed in this capacity. Chief Persley stated that he understands the concern but upheld his position. Mayor Pro Tem Howard commented on the 6% increase for all officers with Ms. Subadan clarifying that it is for sworn personnel. Regarding code enforcement, she mentioned discussion from the retreat, with blight and code enforcement being important to the Commission, adding that the City is looking at a better way to implement the program and managing code enforcement to attack blight by being pro-active. Mayor Pro Tem Howard said the concept is good and suggested that more tweaking should be done. He commented on recruitment and asked what the COLA will be for all employees. Ms. Subadan said using the CPI it will be a 2.3% cola for all employees. In reply to Mayor Pro Tem Howard who suggested giving employees a 3% COLA, Ms. Subadan advised that they will review to include a 3% COLA, adding that the upcoming budget is based on a 2.3% COLA.

Mayor Dorough stated that he would like to be generous to the rank and file, adding that his suggestion is to exclude anyone making \$90,000 and above, suggesting that 2.5% COLA be given to those making under \$90,000.

Commissioner Warbington commented on the 6% and asked if it gets us even or higher than neighboring cities. Chief Persley stated that it puts us higher than base salaries of neighboring areas, adding that new hires can be hired above the based-on qualifications. Commissioner Warbington said he would like APD officers to make more than Valdosta, Columbus, etc., and to be paid the highest in the region. Regarding Code enforcement, he stated that he agrees with the programing to be pro-active rather than reactive. He mentioned the school zone speed initiative, which is not for revenue, but the revenue generated will potentially offset costs. Chief Persley briefly discussed the 'Red Speed' and stated that it is being looked at. He advised that before the virus hit, a presentation was planned and that they will move forward with the project and he will provide updated information. In reply to Commissioner Warbington, Chief Persley stated that it is no cost to the budget and training will be done on the existing system. Regarding revenue, Ms. Subadan explained the process including general fund departments, adding that for the first year it would be conservative, since it is restricted revenue and only certain things allowed for the funds, but it will not show up in the department. Commissioner Warbington stated that in the retreat, extended stay hotels were discussed and suggested that the more we invest/putting resources to these type hotels, improvements will happen and asked if this is inclusive of the two additional Code Enforcement officers. Ms. Subadan stated that this is her expectation of Chief Persley, realizing that someone will have to stay on this full-time once cleanup is completed. It is on the list of pro-active things to be done in the future.

Commissioner Young asked if a specific outcome through the pay increase has been identified, i.e., staffing levels, etc., and what is the overall plan re: code enforcement, taking one segment of the community to clean up, etc., and if it is included in the plan. Chief Persley commented on the Fight Albany Blight initiative and commented on a proactive measure, mapping out the city as a whole,

rather than piece by piece, and prioritize what is easy to fix compared to what will take longer; identifying areas, engaging with the community's recommendations, etc. Regarding personnel staffing, he advised that currently there are 175 sworn officers with the goal of getting to his authorized strength of 214, especially to fill the ranks of specialized units. He also discussed staffing levels, vacancies, etc.

Mayor Dorough agreed with Mayor Pro Tem Howard's comments on not having a person promoted based on length of time, adding that whomever is put in the position should be willing to get out on the frontline. Blighted property has been identified as a priority and the person selected should be committed to the vision; identify properties, people who can get properties renovated, etc., buy-in and commitment of the person in charge. He said he wants accomplishments to be evaluated objectively re: number of homes, number of properties that can be rehabbed and number of properties to be demolished. He said he requested maps of each ward designating dilapidated properties. Chief Persley stated that he can provide the information, adding that he sent a digital version.

CITY MANAGER'S UPDATE

Ms. Subadan said that she will be emailing updated info, adding that when she has anything new on the municipal court, that will be emailed as well.

OTHER BUSINESS/ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDA

Commissioner Warbington mentioned demolitions and asked what will be done with properties, adding that Land Bank handles a different portion and now liens will be on the properties perpetually. He said he and the City Attorney discussed this and asked to see properties with the lien higher than the property value and possibly disposing of the properties, to include a policy regarding properties that do not fall under the Land Bank's authority. Ms. Subadan asked that this be part of the Code strategy with the budget year as it relates to blight. Commissioner Warbington asked if there are properties that action/immediate attention is required that can be brought back for discussion.

Commissioner Young mentioned emails that he sent regarding stimulus monies coming to municipalities and that discussion need to begin to be prudent with monies to make the biggest impact on the City of Albany, etc.

Mayor Dorough asked Commissioner Young to remain on top of this issue and commented on an email that he sent regarding this legislation. He mentioned info on E. Albany sidewalks and asked that this be put on a future agenda since it is a project he would like to see moved forward. He asked to publish notice that the Commission was considering renaming Carver Park to Driskell Park. Ms. Subadan stated that there is a process and commented on the resolution, adding that in the scheme of everything this is not on her radar. A brief discussion followed regarding the process. Mayor Dorough asked for information generated in 2003-2004 regarding design work for Eames Park and asked staff to contact the original contractor to locate the design document. A brief discussion

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followed with it noted that the new name of the company is Populous. Ms. Fields stated she will get back on this to ensure the information is disseminated.

Mayor Pro Tem Howard asked Ms. Subadan to let Mr. Scott Tennison know that he appreciates Mr. following through with demolishing 1113 and 1115 Crawford Drive.

There being no further discussion, the meeting adjourned at 10:24 a.m.

SONJA TOLBERT
CITY CLERK