

OCTOBER 6, 2020
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
GOVT. CTR. – RM. 100 (Virtual Meeting)

PRESENT: Mayor Bo Dorough
Mayor Pro Tem Jon Howard
City Commissioner: Chad Warbington
City Attorney: C. Nathan Davis

Mayor Dorough called the (virtual) meeting to order at 9:21 a.m. and confirmed the attendance of those on the virtual conference call as follows: City Manager Sharon Subadan, Commissioners Matt Fuller, BJ Fletcher, Bob Langstaff and Demetrius Young.

SPEAKER APPEARANCE

1. Diane Brown stated that she is with 9-5 Georgia, which aims to address high utility bills and mentioned that the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the ability of many in Albany to pay their utility bills. The pandemic has also caused a loss in sales, which results in reworking the budget, with the budget being down approximately 15% and 80% of the general fund coming from utilities, resulting in increased bills. She referred to a student who was at their protest, who had a \$1500 light bill and suggested that this is more than the public's market share. She mentioned a Citizen Advisory Committee, which can help work through this issue and stated that if there is no resolution through the Committee, they will reach out to the Public Service Commission regarding the Utility Customer Bill of Rights.

Commissioner Young asked her thoughts if the Albany Utility had a separate department/bureau to address issues she just discussed; an office for customers to seek help and not have to go to an outside agency. Ms. Brown stated that it is an excellent idea, it would provide a chance for collaboration among those with the goal to see that utility bills are lowered.

Mayor Dorough mentioned some of the statistics quoted by Ms. Brown, which he believes are incorrect. Ms. Brown stated that her information came from the City's website which posted the budget. Mayor Dorough stated that she will be supplied with the correct information.

2. Bruce Capps stated that he is present to urge Commissioners to re-examine the policy on building demolition and blight conditions that prompt demolitions to some extent. He suggested that an alternative to demolishing buildings is needed to keep properties on the tax roll. Reviewing his presentation (copy on file), he stated that Carmike Cinema has been determined to be blighted property and agreed that for some, it is an eyesore. He discussed: Code Enforcement looking for low-hanging fruit to get the Carmike in under the ordinance; it not being a blighted, but vacant building; City not enforcing its own process, making it impossible to declare a building vacant, etc, and urged Commissioners to re-examine the policy and appoint a broader group of individuals within the city to determine the perimeters of a demolition policy. He showed photos of buildings which have great potential to be rehabbed but are slated for demolition. The last one's owner does not live in Albany/Dougherty County, made a great amount of money off the City and deliberately let it fall into disrepair. This is not an isolated case with many falling within this category and not paying taxes here.

A brief discussion followed with Commissioner Warbington noting blighted property meaning different things to different people and asked Mr. Capps his definition. Mr. Capps stated that it

would be property cannot be saved or no longer has an alternative use. Commissioner Warbington stated his opinion of blighted property is that it poses a threat to the public safety and welfare of the neighborhood. and agreed that because property is vacant does not mean it is blighted, etc., adding that the City has many properties that are past anyone's definition of 'blighted' and must be addressed. Mr. Capps stated that to some extent it is a judgment call and his issue is 'should the judgment call be left to Code Enforcement and City Attorney', with his answer being 'no', suggesting that basis needs to be broader, etc. Referring to his presentation, he suggested that it seems poor maintenance and decay are being rewarded. The City tears the buildings down, which comes off the tax roll, then maintains the property and bearing the cost in perpetuity. He recommended incentivizing owners to renovate their buildings; this results in the City not rewarding them by tearing down their poor judgement and problem.

Commissioner Young stated that he disagrees with Commission Warbington, a building is not a safety issue unless allowed to deteriorate which makes it a safety issue. He agreed that more needs to be done to force owners to prevent these conditions and, development needs to be considered, etc., adding that he appreciates Mr. Capps efforts regarding planning and preservation.

Mayor Dorough commended Mr. Capps commitment to preserving property and architectural structures. He stated that his definition of blighted property is when someone has neglected their property to such a degree that it impairs the enjoyment of adjacent properties or negatively impacts a neighborhood, adding that he feels we need to be more, not less, aggressive in bringing down the properties.

Commissioner Young advised that a sub-committee, Building Assessment Committee, (Commissioners Fuller, Warbington and himself) was formed to review/address the issue; a process that looks for alternative options needs to be in place and followed before a demolition notice is sent.

PUBLIC SAFETY MATTERS

ALCOHOL LICENSE APPLICATIONS

Deputy Chief/License Inspector Anthony Donaldson reviewed the following information (copy on file):

1. RJ Alverson LLC; d/b/a The Rib Shack; 2206 Dawson Road Suite A; J. Whiting/Agent; Beer Consumption; Ward 4

Requesting clarification, Commissioner Fuller stated that for on-site consumption of beer only, there is no distance requirement; Deputy Donaldson agreed.

Commissioner Young asked if there are other alcohol outlets near this location, which Deputy Chief Donaldson named.

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Deputy Chief Donaldson reviewed the following information (copy on file):

2. Albany Seafood House LLC; d/b/a Juicy Crab; 2524 Archwood Drive; Z. Dunlap/Agent; Liquor, Beer and Wine Consumption; Ward 5

There were no questions/comments regarding this item.

ALCOHOL LICENSE APPLICATIONS – TRANSFER OF OWNERSHIP

Deputy Chief Donaldson reviewed the following information (copy on file):

1. Krishna Group LLC; d/b/a/ Mini Mart; 2422 Stuart Avenue; N. Patel/Agent; Beer and Wine Package; Ward 5

There were no questions/comments regarding this item.

PUBLIC FUNCTION MATTERS

2020 CENSUS UPDATE

Using PowerPoint (copy on file), Planning Director Paul Forgey, advised that since the last meeting, the 1% increase in our local self-response rate equates to approximately 370 households. He stated that enumerators are still out, knocking on doors and, we have maps illustrating the percentage of their workload which has been completed. However, it is not based on county geography, it is a larger area, with our area basically going from Savannah to Columbus (southwest corner of Georgia), with Georgia remaining in the bottom five states for a total response rate of 98.4%. He discussed the consequences caused by those not counted and the chain of events leading up to a lawsuit resulting in the original deadline of October 31 being back in effect. Everyone, everywhere, would have suffered more significant damages had the September deadline remained in effect.

Mayor Pro Tem Howard referred to the Thornton Drive area, asking if that census tract includes the Albany Housing Authority on Clark and E. Broad; Mr. Forgey stated that he believes it does. Mayor Pro Tem Howard suggested that the two of them get together soon to rally that area.

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCE MATTERS

PURCHASES

Central Services Director Yvette Fields discussed information on the following (copy on file):

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1. Vactor Truck – Sourcewell Contract #081-716-PMC

Expenditure \$424,855.00

Mayor Dorough asked that she explain the Sourcewell Contract and how it works. Ms. Fields stated that it is a cooperative purchasing agreement. Purchasing opportunities are advertised and those who submit bids are awarded contracts and able to buy off the contracts, which have been competitively bid.

Commissioner Fuller noted that one has been declared surplus and asked how many we have. Public Works Director Stacey Rowe stated that there are seven and the one being surplus is a 2006 model.

Commissioner Young asked if this purchase will enable the City to increase the level of street-sweeping. Mr. Rowe stated that when getting to the street sweeping item, if passed, it will replace three sweepers and will increase the City's service level.

Mr. Fields stated that the following is off the Sourcewell Contract (copy on file):

2. Front-loaders – Sourcewell Contract #081-716-PMC

Expenditure \$507,876.84

Mayor Dorough asked the need for two front-end loaders. Mr. Rowe explained that the City has six front-loader garbage trucks in fleet, with the City averaging picking up 150 dumps/day, adding that they have exceeded their life expectancy.

Mayor Pro Tem Howard referred to page six, asking if a one-year warranty is standard. Fleet Director Peter Bednar replied in the affirmative, adding that they are 2011 models and way past their lifecycle, which is usually five-eight years. Last year, repairs for one cost approximately \$55,000 in maintenance.

Ms. Fields stated that the following is also a Sourcewell Contract (copy on file):

3. Street Sweepers – Sourcewell Contract #122017-TYM

Expenditure \$893,964

Mayor Dorough asked the need for three street sweepers. Mr. Rowe explained that there are eight sweepers in fleet, sweeping all curb/gutter streets and paved alleys once a month. He said that the three being replaced have exceeded their lifespan, are high maintenance and spend a lot of down-time in the shop.

Commissioner Warbington asked if we have always had eight or were there more in the past. Mr. Rowe advised that at one time there were nine, one was a three-wheeled sweeper, having to have a dump truck running with it, was not as efficient as the regenerative air sweepers, so we are now

down to eight. Commissioner Warbington asked how many are in use, at any given time. Mr. Rowe explained that typically all eight are out but, within the past few months four-five are running because of some being down.

Ms. Fields stated that it is another Sourcewell Contract (copy on file):

4. Dump Trucks – Sourcewell Contract #081716-KTC

Total expenditure \$316,286.94

In reply to Mayor Dorough, Mr. Rowe stated that the two are replacing older models that have exceeded their life. He explained that the dump trucks are used in a variety of different functions (hauling debris to the landfill, performing alley work, ditch work, etc.)

GRANTS

1. Brownfield Assessment Grant Application

Mr. Forgey reported that the \$300,000 grant through the Environmental Protection Agency does not require a match and can be used to inventory/prioritize Brownfield sites. He stated that the application focuses on the Harlem area and Albany Theater; however, as with the existing Brownfield Assessment Grant the City was awarded, EPA is flexible and does not require that the City limit all of the funding to the focus areas if a property more in need of cleanup is identified.

Mayor Pro Tem Howard asked for a site plan of the building the City owns or purchases that may have Brownfield activity.

Commissioner Warbington asked if this grant gives the City the ability to decide where it wants to do an assessment. Mr. Forgey replied in the affirmative, adding that the City wants to direct funds from the grant to encouraging development, or at the very least clean-up property; we have flexibility in using the funds. Commissioner Warbington commented on the blight and potential environmental issues of the Theater.

Mayor Dorough referred to Mr. Forgey's mention of a previous grant and asked when and how the money was spent. Mr. Forgey stated that it was also a \$300,000 assessment grant awarded two years ago, with many environmental assessments, particularly in the downtown area (Mule Barn, 207 Pine, etc.). Mayor Dorough asked for copies of any reports that were generated and a list of where and the amount of funding spent. He stated that there are properties downtown, including the Theater, that within the next year or two will require Commissioners making the hard decision to demolish if there is no hope to revitalize it. He mentioned that Dougherty County has three superfund sites (Firestone, MCLB, and TH Agriculture and Nutrition). He asked for a status update within the next 60 days on those three properties, to include what remediation has been done over the years and any plans to further remediate them.

CITY MANAGER UPDATE

Ms. Subadan advised that she will be emailing an update on all City projects but wanted to specifically mention Express Disposal/Concrete Enterprises contract, with some challenges being encountered. She asked that the public be patient and explained that the company putting out the barrels is subcontracted to our existing and previous waste hauler. Things have not gone as planned and there is a delay in pick-up. She explained that all new barrels that were on our books are out, and there is an issue of several individuals who had a second can or were not on City books which has to be worked through. She stated that it has been 14 years since the City had to do wholesale replacement of 12,000 barrels, adding that refuse in an old or new barrel will be picked up; there was confusion due to Customer Service telling customers that to be picked up, trash must be in the new barrels. This information was incorrect, and any trash put out will be picked up.

Mayor Pro Tem Howard asked if Concrete Enterprise can come back since there was no mutual agreement reached between them and A-1 Brantley. He asked to ascertain that they formed a partnership with another minority contractor. Ms. Subadan explained that they will provide an overall update at a future meeting

Commissioner Warbington suggested that the City engage the media, social networks, etc., to get the message to the public. He asked what recourse the City has and if they are confident that by Friday, they will have a subcontractor. Ms. Subadan advised that the City is holding the last payment to Transwaste/GFL because of unfinished business with them. Commissioner Warbington asked if pick up days remain the same; Ms. Subadan replied in the affirmative, adding that routes are also the same.

Commissioners Young asked how much of the delay may be due to the subcontractor not working with Concrete Enterprises. He stated that the fall through of A-1 Brantley as the subcontractor left a bad taste in his mouth. Ms. Subadan stated that to be fair, there are no reports of trash not getting picked up. Commissioner Young interjected that he has received calls regarding that issue. Ms. Subadan advised that with the new technology, we can determine what and when something was missed; the cameras provide the means to investigate complaints. According to her information, general complaints are of drop off and pick up of the barrel, with customers being confused about the schedule, which is really not a function of the sub; it is the function of a third party which only comes into effect when there is a change in vendor and new cans. She explained that the problem is with GFL because they are contracted to pick up their barrels. She sent emails to Commissioners sharing the City's challenges with GFL, which started with yard debris delays during the shelter in-place, adding that she has met with them, written letters, as well as sending sanction letters. She said that for the past six months, GFL has been dragging their feet; however, there is a backup plan. Commissioner Young reiterated that A-1 was cut out of the process and the pledge of Concrete Enterprises to partner with them failed. This is something he will take into consideration when the contract comes up again. Ms. Subadan asked that he directly share the complaints with her. Commissioner Young stated that they called 311 and should be in that system.

ITEMS FOR NEXT AGENDA

Mayor Pro Tem Howard advised that the City's email server has been compromised; he received an email asking for money on behalf of Mayor Dorough.

Commissioner Warbington mentioned the current issue regarding the Humane Society not taking in animals and asked if we have an agreement with any adjacent counties. Chief Persley advised that some local vets have offered their services for emergencies and animals needing treatment. For animals needing to be secured and no owner has been identified, Lee County is the backup. The information he was provided indicates that the animals at the Humane Society were moved to another shelter. Commissioner Warbington mentioned King and Chloe, asking if they are secure; Chief Persley stated that he will have to find out. Commissioner Warbington noted the other issue with the Humane Society is the financial situation; part of negotiation for their contract was a request for their financials; he asked if there has been any movement in that regard. Chief Persley stated that attorney Joe Dent advised him that he had sent the information to the City Attorney's office. In reply to Commissioner Warbington, Mr. Davis stated that he thought he had sent that information to Commissioners; he will ensure that they receive it.

Mayor Dorough stated that he has three items; the first regards constituents who live in E. Albany and asked about \$35.0 million allocated following a disaster. Ms. Subadan explained that the CDBG was for the entire state, which specifically includes Albany zip code 31705. Mayor Dorough stated that some people have not repaired their homes as they were counting on this money and asked who should these citizens call to get information, adding that he feels a virtual public hearing should be held and allow all affected citizens to ask questions. He asked if Community & Economic Development is the office they should contact. Ms. Subadan replied in the negative, explaining that the process has been extremely lengthy, the City still does not actually have funds to dispense. She explained that the City and County are partnering to address Unmet Needs, part of the grant dedicated to housing in that zip code, adding that she will get in touch with the County Administrator. She advised that they spoke yesterday regarding a portion of funds that were dedicated to mitigation that will make the community more resilient in the future. She stated that the Department of Community Affairs limited the City to one project for mitigation and that she will be proposing potential projects for Commissioners to approve. The housing portion of the funds was supposed to go first, with \$200,000 released for administration which we are partnering with the County on. She mentioned that the County is very interested in helping those in Radium Springs, a 31705 zip code. Mayor Dorough stated that the area he is referring to is in southeast Albany, near Morningside Elementary. His friend has called CED, cannot get calls returned, no information and that is why he is asking that a public hearing be scheduled in order to get information to citizens, especially to let them know that the City/County are not responsible for delays and to provide instructions on where we go from here. The second issue is the discovery that some citizens were having trash being picked up but were not being billed for trash collection; Ms. Subadan agreed. Mayor Dorough asked the total number of citizens; Ms. Subadan stated that she will get back with him regarding details and explained that a lot of them were second cans; a report will be provided to the Board once the information has been confirmed. Mayor Dorough suggested implementing a procedure to ensure that those getting service are paying for it; Ms. Subadan stated that having trackable cans will help ensure this. Mayor Dorough stated that his

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third issue regards sidewalk discussions for downtown, he would like for staff to look at brick pavers. He read that water can filter into the ground and realizes the cost is greater, but there are environmental benefits and asked that staff look into that, particularly in conjunctions with the plans for downtown. Ms. Subadan recalled that the City was awarded a large grant for planning for downtown and, she will remind Ms. Gaskins of this. The City has never been able to afford pavers, which she is all about, and hopefully the planning grant can assist in this endeavor.

Technical and Communication Director Steven Carter advised that the City's email system has not been compromised; anyone with spam email can call 229.302.1100, staff is available to help. He reiterated that our email system has not been compromised.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 10:47 a.m.

SISSY KELLY
ASST. CITY CLERK