

APRIL 6, 2021
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
GOVT. CTR. – RM. 100 (Virtual Meeting)

PRESENT: Mayor Bo Dorough
Mayor Pro Tem Matt Fuller (attended virtually)
City Commissioners: Jon Howard and Chad Warbington
City Manager: Sharon D. Subadan
City Attorney: C. Nathan Davis
(Virtual participants: BJ Fletcher, Bob Langstaff and Demetrius Young)

Mayor Dorough called the (virtual) meeting to order at 8:31 a.m. and confirmed the attendance of those on the virtual conference call.

SPEAKER APPEARANCE

1. Using a power point presentation (copy on file), April Andrews discussed Housing in Albany and mentioned Treeside Park Apartments and issues, i.e., high utility bills, voter registration and turnout, housing and organizing trainings. She commented on slide 3 and the 11 specific concerns including contacting Code Enforcement, which was not readily able to assist.

Commissioner Howard thanked Ms. Andrews for her presentation and advised that the concerns are citywide, adding that he will address this with the City Manager.

Commissioner Fletcher stated that she will assist those with the problems and offered her phone number.

Commissioner Warbington stated that he supports options to assist with the problems, agreeing with Commissioner Howard's comments that he will also address this with the City Manager.

Commissioner Young apologized for the complaints not being acted on and said he will also ask Code Enforcement and City staff the next step in resolving issues as it pertains to blighted property, quality of life, etc.

Mayor Dorough asked Ms. Andrews to put her comments in writing; Ms. Andrews stated that she will provide. Mayor Dorough advised that this is not City property and acknowledged code violations at the private complex where she lives. He apologized for the concerns and assured Ms. Andrews that relief will be provided. In reply to Mayor Dorough, Ms. Andrews stated that the location is 2315 W. Gordon Ave., with 60-70 units on site.

Commissioner Howard questioned if the corporation is current with paying utility bills. Ms. Subadan stated that this complex has a different property management, adding that Code went out in February/March relating to plumbing issues and, the landlord was informed of deficiencies. She advised that the City is limited with how it can address private properties, which is a consistent challenge within the community. Commissioner Howard addressed state law and Code Enforcement not being allowed on private property unless it is complaint driven, adding that this is a statewide issue. Laws are written and voted on by state elected officials, with many of them owning substandard properties, and do not keep their apartments/properties up to code.

Commissioner Young echoed the concerns of Commissioner Howard.

Mayor Dorough asked for a summary for the last 24 months of complaints from 2315 W. Gordon, work orders, reports, etc., to verify what the City has done.

2. Using a power point presentation (copy on file), James Pratt discussed systemic racism and public safety and asked for an extra five minutes. Mayor Dorough stated that this is at the will of the Commission. Commissioner Howard and Young were in favor, with Mayor Dorough and other Commissioners unfavorable to grant the extra time. Mayor Dorough told Mr. Pratt that he is limited to five minutes and can come back to the next work session to complete his presentation. Mr. Pratt discussed the definitions of racial harm in society, stereotype, anti-black racism, which can be overt/covert; definitions of what government is made of, i.e., institutions (cultural/structure) and systematic, adding that systemic is a medical term meaning ‘spread throughout the system). He quoted Nelson Tift and commented on examples of systemic anti-black racism (saggy pants); language and culture of openness, ignoring and misusing data, attempts at control/silencing, etc., provoking cases (microaggressions/obstruction and abuse of power).

In reply to Commissioner Howard, Mr. Pratt clarified his comments on microaggressions.

Commissioner Fletcher referenced saggy pants meetings that were discussed with Mr. Pratt giving an example of denial of not being able to speak at the Commission meetings last year (two times). Mr. Pratt stated that he can send emails regarding this matter as proof of his point.

Commissioner Warbington thanked Mr. Pratt for expressing his concerns.

In reply to Commissioner Young, Mr. Pratt stated that there were a few more slides and again showed the slide of emails that were received not allowing and/or hindering citizens from speaking before the Commission. Commissioner Young commented on not allowing some citizens to speak longer than five minutes while allowing others that opportunity. Mr. Pratt noted meetings whereby people were given extra time to speak and ended his comments with a quote from Dr. Martin Luther King.

APPOINTMENT

1. Appointment to Municipal Court to fill unexpired term of Public Defender

In reply to Mayor Dorough, the Clerk advised that she was told that HR is now advertising for this position.

In reply to Commissioner Howard, Mayor Dorough advised that Ms. Hightower was driving back and forth from Valdosta, which could be one reason she resigned.

The consensus was to allow HR to complete the process to include looking at those who applied in January. Ms. Subadan stated that a resume was received and circulated to the Commission.

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Additional discussion followed on having someone to immediately fill in. Barry Brooks, Asst. to the City Manager, stated that Kimberly Brown-Williams can be asked to fill in until there is someone appointed permanently. He advised that the courthouse is closed this week and there are no court cases scheduled, adding that Gary Lamar works for a local firm that assists the City and assigns individuals who are available to substitute when needed.

Commissioner Warbington asked if Ms. Williams can be used to fill in short term with Mr. Davis stating that this can be done. Mayor Dorough recalled that Ms. Williams quit in the past due to inadequate compensation. In reply to Mayor Dorough, the Clerk advised that to her knowledge, the job is being advertised by HR.

GOVERNMENT CENTER RE: OWNERSHIP/MANAGEMENT

Mayor Dorough commented on ownership and management of the Government Center, 222 Pine Ave., and gave a brief history beginning in 1988, SPLOST Funds being used, ADICA's obligation to deed the property to the City/County, the deed of record and responsibilities including management/budget/reports, etc., are now being discussed. Mr. Davis agreed with the summary and discussed paragraphs regarding future capital expenses, etc. . Mayor Dorough mentioned water damages in offices on the fifth floor over the years, etc., with the understanding that expenses will be shared in the future as noted in the draft agreement. In reply to Mayor Dorough, Ms. Subadan briefly discussed the water issues on the fifth floor and funding for sealing to prevent further water damage, other issues that needs to be addressed, etc., recommending it be made a priority.

Commissioner Warbington suggested sending the agreement to the County with a straw vote today to expedite the process. Ms. Subadan advised that it was already sent to the County Administrator and, a telephone straw poll was taken with the consensus being to continue forward as discussed. Mayor Dorough polled Commissioners to ascertain that they agree to the agreement; consensus was unanimous. In reply to Mayor Dorough, Ms. Subadan advised that Interim City Manager, Steven Carter, and Mr. Davis will be handling. Mayor Dorough asked for assurance that the agreement is acceptable with the County for finalizing at the end of the month.

CHARTER AMENDMENT RE: DIRECTOR OF CODE ENFORCEMENT

Mayor Dorough briefly commented on concerns that the position must be POST-certified. Mr. Davis stated that eliminating that requirement is in process with Ms. Subadan stating that after researching the issue, the original person appointed to the position was POST-certified and currently, this is not a requirement, adding that leadership, vision for code enforcement is needed rather than being POST-certified. She advised that Mr. TuTu will be leaving the City and Marshal Walter Norman will resume the position temporarily and noted that removing the requirement will help broaden the applicant pool for better applicants.

Commissioner Howard clarified how long the job has been advertised, with Ms. Subadan stating that this has been in progress since last year.

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Commissioner Warbington mentioned discussion at the retreat (outsourcing, bringing in a contractor) and recommended a parallel option by looking outside to fill vacancies faster.

Mayor Dorough asked the Clerk to research the minutes regarding the POST-certified position when this department was established.

CHARTER AMENDMENT RE: MANDATING APPOINTMENTS

Mayor Dorough briefly discussed Commission appointments and suggested removing the requirement to reappoint employees every two years at the Organizational meeting following elections in November. Mr. Davis agreed that appointments are made at the will of the Commission with there no longer being a specified date. Mayor Dorough commented on there not being a two-year term, unless there is a contract, excluding state law that the municipal court judge is appointed yearly.

Commissioner Young asked if there are comparisons of other cities regarding Commission appointments. He explained that when amending the Charter he prefers to know the rationale behind changes. Mayor Dorough asked the Clerk how long this requirement has been in place with the Clerk advising that she is aware of this process since the 1980's, etc. Mayor Dorough asked Mr. Davis to research when this was established and to contact some cities to ascertain how they handle these appointments.

CHARTER AMENDMENT RE: CITY MANAGER'S PURCHASING AUTHORITY

Mayor Dorough discussed revising the charter to have the spending limit reduced from \$100,000 to the original \$40,000.

Commissioner Young asked if this would take place after a permanent city manager is in place. Mayor Dorough stated that this is a charter amendment and must to go through the process.

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCE MATTERS

HARLEM REVITALIZATION PLAN GRANT

Mayor Dorough recognized William Wright to speak on this item. Mr. Wright stated that this item presents challenges and mentioned the Hilton Hotel owners who set up a bogus corporation (Albany Holdings) resulting in the City giving them \$225,000 to assist and now we are saying we are giving \$20,000 for this revitalization, which is unfair. He gave a brief history of businesses in Harlem, the Multi-model Transportation Center, the bogus study that was conducted in 2001, etc., with 35 businesses being identified in the Harlem area; six years later it dropped from 32 businesses to six., with no help offered from the City to relocate. He asked that a realistic look be taken to see how much it will take to revise the Albany Harlem District, suggesting to use the

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Multi-model as a way to assist with the revitalization, have relocation funding to bring back businesses which were originally in the area, etc. He said he will come back to discuss the study that was done in 2018.

Commissioner Howard thanked Mr. Wright for his presentation.

Commissioner Warbington asked Mr. Wright if he is in favor of giving the \$20,000 grant, with Mr. Wright commented on the grant then asked what will be done if the funding is insufficient. Comparing what was given to the Hilton Hotel, he stated this is not equal treatment, is not realistic and should be reviewed.

Commissioner Young clarified that the grant that is up for consideration (copy on file) will be approximately \$33,000 and is for developing a revitalization plan. He asked Mr. Wright where we are with the transportation project with Mr. Wright stating that it has been 20 years since inception of the proposed transportation project, adding that no one has ever come to him to give comments, etc. Commissioner Young asked Ms. Subadan where we are with the transportation center, with Ms. Subadan advising that this is a federal/state project and there are matching funds. She advised that nothing has been awarded at this time since there was only one bid and it will have to go back out; there have been workshops and, the minority business community is being considered and encouraged to participate in projects, adding that projects require Federal certification. We are currently readvertising to have more competition. Mr. Wright briefly discussed certification requirements and suggested getting a handle on this due to the City being 80% minority, etc.

Mayor Dorough advised Mr. Wright that there will be significant community engagement.

Paul Forgey, Planning Director, discussed information (copy on file) regarding the contract acceptance for a grant from the Department of Community Affairs for the development of a Harlem Revitalization Plan. He advised that the total cost of the grant is approximately \$33,400 and explained that the purpose is to develop a plan to include community engagement. He noted that the grant is through Historic Preservation Division and is focused on historic preservation while also looking at community preservation. He asked for approval to move forward and to have someone authorized to sign the contract.

Commissioner Howard asked if Planning staff has looked inside the Ritz Theatre. Mr. Forgey stated that it was within the last year. Commissioner Howard asked Ms. Subadan if Commissioners can have the opportunity to tour the Ritz, with Ms. Subadan advising that she sent an email to everyone in the past regarding information that was received from David Maschke. She questioned what will be done with the Ritz, will it be a community center, who will run it, renovation, etc., and advised that there is mold in the building, masks will be required, adding that she can re-send the information. Due to mold issues, Commissioner Howard asked that the information be resent.

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In reply to Commissioner Young, Mr. Forgey advised that the grant must be in place by May of next year.

PURCHASES

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

1. Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus - Ten-8; Bradenton, FL
Total exp. \$197,342.42

AFD Chief Cedric Scott thanked Commissioners for their consideration; the focus of firefighters is to keep themselves and citizens safe during emergencies.

In reply to Commissioner Howard, Chief Scott stated that they are replaced every ten years, adding that they are purchasing 25 this year and 30 a year over the next five years.

Mayor Dorough questioned the optimal number of 145 and asked why this many are needed. Chief Scott discussed the process, which includes each person wearing the apparatus in dangerous environments; the equipment will be placed on all trucks to include face equipment, etc. In reply to Mayor Dorough, Chief Scott explained how many people are on duty and/or suited up at the same time, adding that there are three shifts. He explained training to wear the apparatus, additional units, etc., with Ms. Subadan also discussing the need to have additional SCBA available in the event of a catastrophic event; there would be no time to refill tanks.

Ms. Fields discussed information (copy on file), as it pertains to discussions at the recent Commission retreat.

- 2 Bond Threshold Increase from \$40,000 to \$100,000

Commissioner Howard referenced the retreat and Mayor Dorough committing to send a letter to the County Commission regarding the establishment of a DBE office to also include the School Board. Mayor Dorough stated that he has not had an opportunity to draft the letter, but he will provide a copy to Commissioners before it is sent. Commissioner Howard provided a brief history of the DBE office and its need including comments discussed at the recent retreat.

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

3. Tennis Center (Pickleball Courts) - EMC Engineering - \$82,500.00

Mayor Pro Tem Fuller said he is in favor of moving this forward and questioned architectural services. Mayor Dorough noted the site plan, which includes the tennis court and pickleball courts; architectural design refers to the brick/mortar building rather than the design of the tennis and pickleball courts.

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Commissioner Young asked to keep in mind that Bill Miller and Henderson Gyms need to get back on track for remodeling.

Mayor Dorough stated that he was not aware of this being a joint City/County project; it was his understanding that the City was selling the County the six acres as the complex site; is the City obligated to contribute funds to the project. Ms. Subadan advised that the City is not obligated; however, the feeling of the Tennis Association is to co-locate pickleball on the site with the Tennis Center. She stated that pickleball is very popular and tournaments will bring a new revenue source. She advised that we are getting appraisals for the piece of the property belonging to the City and that it is not an obligation, adding that a desire to have a consolidated center would be more advantageous to have the engineering work simultaneously. Mayor Dorough clarified that the pickleball court will be the City facility and the tennis courts will be County operations; Ms. Subadan agreed.

Craig Potter, Interim Recreation Director, advised that he received quotes on seven (\$235,000) and 14, which will double that amount. Mayor Dorough stated that he has problems with this in that it was not part of original discussions and referenced Commissioner Young's concern regarding starting new projects with prior ones still waiting in line.

In reply to Commissioner Warbington regarding the selling price of the property, Ms. Subadan stated that we do not have the estimate at this time.

Commissioner Young agreed with Mayor Dorough that this project was not previously discussed and expressed concern. Ms. Subadan stated that the part of land sold to the County will be for the tennis courts (as noted on page 61). Mayor Dorough stated this is the reason a Recreation Master Plan is critical; it would provide the number of pickleball courts that would be sufficient. He advised that he is disinclined to move forward constructing pickleball courts until additional SPLOST funds are available and the City has a Master Plan.

Mayor Dorough gave a brief summary of the following interviews as noted:

4. Recreation Master Plan (Commission Interviews)

Ron Huffman and Lee Walton (representatives of Wood) were on the virtual call and given five minutes for the presentation. Ms. Fields advised that vendors were told they would be given ten minutes.

Mr. Walton stated that Wood appreciates the opportunity to present the team's qualifications, approach and commitment to work closely with Albany to deliver a responsive and practical Recreational Master Plan. Using PowerPoint to present their proposal (copy on file), he reviewed the information. Mr. Huffman briefly discussed his prior experience with City/County parks. Mr. Walton continued with the presentation.

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Mayor Dorough advised that only Commissioners Fletcher and Warbington submitted questions; Commissioner Fletcher asked ‘how will the consultant ensure that the plan will be viable for the future’. Mr. Huffman stated that working together and being able to understand the Albany community is the key to making it work. He advised that maintenance is a major challenge to the City and planning for lifestyles to fit community needs (ie demographics; new trends [e-sports, gaming rooms, year-round programming], etc). Mr. Walton advised that the connections to trends and viability is making sure that the facilities they have going into the future are the right ones that will be used and worth the investment.

Commissioner Warbington asked for examples of cities similar to Albany where they have done similar work; Mr. Huffman mentioned Ackworth, Statesboro, and Savannah. Discussing Savannah, Mr. Walton stated that the emphasis on understanding the operation/maintenance aspect and how the budget would be impacted in the long term, adding that budgeting support helps to co-ordinate that. Commissioner Warbington asked if the budgetary amount provided in the bidding process is sufficient. Mr. Huffman stated that while he knows what Wood proposed, he does not know the budgeted amount. It could be that they are less expensive than others based on having worked on the park system in Albany.

Commissioner Young noted the amount of experience they have with facilities and parks and asked if they have experience in leveraging the facilities and parks to help citizens wanting to improve their health, adding that there is a disparity regarding health in Albany and the need to look at wellness issues. Mr. Huffman stated that mind, body and wellness is a big trend in recreation and that causes a need for recreational opportunities that are a one-stop Wellness Center, adding that COVID has caused the need to expand what recreational plans include. Mr. Walton also commented on the environment and recreation being a key factor in wellness, which is the core of both. Commissioner Young asked how the demographics and culture of a community influence their designs in a Master Plan. Mr. Huffman stated that they customize plans for every community, with each location individually designed and mentioned issues of vandalism at Gordon and Carver Parks affecting the design of parks in Albany. He could not say if it is cultural or economics, but it is something unique to Albany. Mr. Walton interjected that parks tell a story and the history of a park is part of the designing process.

Mr. Mark Vaughn, Lose Design recognized their partner, Whit Alexander, who used PowerPoint (copy on file) to present their proposal

Mayor Dorough paraphrased Commissioner Fletcher’s question regarding the viability of their Master Plan for the future. He added that it is asking ‘can we afford it, build it’ regarding the cost to operate and maintain the facilities. Mr. Alexander stated that they can give a reliable price for all of the conceptual plan; however, it may be more than the City wants to invest, but it will be in the draft plan, which will be pared back. Mr. Vaughn mentioned the Master Plan they designed in Cobb County, which was used as a checklist and worked well for them.

Commissioner Warbington asked how they take their design experience, knowledge and expertise across the country and use it to factor in the needs of our area, the wants/needs of our youth and

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senior adults. Mr. Vaughn discussed gathering the ideas/input of clients, which continues to add to their massive toolbox, providing ideas which address and meet the specific needs of each community, providing them the ability to pull/modify ideas and tailor a custom fit for the needs and desires of Albany.

Commissioner Young asked the same question he asked the gentlemen from Wood. Mr. Alexander replied that there are fitness, senior programs, etc., that get people active. He mentioned the impact of the pandemic which caused people needing somewhere to get away from the stresses of the day. This renewed interest in parks, especially as they were among the few venues which remained open and served to underscore their importance to communities. Commissioner Young asked how they will incorporate the local culture and demographics into the Master Plan. Mr. Alexander discussed factors taken into consideration (income levels, subsidized programs, car ownership, etc.) to be able to cater to Albany citizens.

Mayor Dorough emphasized the need of a Master Plan and referred to the proposed pickleball courts, with a potential cost of \$400,000. He briefly commented on the Skatepark (a result of Albany Tomorrow, Inc. ,claiming that the youth wanted a skatepark, reducing the limited funds to improve what we already have), and mentioned Flint River Golf Course which was touted as an enterprise fund and pay for itself, (but that is not going to happen). He briefly discussed the public not understanding the golf course fees, etc., adding that he sees recreation as an obligation of the City; however, we have not fully leveraged it as an opportunity for at-risk youth, which he wants to be provided in the Master Plan. Mr. Alexander advised that is specifically why Derrell Walker, consultant of Lose Design has been brought in as a part of team, adding that he was very successful in Pasadena getting at-risk youth off the street and into programs.

CITY MANAGER ADMINISTRATION'S CLOSING REPORT

The City Manager provided a recap of her accomplishments over the last six years (copy on file); adding that this is her last official report to the Commission and that she will be providing a close-out report of all departments by the end of the week which will have the status of anything pending in a department (grants, deadlines, etc.). She thanked Commissioners for the opportunity to have served the City of Albany.

Mayor Dorough and the Commissioners thanked her for her leadership, service and accomplishments and wished her well as she leaves the City and Albany.

Mayor Dorough referred to the slide showing the amount the City spent for the diasters; it was \$36.0 million, with \$23.0 million reimbursed and \$8.0 million owed. Ms. Subadan agreed, adding that the City has been obligated another \$4.5 million, but has not been issued a check; what was reported is what was actually received. Mayor Dorough asked if the \$4.5 million that has been committed, is it included in the computation for the reserve; Ms. Subadan replied negatively, adding that it will not be credited until received. Mayor Dorough asked if Mr. Brown and his department are best suited to monitor the status of those funds; Ms. Subadan agreed, adding that

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Risk Management took the lead in making sure that everything filed with FEMA was accurate and will keep a close eye on the status of it all.

ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDA(S)

Commissioner Howard noted that the agreement with the Boys and Girls Club for Thornton Gym is due for renewal.

Commissioner Young advised staff that the presentation from the Criminal Justice Coalition planned for the next work session has been moved to May.

Mayor Dorough asked the status of Driskell Park and whether it has been put out for bid. Ms. Subadan advised that information will be on the next next agenda. Mayor Dorough clarified that the proposal is to separate the engineering from the construction; Ms. Subadan agreed. Mayor Dorough asked that someone look at Carver Gym and provide an estimate to fix it. Ms. Subadan advised that someone can be hired to evaluate it; most likely someone who can provide an environmental evaluation due to the mold issue. Mayor Dorough asked that this be put on an agenda.

There being no further discussions, the meeting adjourned at 12:09 p.m.

SONJA TOLBERT, CMC
CITY CLERK