

CALLED MEETING

COMMISSION CHAMBER

January 30, 2024

Augusta Richmond County Commission convened at 11:00 a.m., Tuesday, January 30, 2024, the Honorable Garnett Johnson, Mayor, presiding.

PRESENT: Hons. Johnson, Williams, Mason, Frantom, Garrett, Scott, McKnight, Pulliam, Lewis and Guilfoyle, members of Augusta Richmond County Commission.

Mr. Mayor: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. Madam Clerk, I call this meeting to order. Attorney Brown.

1. LEGAL MEETING

A. Pending and potential litigation

B. Real estate

C. Personnel

Mr. Brown: Good morning, Mayor Johnson and commissioners. We would request a motion to go into executive session for the discussion of pending or potential litigation, real estate and personnel.

Mr. Mason: So move.

Ms. McKnight: Second.

Mr. Mayor: I have a motion and a second. There's a question on the floor.

Mr. Guilfoyle: Point of privilege, Mr. Mayor.

Mr. Mayor: All right, commissioner from the 10th, please state your point, sir.

Mr. Guilfoyle: Can I address the attorney?

Mr. Mayor: Yes, sir.

Mr. Guilfoyle: Attorney Brown, as far as most likely we're going to be going in legal discussing this administrator position on if we're going to move forward. How do we get to the point where we're voting here on the floor because apparently we're not allowed to vote in legal and I know you had stated before we can so tell me how do we get to the position where we vote here for candidates that's listed, the two candidates actually that's been listed a couple of weeks ago?

Mr. Brown: Commissioner Guilfoyle, Mayor Johnson, as to agenda items the agenda item before you is whether or not to go into executive session for the discussion of personnel, real estate or pending and potential litigation. Once you go in and discuss any of those items then your

question can be posed on the floor. Right now you do not have a public agenda item to discuss what you requested.

Mr. Garrett: It's a point of personal privilege.

Mr. Guilfoyle: So, Attorney Brown –

Mr. Brown: Yes, sir.

Mr. Guilfoyle: You have the list of what's going to be discussed in legal.

Mr. Brown: We have personnel, real estate and pending and potential litigation. Those subject matters, the details of those subject matters are under executive session privilege so I think it's not deemed appropriate to discuss those matters prior to going into executive session. You would need an agenda item if what you're seeking to discuss right now is the process.

Mr. Guilfoyle: It's the process.

Mr. Brown: I'm very happy to answer your question and I think you can get the answer to your question in due time to do the voting that you want to do.

Mr. Guilfoyle: The question that I wanted answered I'd rather for it be answered here in the public as far as once we get behind closed doors, then we're going to hear hey, we can't come out of this room without everybody in consensus or voting which both is the same in my book whether you raise hands, use your voice or nod. Would that be correct?

Mr. Brown: Would what be correct?

Mr. Guilfoyle: Is the only way to come out of legal to vote for the candidates is to vote in legal or can we make a motion as soon as we come out of legal?

Mr. Brown: To come out and make a motion regarding those candidates does not require that you vote in legal.

Mr. Guilfoyle: Okay.

Mr. Brown: I think that's what you're asking, do you have to vote in legal in order to come out here? The answer would be no, you are not limited by that. You can make any motion that you like regarding personnel that we discussed in legal when you come back out. You are not restricted.

Mr. Guilfoyle: Okay, thank you.

Mr. Mayor: Thank you, commissioner from the 10th. I have a motion and a second. I see commissioner from the 7th in the queue, sir.

Mr. Frantom: I just want clarity on what he just said. Attorney Brown, you said that we could come out and discuss –

Mr. Brown: You could come out and make a motion I said.

Mr. Frantom: A motion of a candidate when we get out of legal is what you're saying we can do.

Mr. Brown: Yes, you can do that. It's always a matter of the will of the body how the outcome of that.

Mr. Frantom: That means that we can do it. Thank you.

Mr. Mayor: Commissioner Garrett, you're still in the queue, sir, or are you good, sir?

Mr. Garrett: Yes, I was going to ask about item #3 of the special called meeting if we were going to handle that before we went into executive session and what the emergency status of this item was since it was added to the special called meeting.

Mr. Mayor: Administrator Douse.

Ms. Douse: Sure, please forgive my voice. I have a sore throat but it is required by the Georgia Department of Transportation that the Commission approve our Public Transit Agency Safety Plan. The safety committee with Transit met last week and approved the plan and this was the earliest that we could get the plan approved prior to January 31. Hence, the reason why I requested it to be on the agenda on the special called agenda for the Commission to approve it.

Mr. Garrett: So it needs to be approved by the 31st?

Ms. Douse: It must be approved by the 31st, yes.

Mr. Garrett: Thank you.

Mr. Mayor: All right, the colleagues have the motion and the proper second to go into executive session, Madam Clerk. We're voting.

**Mr. Williams and Mr. Lewis out.
Motion carries 8-0.**

Mr. Mayor: Thank you, Madam Clerk. We're now in executive session.

[EXECUTIVE SESSION]

Mr. Mayor: Ladies and gentlemen, thank ya'll so much for being here. Madam Clerk, I'll call this meeting back to order. Attorney Brown.

2. Motion to authorize execution by the Mayor of the affidavit of compliance with Georgia's Open Meeting Act.

Mr. Brown: Thank you, Mayor Johnson. We would request a motion to execute the closed meeting affidavit.

Mr. Frantom: So moved.

Ms. McKnight: Second.

Mr. Mayor: I have a proper motion and second. Madam Clerk, we're voting.

Mr. Lewis and Ms. Scott out.
Motion carries 8-0.

Mr. Mayor: Thank you, Madam Clerk. Attorney Brown, are there any motions that are the result of our executive session?

The Clerk: Yes, sir. A motion to ratify the purchase of 2403 Mt. Auburn Street by Augusta, Georgia by and through the Housing and Community Development Department through Augusta Georgia Land Bank in the amount of \$1,300,000 for the purchase of an ongoing redevelopment efforts in accordance with the Sand Hills Neighborhood Urban Development Master Plan.

Mr. Mayor: Thank you, Madam Clerk. I see a few colleagues in the queue before we call for a motion. Commissioner Williams from the 5th, you're up, sir.

Mr. Williams: Yes, sir. Is Director Hawthorne Welcher in here?

Mr. Mayor: Director Welcher.

Mr. Williams: I have one more question.

Mr. Mayor: Director Welcher, will you approach, please, sir? Commissioner Williams.

Mr. Williams: Yes, sir. Mr. Welcher, can you please explain one more time exactly what you thought the procedures were when purchasing the Mt. Auburn Street?

Mr. Welcher: Yes, sir, Mr. Mayor, members of the committee, members of the Commission. So the purchase of Weed School was a by product of a redevelopment plan, of course, that was approved by Commission back in 2019/2020. As a part of that over the last three to four years, Housing & Community Development Department has been working with various partners as well as the Land Bank to begin the redevelopment of transformation of the neighborhood back into a thriving community. Based on that from a housing perspective, affordable housing is alive and well. The demolition and clearance of abated properties is alive and well so the uptick and the next step in that is to sort of (inaudible) and repopulate and look at

some commercial assets. So we did that and came before committee in the legal session back in April seeking interest to look at a commercial property known as 2403. At that time we moved forward with the appraisal as well as other environmental aspects of this respective property. Based on that and our due diligence, we were confident in our efforts to move forward so I think based on that we sort of moved forward also in August to look at funding from a CDBG perspective which would be the major funding, primary funding source to acquire. At that time we sought Commission approval on the floor August 1. That approval was given and then at that time we came back before you in another session on September 26 to say hey, we've done our due diligence. We feel good about exactly this purchase, this acquisition. It will serve actually as a nucleus as we move to sort of continue our revitalization efforts similar to other areas that we're revitalizing, and we asked for your blessing at that time to be able to move forward to acquire the property and working through our Land Bank thus is the process that we're using some aspect in the previous years.

Mr. Williams: And just to follow up without calling any names, there was mentioned that the property, I don't remember exactly how it was stated, would probably go for \$1.2 million or so, that's pretty much a yes or no question pretty much.

Mr. Welcher: There was conversation, yes, sir.

Mr. Williams: That was the conversation ultimately, you guys bought it for \$1.3 million.

Mr. Welcher: That's correct.

Mr. Williams: Okay, thank you.

Mr. Mason: Mr. Mayor.

Mr. Mayor: Yes, sir. The Chair recognizes Commissioner from the 4th, Commissioner Mason.

Mr. Mason: Thank you. I make a motion to approve please.

Mr. Williams: Second.

Mr. Mayor: All right. There's a motion from the commissioner from the 4th, second from the commissioner from the 5th. Madam Clerk, seeing no colleagues in the queue, we're voting.

**Ms. McKnight votes No.
Motion carries 9-1.**

Mr. Mayor: Thank you, Madam Clerk: Attorney Brown, is there another motion?

The Clerk: Yes, sir, we have one additional motion. Motion to approve the hiring of Mr. Kyle Alfonso as Augusta Engineering Project Engineer Infrastructure and Program Delivery in the Engineering and Environmental Services Department at an annual salary of

\$110,000 and the customary benefits provided Augusta employees with an effective date of March 2, 2024.

Mr. Mayor: The Chair recognizes the commissioner from the 8th, Commissioner Garrett.

Mr. Garrett: Motion to approve.

Mr. Williams: Second.

Mr. Mayor, Madam Clerk, there's a motion seconded by the commissioner from the 5th. Attorney Brown, before we vote obviously you're in the queue, sir.

Mr. Brown: Thank you, sir. The Administrator is asking for a checking of the name. Yes, the name of the employee is Kyle Alonso. That's for the record.

Mr. Mayor: For the record it's Kyle Alonso. All right, so I have a motion and I have a second. So, Madam Clerk, with that for Kyle Alonso, we're voting.

Motion carries 10-0.

Mr. Mayor: Thank you, Madam Clerk. Attorney Brown.

Mr. Brown: We have one other motion, Mayor Johnson. We would request a motion to approve the granting of a non-exclusive easement upon Augusta's property known, commonly known as 3705 Old Waynesboro Road, Fire Station #1 and that easement would be granted to RTB Investments LLC. That transaction will be closed under the direction and guidance of Augusta Law Department.

Mr. Mayor: Thank you, Attorney Brown. The Chair recognizes the commissioner from the 8th, Commissioner Brandon Garrett.

Mr. Garrett: Motion to approve but I don't think this is Fire Station #1.

Mr. Frantom: Second.

Mr. Mayor: Wait a second. Fire Station 17.

Mr. Brown: Fire Station #17 and the sum being paid for this easement is \$10,000.

Mr. Garrett: Motion to approve.

Mr. Frantom: Second.

Mr. Mayor: All right, I've got a motion and a second. That's commissioner from the 9th (sic) and commissioner from the 7th. All right, let's vote, colleagues.

Motion carries 10-0.

Mr. Mayor: All right, Attorney Brown.

Mr. Brown: There are no further motions.

Mr. Mayor: All right, that concludes out business.

Mr. Brown: There's no further motions from executive session.

Mr. Mayor: All right.

Mr. Brown: At this time.

Mr. Mayor: At this time. Thank you, Attorney Brown. There are no further motions. The Chair recognizes the commissioner from the 4th, Commissioner Al Mason.

Mr. Mason: Thank you, Mr. Mayor. At this time I'd like to make a motion to hire Tameka Allen as the next City Administrator for the City of Augusta.

Ms. McKnight: Second.

Mr. Williams: Mr. Mayor.

Mr. Mayor: All right, Commissioner Williams, you have the floor, sir.

Mr. Williams: Yeah, we just want a roll call vote.

Mr. Mayor: Yes, sir. Is there any objection to a roll call vote?

Mr. Mason: No objection.

Mr. Mayor: No objections. All right.

Mr. Brown: Mayor Johnson, just for clarity, while this vote is taking place, I believe we want to make it clear for the record that the nominations remain open.

Mr. Mayor: Yes, sir. These nominations remain open and just so the public knows, we have two names that are under consideration today and it is our intent to vote on these in the public which I believe it's your right to know as we vote and the request has been made that it be a roll call vote so commissioner, are you in the queue?

Mr. Frantom: Well, clarity because we close the nomination for today to vote on the person.

Mr. Brown: Two.

Mr. Frantom: We don't have to vote on the second one if nobody nominates them.

Mr. Brown: No, if the nominations remain open until a person is appointed. Once a person is appointed by six votes or more, then the position is filled. There can be no further nominations because the position would be filled.

Mr. Frantom: But we don't close the nomination today based on the two candidates like we have before and every time I've been up here?

Mr. Brown: For today –

Mr. Frantom: For today we close the nomination for today and that's what I'm about to do because I don't think there's another motion for the other candidate so I was closing the nomination so we can vote on the one person before us like we've done every time I've been up here.

Mr. Mayor: Attorney Brown.

Mr. Brown: This is an appointment to a position. This is not a board; this is a position. The Mayor has offered two names for consideration. I believe that it is proper to proceed with the motion that's on the floor. If the person receives and in this case Ms. Allen, if Ms. Allen receives six votes, the Commission will not be prohibited from considering the other name.

Mr. Mayor: All right, I see a lot of folks in the queue. Commissioner Mason, are you good? I see you in the queue.

Mr. Mason: I'm in the queue because I'm ready to vote.

Mr. Mayor: All right. Madam Clerk –

Mr. Williams: I'm on the body.

Mr. Mayor: You're on the body. Commissioner Williams.

Mr. Williams: Yeah, okay, we did discuss that. If we don't get either one of these two then you would bring up number three, correct? He said today.

Mr. Mayor: I have to make a submission to this body but according to our attorney, we cannot vote today. It has to remain open –

Mr. Williams: But you can bring the name up.

Mr. Mayor: Yes, sir, and that is my intention. It is, yes, sir. All right, Madam Clerk, roll call vote.

The Clerk: Mr. Frantom.

Mr. Frantom: Yes, ma'am.

The Clerk: Mr. Garrett.

Mr. Garrett: Yes.

The Clerk: Mr. Guilfoyle.

Mr. Guilfoyle: Yes, ma'am.

The Clerk: Mr. Johnson.

Mr. Johnson: No, ma'am.

The Clerk: Mr. Lewis.

Mr. Lewis: No, ma'am.

The Clerk: Mr. Mason.

Mr. Mason: Yes, ma'am.

The Clerk: Ms. McKnight.

Ms. McKnight: Yes, ma'am.

The Clerk: Ms. Pulliam.

Ms. Pulliam: No, ma'am.

The Clerk: Ms. Scott.

Ms. Scott: No, ma'am.

The Clerk: Mr. Bobby Williams.

Mr. Williams: Abstain.

Motion fails 5-4-1.

Mr. Mayor: All right, Parliamentarian, let's continue with the next name, please, sir. I don't think he requires a nomination, does it?

Mr. Johnson: That was my inquiry.

Mr. Brown: The name has to be placed on the floor even though you know who it is. It has to be placed on the floor in public.

Mr. Mayor: All right. So Richard Chess is also under consideration from this body and I think Mr. Chess deserves a vote if he's made a finalist. So, Madam Clerk, if this body does not object, I think we need to do another roll call vote for Mr. Robert Chess.

Mr. Brown: I believe, Mr. Mayor, you need someone to nominate that person. Commissioner Johnson, I see you in the queue first.

Mr. Johnson: Just for the sake of the process, I'll nominate Richard Chess just for the sake of the process.

Mr. Mayor: All right, Madam Clerk, I have a motion and second. We're going to do a roll call.

The Clerk: Nominations don't need seconds, but did you have a second?

Mr. Garrett: You don't need one for a nomination.

Mr. Frantom: You don't need one.

The Clerk: Mr. Bobby Williams? Who seconded it?

Mr. Mayor: Alvin Mason.

The Clerk: Alvin Mason, okay.

Mr. Frantom: Not on a nomination, you don't need a second.

Mr. Mayor: All right, we'll do a roll call vote. Anybody want to say anything before we do a roll call vote? Seeing nobody, all right, Madam Clerk.

The Clerk: Mr. Frantom.

Mr. Frantom: No, ma'am.

The Clerk: Mr. Garrett.

Mr. Garrett: No, ma'am.

The Clerk: Mr. Guilfoyle.

Mr. Guilfoyle: Yes, ma'am.

The Clerk: Mr. Johnson.

Mr. Johnson: No, ma'am.

The Clerk: Mr. Lewis.

Mr. Lewis: No, ma'am.

The Clerk: Mr. Mason.

Mr. Mason: No, ma'am.

The Clerk: Ms. McKnight.

Ms. McKnight: Yes, ma'am.

The Clerk: Ms. Pulliam.

Ms. Pulliam: No, ma'am.

The Clerk: Ms. Scott.

Ms. Scott: No, ma'am.

The Clerk: Mr. Bobby Williams.

Mr. Williams: No, ma'am.

Motion fails 2-8.

Mr. Mayor: Attorney Brown, for clarification the candidate received eight votes as a No. Does that disqualify him from the furtherance of this process?

Mr. Brown: Neither candidate you voted on today moved forward.

Mr. Mayor: Commissioner Mason, you have the floor, sir.

Mr. Mason: Yes, sir, Mr. Mayor. I am going to request reconsideration for Ms. Allen as the Administrator for Augusta Richmond County.

Mr. Frantom: Second.

Mr. Mayor: So there's a motion, Attorney Brown, and there's a proper second for reconsideration.

The Clerk: I didn't get that second. Who seconded that?

Mr. Garrett: Frantom.

Mr. Mayor: Commissioner from the 5th, you have a question of clarity. You have the floor, sir.

Mr. Williams: Going to the attorney, first, please.

Mr. Mayor: Yes, sir. Attorney Brown.

Mr. Williams: Mr. Attorney Brown.

Mr. Brown: Yes, sir.

Mr. Williams: First we vote on whether to consider and if that goes well, then you vote on the person, correct?

Mr. Brown: That is correct.

Mr. Williams: All right, thank you for clarity.

Mr. Mayor: Roll call vote for consideration.

The Clerk: Mr. Frantom.

Mr. Frantom: Yes, ma'am.

The Clerk: Mr. Garrett.

Mr. Garrett: Yes.

The Clerk: Mr. Guilfoyle.

Mr. Guilfoyle: Yes, ma'am.

The Clerk: Mr. Johnson.

Mr. Johnson: Yes, ma'am.

The Clerk: Mr. Lewis.

Mr. Lewis: Yes, ma'am.

The Clerk: Mr. Mason.

Mr. Mason: Yes, ma'am.

The Clerk: Ms. McKnight.

Ms. McKnight: Yes, ma'am.

The Clerk: Ms. Pulliam.

Ms. Pulliam: Yes, ma'am.

The Clerk: Ms. Scott.

Ms. Scott: Yes, ma'am.

The Clerk: Mr. Bobby Williams.

Mr. Williams: Yes, ma'am.

Motion carries 10-0.

Mr. Brown: Mayor Johnson.

Mr. Mayor: All right, Attorney Brown.

Mr. Brown: The meeting, your present status here is that a motion to reconsider has been approved. That candidate may now be reconsidered.

Mr. Mayor: Thank you so much, Attorney Brown. All right, before we vote there are some colleagues in the queue. Commissioner from the 4th, do you have anything you want to state before we do the roll call vote?

Mr. Mason: No, I'm ready for the roll call vote. Do we need to add that, Mr. Attorney?

Mr. Brown: Add what?

Mr. Mason: Do I need to say the name again or you said she can be reconsidered based on what I said? I asked for reconsideration. That's all that is necessary, right?

Mr. Brown: For lack of a controversy, I would suggest that you state the name that you're voting on.

Mr. Mason: I make a motion that we --

The Clerk: You're nominating her, sir.

Mr. Mason: I make a motion that we nominate Tameka Allen as the next City Administrator for Augusta Richmond County.

Ms. McKnight: Second.

Mr. Mayor: You don't need a second. All right, so there is a second nomination for Ms. Tameka Allen. Madam Clerk, roll call vote.

The Clerk: Mr. Frantom.

Mr. Frantom: Yes, ma'am.

The Clerk: Mr. Garrett.

Mr. Garrett: Yes.

The Clerk: Mr. Guilfoyle.

Mr. Guilfoyle: Yes, ma'am.

The Clerk: Mr. Johnson.

Mr. Johnson: No, ma'am.

The Clerk: Mr. Lewis.

Mr. Lewis: No, ma'am.

The Clerk: Mr. Mason.

Mr. Mason: Yes, ma'am.

The Clerk: Ms. McKnight.

Ms. McKnight: Yes, ma'am.

The Clerk: Ms. Pulliam.

Ms. Pulliam: No, ma'am.

The Clerk: Ms. Scott.

Ms. Scott: No, ma'am.

The Clerk: Mr. Bobby Williams.

Mr. Williams: Abstain.

Motion fails 5-4-1.

Mr. Mayor: All right, Attorney Brown, ladies and gentlemen, obviously we've gone through two rounds of this and we haven't gotten anywhere –

Mr. Frantom: Point of personal privilege, sir.

Mr. Mayor: All right. The Chair recognizes the commissioner from the 7th for a point of personal privilege.

Mr. Frantom: Thank you, Mr. Mayor. Just want to state that today is a day of why on May 20 everybody in Augusta Richmond County needs to vote for the Mayor to have a vote and I highly suggest that ya'll support that. Thank you, Mr. Mayor.

Mr. Mayor: Ladies and gentlemen, we certainly appreciate you being here today. The Charter states that the Mayor nominates all candidates for consideration of this body to be the next Administrator. The Charter also states that should no candidate receive six votes he shall submit the remaining names. At this point, Attorney Brown, to this body we're prepared to follow up the letter of the law of the Charter. I now submit Takiyah Douse for consideration. Attorney Brown has stated that we cannot have that vote today and that per our Charter and per our rules and state law, her name has to be made public for 14 days. It has not been 14 days so as I understand perhaps at our next meeting Ms. Douse will be under consideration for a vote by this body. Attorney Brown.

Mr. Brown: Just for clarity the name and paperwork for Ms. Douse was released last Friday. It is correct. It is the Open Records Act that prevents a vote on a name for a head of agency until at least 14 days has passed after the release to the public of the name of the candidate. Therefore, 14 days not having passed since last Friday, that name would not be eligible today for this, for consideration or nomination.

Mr. Mayor: Thank you, Attorney Brown. Commissioner Mason, I see you in the queue, sir.

Mr. Mason: Yes, just for a point of clarity, we'll bring back the third name at the next Commission meeting or?

Mr. Mayor: I'm not quite sure if it will make the 14 days.

Mr. Brown: The next scheduled meeting at which that name could be, the next scheduled regular meeting at which that name could be considered would be the next special called and committee meeting which is two weeks from today.

Mr. Mason: Okay, and another point of clarity, that does not prohibit the name of Ms. Allen being voted on at that time as well, does it?

Mr. Brown: The next name to be considered would be the third person's name. After that the Commission would have the right to consider what process it used for recruitment going

forward but is not absolutely prohibited by law for the Commission to modify its process after the next name is considered.

Mr. Mason: Thank you.

Mr. Brown: Yes, sir.

Mr. Mayor: Ladies and gentlemen, certainly appreciate you being here today. While we're disappointed we couldn't get a decision made, in two weeks we will get one. Thank ya'll for being here. Commissioner from the 7th, you're in the queue.

Mr. Frantom: I'm ready to go to the committees.

Mr. Mayor: All right, thank ya'll for being here.

Mr. Frantom: We have another agenda item? Oh, I'm sorry.

Mr. Mayor: All right, Madam Clerk, I understand we have one more item.

- 3. Motion to approve the Public Transit Agency Safety Plan (PTASP) as drafted for the Augusta Transit Department by the Georgia Department of Transportation in accordance with 49 CFR 673.11(a)(1). (Requested by Interim Administrator Takiyah Douse)**

Ms. McKnight: Motion to approve.

Mr. Guilfoyle: Second.

Mr. Mayor: All right, there's a motion from the commissioner from the 3rd and second from the commissioner from the 10th. Madam Clerk, we're voting.

Motion carries 10-0.

Mr. Mayor: Thank you. Madam Clerk, does that conclude our business for this?

The Clerk: Yes, sir.

Mr. Mayor: All right, this meeting is hereby adjourned and I turn it over to Public Services Committee. Commissioner Frantom.

[MEETING ADJOURNED]

Lena J. Bonner
Clerk of Commission

CERTIFICATION:

I, Lena J. Bonner, Clerk of Commission, hereby certify that the above is a true and correct copy of the minutes of the Called Meeting of the Augusta Richmond County Commission held on January 30, 2024.

Clerk of Commission

