

COUNCIL OF COLUMBUS, GEORGIA

CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

Council Chambers
C. E. "Red" McDaniel City Services Center- Second Floor
3111 Citizens Way, Columbus, GA 31906

June 4, 2024
5:30 PM
Regular Meeting

MAYOR'S AGENDA

PRESENT: Mayor B. H. "Skip" Henderson, III and Mayor Pro Tem R. Gary Allen (*Councilor District 1 Seat – Vacant*) and Councilors Tyson Begly, Joanne Cogle, Charmaine Crabb, Glenn Davis (arrived at 6:28 p.m.), R. Walker Garrett, Bruce Huff, Judy W. Thomas and Toyia Tucker. City Manager Isaiah Hugley, City Attorney Clifton Fay, Clerk of Council Sandra T. Davis, and Deputy Clerk of Council Lindsey G. McLemore.

The following documents have been included as a part of the electronic Agenda Packet: (1) Muscogee County Jail Presentation

The following documents were distributed around the Council table: (1) Licensing Process Information; (2) Documents from PAWS Humane Society

CALL TO ORDER: Mayor B. H. "Skip" Henderson, III, Presiding

INVOCATION: Offered by Pastor Bruce Conage, Rosehill Memorial Baptist Church of Columbus, Georgia

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: Led by Mayor Henderson

MINUTES

1. Approval of minutes for the May 28, 2024 Council Meeting and Executive Session. Mayor Pro Tem Allen made a motion to approve the resolution, seconded by Councilor Garrett and carried unanimously by the eight members present, with Councilor Davis being absent for the vote.

OATH OF OFFICE:

2. Oath of Office administered to the newly appointed Columbus Councilor District 1- Byron Hickey by Chief Superior Court Judge Arthur L. Smith, III.

Mayor B. H. "Skip" Henderson stated he was just informed that the swearing in for Byron Hickey has been postponed. He explained though he took his oath with Probate Judge Marc D'Antonio yesterday, a Superior Court Judge still has an oath to administer to him.

PROCLAMATION:

4. **Proclamation:** Brookstone High School Baseball State Championship

Receiving: Greg Mathis, Head Coach

Mayor Pro Tem R. Gary Allen read the proclamation into the record proclaiming June 4, 2024, as *Brookstone Cougars State Championship Day*, recognizing the Brookstone High School Baseball Team for winning the Georgia Independent Athletic Association AAAA Region 5 Championship.

5. **Proclamation:** NeighborWorks Columbus Week

Receiving: Cathy Williams, Executive Director of NeighborWorks

Councilor Tyson Begly read the proclamation into the record proclaiming June 1-8, 2024, as *NeighborWorks Columbus Week*, recognizing NeighborWorks Columbus for 25 years of assisting families in securing safe, fit and affordable housing in Columbus, Georgia.

6. **Proclamation:** Caribbean American Heritage Month

Receiving: Aysia Berry

Councilor Bruce Huff read the proclamation into the record proclaiming June 2024 as *Caribbean American Heritage Month*, recognizing citizens of Caribbean descent for playing a vital role in shaping our neighborhoods, businesses, and arts in the community.

PUBLIC HEARING:

3. **TAXPAYER BILL OF RIGHTS PUBLIC HEARING:** 6:00 p.m. The budget tentatively adopted by the Consolidated Government of Columbus, Georgia, requires a millage rate higher than the rollback millage rate. Therefore, before the Consolidated Government of Columbus, Georgia, may finalize the tentative budget and set a final millage rate, Georgia Law requires that three public hearings be held to allow the public an opportunity to express their opinions on this increase.

City Attorney Clifton Fay began the Taxpayer Bill of Rights Hearing by explaining the City Council is required to have a public hearing anytime the projected value of tax digest is expected to increase. He stated though the property values in the county are projected to increase, if a property owner has a Homestead Assessment Freeze, then their property taxes should not be affected.

Finance Director Angelica Alexander approached the rostrum to further explain the projected increase. She stated there are two types of increases that may cause some adjustment to the tax digest, inflationary increases with the reassessment of property values based on sales, and changes to the tax digest when there are new and/or improved properties coming onto the tax rolls. She explained the millage rates that were included in the Mayor's Recommended FY2025 Budget are the same as approved for the prior fiscal year, with Urban Service District #1 at 16.07 mills, Urban Service District #2 at 10.09 mills, and Urban Service District #4 at 9.19 mills. She went on to explain with new and improved properties coming onto the tax digest, the Tax Commissioner is required to calculate what is known as the Rollback Millage Rate, which is a millage that determines what we could assess the property values to collect the same tax revenue as the previous year with those assessed at a lower amount. She stated Urban Service District #2 was advertised with a rollback millage rate increase of 4.52%.

City Manager Isaiah Hugley clarified that there has not been an increase in any of the Urban Service Districts for ten years, to which Finance Director Alexander confirmed this to be true.

PRESENTATION:

7. An extension to qualify for alcohol sales on Sundays. (Presented by Ms. LeAnne Browning, representing Fetch, Inc.) Mayor Pro Tem Allen made a motion to approve a 90-day extension to allow Fetch, Inc. to qualify for Sunday alcohol sales, seconded by Councilor Garrett and carried unanimously by the eight members present, with Councilor Davis being absent for the vote.

Ms. LeAnne Browning approached the rostrum to request a 90-day extension to allow the Fetch Dog Park to qualify for alcohol sales on Sundays.

CITY ATTORNEY'S AGENDA

ORDINANCES

1. **2nd Reading-** An ordinance to revise and clarify certain provisions of the Columbus Code which provide for the foreclosure of liens on property for which funds are due and owing to the consolidated government; and for other purposes. (continued on 2nd Reading due to inconclusive vote) (Councilor Begly) Mayor Pro Tem Allen made a motion to adopt the ordinance, seconded by Councilor Garrett and open for discussion. Councilor Cogle made a motion to amend the ordinance to only address commercial properties and not residential, seconded by Councilor Garrett and resulted in an inconclusive four-to-four vote, with Councilors Cogle, Crabb, Garrett and Tucker voting in favor, and Mayor Pro Tem Allen and Councilors Begly, Huff and Thomas voting in opposition, with Councilor Davis being absent for the vote. The original motion to adopt the ordinance was called forward and resulted in an inconclusive four-to-four vote, with Mayor Pro Tem Allen and Councilors Begly, Garrett and Thomas voting in favor, and Councilors Cogle, Crabb, Huff and Tucker voting in opposition, with Councilor Davis being absent for the vote.
2. **1st Reading and Public Hearing-** An ordinance adopting an operating and capital improvement budget for the Fiscal Year 2025 beginning July 1, 2024 and ending June 30, 2025, for certain funds of the Consolidated Government of Columbus, Georgia, and appropriating the amounts shown in each budget; and for other purposes. (Budget Review Committee)

Councilor Judy W. Thomas stated she believes this proposed budget is one that the Council can be proud of as they addressed items that were necessary to help General Government Employees by increasing staff for various departments, and they looked at the Public Safety Departments to better compensate current employees and will attract new employees.

City Manager Isaiah Hugley stated he agrees with Councilor Thomas, but he is concerned about the proposed budget of \$366,319,362.00 with \$220,849,985.00 for General Fund, and of that \$11.27 million comes from General Fund Reserves to balance the budget, and \$9.3 million of that is for ongoing day-to-day operations. He went on to state though they anticipate an increase in revenue, the \$9.3 million of day-to-day operation costs is something that will have to be funded year after year, suggesting everyone should be mindful of this. He stated this leaves 56.60 days for General Fund, 41.21 days for OLOST, with a total of 97.81 days in the Reserve Fund.

Finance Director Anglica Alexander approached the rostrum to speak on the budget and agreed with the concerns expressed by the City Manager regarding the Reserve Fund Days. She went on to explain a handout that was provided showing a snapshot of the licensing processes and current improvements. She explained the processes have improved but worries without the appropriate staffing that the improvements will decline and requested Council to reconsider the additional positions and career ladder adjustments that were requested by the Finance Department.

NOTE: Councilor Davis arrived at 6:28 p.m.

In response to comments from **Councilor Judy W. Thomas** on the appropriateness of the Finance Director's comments, **Mayor B. H. "Skip" Henderson** stated he authorized Director Alexander to speak because he does not believe it to be out of order. He explained he wants to make sure the Council understands the impact the removal of these additional positions will have on the Finance Department and since they were removed at the tail end of the last budget meeting, he wanted to allow the Finance Director the opportunity to speak.

REFERRAL(S):

FOR THE CITY MANAGER:

- Bring back an update on the American Rescue Plan, to include funding that is still on the table and if this money will be reallocated to other projects by the end of June or beginning of July. (*Request of Councilor Tucker*)

3. **1st Reading-** An ordinance adopting non-operating budgets for the fiscal year 2024 beginning July 1, 2024 and ending June 30, 2025, for certain funds of the Consolidated Government of Columbus, Georgia, and appropriating the amounts shown in each budget. (Budget Review Committee)
4. **1st Reading-** An ordinance providing for contributions to the Columbus, Georgia General Government Employees' Pension Plan for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2024 and ending June 30, 2025. (Budget Review Committee)
5. **1st Reading-** An ordinance providing for the governmental contributions to the Columbus, Georgia Pension Plan for employees of the Department of Public Safety for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2024 and ending June 30, 2025. (Budget Review Committee)
6. **1st Reading-** An ordinance providing for Government funding of a Major Disability Income Plan for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2024 and ending June 30, 2025. (Budget Review Committee)
7. **1st Reading-** An ordinance providing for Government funding of a Death Benefit Escrow for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2024 and ending June 30, 2025. (Budget Review Committee)
8. **1st Reading-** An ordinance amending Article VII of Chapter 13 of the Columbus Code Solid Waste Collection and Disposal by updating certain fees and the guidelines for an offset to the residential rate for low-income households; and for other purposes. (Budget Review Committee)
9. **1st Reading-** An ordinance renewing Business Improvement Districts in Columbus, Georgia through December 31, 2034; and for other purposes. (Mayor Pro-Tem)

Uptown Columbus CEO Ed Wolverton approached the rostrum to speak on the proposal to renew the Business Improvement District for another ten-year term. He explained the State of Georgia has two requirements that the entity can meet for reauthorization, and they are presenting 75% of the properties in support of the renewal.

10. 1st Reading- An ordinance adopting new permit fees for Building Code inspections in Section 8-14.4 of the Columbus Code; and for other purposes. (Mayor Pro-Tem)

Inspections & Code Director Ryan Pruett approached the rostrum to briefly speak on the proposed ordinance and the presentation that was provided at the May 28, 2024, meeting. He stated after that meeting, he met with the Homebuilders Association to explain the new fee structure and a letter of support was received as a follow-up.

At the conclusion of the City Attorney’s Agenda, City Attorney Fay requested an executive session to discuss a matter of personnel.

PUBLIC AGENDA

1. Ms. Julee Fryer, representing the Animal Control Advisory Board, Re: The Animal Control Advisory Board supports the Columbus Animal Care and Control staffing model for the FY25 Budget.

REFERRAL(S):

FOR THE CITY MANAGER:

- Let’s have the Director, Animal Control Division Manager and board members meet and come up with steps to work on Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) to come up with solutions to address some of the concerns. (*Request of Councilor Tucker*)

2. Ms. Theresa El-Amin, representing Southern Anti-Racism Network, Re: Reparations in 2028. *Not present at this point in the meeting.*

3. Miss Courtney Pierce, representing PAWS Humane Society, Re: Reconsideration of appropriate staffing levels at Animal Care and Control.

CITY MANAGER'S AGENDA

1. Golden Park Cell Tower 5-Year Lease Extension

Resolution (192-24): A resolution authorizing the execution of a lease amendment and renewal through May 31, 2029, with SBA Towers VI, LLC for the purpose of leasing space at Golden Park to operate and maintain an existing telecommunication tower. Mayor Pro Tem Allen made a motion to approve the resolution, seconded by Councilor Huff and carried unanimously by the nine members present.

2. UPDATES AND PRESENTATIONS

B. MCP FY24 Budget Update – Herbert Walker, Warden, Muscogee County Prison

Finance Director Angelica Alexander approached the rostrum to explain the Muscogee County Prison is appearing before Council pursuant to Ordinance 13-39, requesting an additional appropriation for their budget for Fiscal Year 2024. She stated the request is for additional funding in

the amount of \$200,000 to cover an increase in inmate food cost, overages for outside inmate medical care, and operating costs.

Councilor Huff made a motion to approve the request from the Muscogee County Prison for an additional \$200,000 for their FY2024 Budget, seconded by Councilor Cogle and carried unanimously by the eight members present, with Mayor Pro Tem Allen being absent for the vote.

A. Jail Update - Drale Short, Director, Public Works

Public Works Director Drale Short approached the rostrum to provide a presentation on the recommendations to preserve the Muscogee County Jail for the safety of the employees and inmates while moving forward with a plan for the future. She stated CGL Companies has provided an estimated annual cost of \$1,500,000 for preventative maintenance for Recorder’s Court, Muscogee County Jail, and the Muscogee County Prison, but does not include equipment and material cost. She went on to share the estimated repair costs submitted by Gilbane with a low estimate of \$22,204,315 and a high of \$37,319,490.

City Manager Isaiah Hugley shared information on the funds spent on the Government Center for the health and safety of employees and citizens, and stated this is a similar scenario currently faced with the Muscogee County Jail. He asked for Council to consider allocating funds out of the Reserve Funds to make repairs to the current Muscogee County Jail until a new jail can be constructed.

Muscogee County Sheriff Greg Countryman came forward to respond to questions and to express his concern regarding the condition of the jail. He explained he would like to see a new jail, but the maintenance issues presented are necessary for the health and safety of the deputies and the population housed in the jail. He stated there definitely needs to be a full-time maintenance person in the jail, with the plumbing and HVAC system being the biggest issues.

Inspections & Code Director Ryan Pruett came forward to answer questions from the members of Council. He shared information on roof replacement/repairs and other various projects.

REFERRAL(S):

FOR THE CITY MANAGER:

- Wants the hourly rate paid to Benjamin Franklin Plumbing for services provided. *(Request of Councilor Tucker)*
- Wants to see a full budget for this project from the Sheriff’s Department and Public Works, and information on where the funding will come from. *(Request of Councilor Thomas)*
- Cost breakdown of \$1.5 million preventative maintenance. *(Request of Councilor Tucker)*

BID ADVERTISEMENT

DATE: June 04, 2024

June 7, 2024

1. Interactive Floor/Play System (Re-Bid) – PQ No. 24-0005

Scope of Quote

The Columbus Consolidated Government (“the City”) is seeking quotes from qualified vendors to provide two (2) immersive, educational and recreational projection systems, to be used by the Department of Parks and Recreation.

CLERK OF COUNCIL'S AGENDA

ENCLOSURES - ACTION REQUESTED

1. Minutes of the following boards:

Budget Review Committee, May 7, 2024

Mayor Pro Tem Allen made a motion to receive the minutes of the one committee meeting listed, seconded by Councilor Tucker and carried unanimously by the nine members present.

BOARD APPOINTMENTS - ACTION REQUESTED

2. MAYOR'S APPOINTMENTS MAY BE CONFIRMED FOR THIS MEETING:

A. PENSION FUND, EMPLOYEES' BOARD OF TRUSTEES:

A nominee for the seat of Crystal Shahid (*Does not desire reappointment*) for a term expiring on June 30, 2024, as a Business Community Representative on the Pension Fund, Employees' Board of Trustees (*Mayor's Appointment*). There were none.

3. COUNCIL APPOINTMENTS- READY FOR CONFIRMATION:

A. COLUMBUS AQUATICS COMMISSION: Ms. Jensen Melton was nominated to serve another term of office. (*Councilor Huff's nominee*) Term expires: June 30, 2026. Mayor Pro Tem Allen made a motion for confirmation, seconded by Councilor Tucker and carried unanimously by the nine members present.

B. COLUMBUS GOLF COURSE AUTHORITY: Mr. Richard Mahone was nominated to serve another term of office. (*Councilor Huff's nominee*) Term expires: June 30, 2028. Councilor Huff made a motion for confirmation, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Allen and carried unanimously by the nine members present.

C. COLUMBUS GOLF COURSE AUTHORITY: Mr. James Houston, Jr. was nominated to serve another term of office. (*Councilor Huff's nominee*) Term expires: June 30, 2028. Councilor Huff made a motion for confirmation, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Allen and carried unanimously by the nine members present.

D. KEEP COLUMBUS BEAUTIFUL COMMISSION: Ms. Kara Brakefield was nominated to succeed Ms. Tracy Walton-King. (*Councilor Tucker's nominee*) Term expires: June 30, 2027. Mayor Pro Tem Allen made a motion for confirmation, seconded by Councilor Tucker and carried unanimously by the nine members present.

E. KEEP COLUMBUS BEAUTIFUL COMMISSION: Ms. Skyler Dexter was nominated to fill the vacant SD-29 seat. (*Councilor Tucker's nominee*) Term expires: June 30, 2026. Mayor Pro Tem Allen made a motion for confirmation, seconded by Councilor Tucker and carried unanimously by the nine members present.

4. COUNCIL'S DISTRICT SEAT APPOINTMENT- ANY NOMINATIONS MAY BE CONFIRMED FOR THIS MEETING:

A. YOUTH ADVISORY COUNCIL:

A nominee for a seat on the Youth Advisory Council as the District 2 Representative for the 2024-2025 School Year (*Council District 2- Davis*). There were none.

A nominee for a seat on the Youth Advisory Council as the District 4 Representative for the 2024-2025 School Year (*Council District 4- Tucker*). There were none.

A nominee for a seat on the Youth Advisory Council as the District 5 Representative for the 2024-2025 School Year (*Council District 5- Crabb*). There were none.

A nominee for a seat on the Youth Advisory Council as the District 8 Representative for the 2024-2025 School Year (*Council District 8- Garrett*). There were none.

5. COUNCIL APPOINTMENTS- ANY NOMINATIONS WOULD BE LISTED FOR THE NEXT MEETING:

A. COLUMBUS AQUATICS COMMISSION:

A nominee for the seat of Timothy Crabb (*Does not desire reappointment*) for a term expiring on June 30, 2024, on the Columbus Aquatics Commission (*Council's Appointment*). There were none.

A nominee for the seat of Richard Leary (*Eligible to succeed- Does not desire reappointment*) for a term expiring on June 30, 2024, as the Columbus Hurricanes Representative on the Columbus Aquatics Commission (*Council's Appointment*). There were none.

A nominee for the seat of Janet Bussey (*Not Eligible to succeed*) for a term expiring on June 30, 2024, on the Columbus Aquatics Commission (*Council's Appointment*). There were none.

A nominee for the seat of Bruce Samuels (*Not Eligible to succeed*) for a term that expired on June 30, 2022, on the Columbus Aquatics Commission (*Council's Appointment*). There were none.

AUDIT COMMITTEE:

Councilor Joanne Cogle stated Councilor Begly's time on Council is coming to an end, so they will need to replace him on the Audit Committee and nominated Councilor Glenn Davis to succeed Councilor Begly.

Councilor Cogle then made a motion to appoint Councilor Davis to succeed Councilor Begly on the Audit Committee, seconded by Councilor Tucker and carried unanimously by the nine members present.

PUBLIC AGENDA (continued):

2. Ms. Theresa El-Amin, representing Southern Anti-Racism Network, Re: Reparations in 2028.

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

Mayor Henderson entertained a motion to go into executive session to discuss a matter of personnel as requested by City Attorney Fay earlier in the meeting. Councilor Tucker made a motion to go into Executive Session, seconded by Councilor Crabb and carried unanimously by the seven members present, with Councilors Garrett and Huff being absent for the vote, and the time being 8:29 p.m.

NOTE: Councilor Tucker left the meeting during the Executive Session at 8:54 p.m.

The Regular Meeting reconvened at 9:10 p.m., at which time, Mayor Henderson announced that the Council did meet in executive session to discuss a matter of personnel; however, there were no votes taken.

With there being no further business to discuss, Mayor Henderson entertained a motion for adjournment. Motion by Mayor Pro Tem Allen to adjourn the June 4, 2024, Regular Council Meeting, seconded by Councilor Huff and carried unanimously by the eight members present, with Councilor Tucker being absent for the vote, and the time being 9:11 p.m.

Sandra T. Davis, CMC
Clerk of Council
Council of Columbus, Georgia