

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

October 31, 2023
9:00 AM
Consent Agenda / Work Session

CONSENT AGENDA/WORK SESSION

PRESENT: Mayor B. H. "Skip" Henderson, III and Mayor Pro Tem R. Gary Allen (via Microsoft Teams) and Councilors Jerry "Pops" Barnes, Tyson Begly, Joanne Cogle, Charmaine Crabb, Glenn Davis, R. Walker Garrett, Bruce Huff (arrived at 9:11 a.m.), Judy W. Thomas, and Toyia Tucker (arrived at 9:09 a.m.). City Manager Isaiah Hugley, City Attorney Clifton Fay, Clerk of Council Sandra T. Davis, and Deputy Clerk of Council Lindsey G. McLemore were present.

The following documents have been included as a part of the electronic Agenda Packet: (1) Business License Process Update Presentation; (2) Resurfacing Program Presentation; (3) State of the Streets Presentation; (4) Columbus Parks and Recreation Outdoor Pools Update Presentation

The following documents were distributed around the Council table: (1) Executive Summary Report – Business License Processing; (2) Columbus Consolidated Government Monthly Financial Snapshot (Unaudited) FY2023 – September 2023

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

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

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: Led by Mayor Henderson

MINUTES

1. Approval of minutes for the October 24, 2023, Council Meeting and Executive Session. Councilor Thomas made a motion to approve the minutes, seconded by Councilor Cogle and carried unanimously by the eight members present, with Councilors Huff and Tucker being absent for the vote.

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

Mayor Henderson entertained a motion to go into executive session to discuss matters of potential litigation and personnel as requested by City Attorney Fay. Councilor Barnes made a motion to go into Executive Session, seconded by Councilor Crabb and carried unanimously by the eight members present, with Councilors Huff and Tucker being absent for the vote, and the time being 9:04 a.m.

The Regular Meeting reconvened at 10:40 a.m., at which time, Mayor Henderson announced that the Council did meet in executive session to discuss matters of potential litigation and personnel; however, there were no votes taken.

WORK SESSION AGENDA

I. Revenue Division- Business License Update - Angelica Alexander, Director, Finance

City Manager Isaiah Hugley made opening remarks in response to the request made by Councilor Cogle and supported by eight members of Council during the October 24, 2023 Council Meeting, requesting an executive summary by the close of business on October 30, 2023, which was provided as requested. He stated for the record, the update that is being provided today is not in response to the audit investigation by Troutman Pepper and as City Manager he has not been included in anyway in the audit investigation. He went on to state he has not been consulted nor has he received an entrance or exit interview with Troutman Pepper or anyone else.

He further explained that business license processing is a function of the Revenue Division in the Finance Department and had reported to management they were delayed in processing business license renewals beginning during the COVID-19 Pandemic; however, the division did not report to management the extent of the delay nor the negligence of not following the established protocol for enforcement of businesses that did not renew. He explained this was discovered by management after a referral from City Council on July 25, 2023, and as a follow up, Deputy City Manager Pam Hodge made a request to the Finance Director and Revenue Division Manager for reports and information, and since that time, immediate action has been taken to address the known issues. He stated he has authorized temporary staffing to address the backlog in processing per the established protocol for courtesy delinquent notices for 2020 to 2023, which are mailed annually. He stated a delinquent business license list was turned over to the Inspections and Code Department on September 13, 2023, and they are actively visiting each business location in Muscogee County to confirm if the business is still in operation and if so, are issuing a warning or a citation for operating a business without a business license. He explained other actions to be considered to address issues in the Revenue Division with regards to software updates and restructuring.

He stated the Finance Department Revenue Division failed to follow established protocol for license years 2020, 2021 and 2022 in not turning over those businesses identified as delinquent over to Code Enforcement. He stated, to be clear, there is absolutely no excuse for the Revenue Division to not follow established protocols and concluded by saying this division like so many other divisions and private businesses became overwhelmed during the pandemic. He explained everyone had to operate during extraordinary times and were forced to operate in new ways with a shortage in employees due to exposure to COVID-19 or not being able to fill positions, and this was experienced throughout the Columbus Consolidated Government.

Finance Director Angelica Alexander approached the rostrum to provide an update on the Business License Process. She explained all businesses in Muscogee County are required to renew their business licenses annually by April 1st, but the due date has been extended for the last four years which has negatively impacted business license processing. During the presentation she also provided information on the staffing challenges, software issues, and the delay in mailing out the courtesy non-compliance notices.

Inspections & Code Director Ryan Pruett approached the rostrum to address procedures of Code Enforcement going out to businesses regarding non-compliance.

REFERRAL(S):

FOR THE CITY MANAGER:

- Check with the Sheriff to see if they can deliver the non-compliance warning citations to those businesses that are based outside of Muscogee County. (*Request of Councilor Crabb*)

II. Finance Update - Angelica Alexander, Director, Finance

Finance Director Angelica Alexander approached the rostrum to provide a monthly financial update for September 2023.

III. Pavement Management Update - Donna Newman, Director, Engineering

Engineering Director Donna Newman approached the rostrum to introduce the update on pavement management. She provided information gathered from the study, funding availability, and hinderances.

Assistant Engineering Director Vance Beck approached the rostrum to introduce the President of International Cybernetics Company. He stated this company was chosen through an RFP to assess the condition of the roadways in the community.

President Kurt Keifer, International Cybernetics Company, came forward to provide information on the current pavement conditions, pavement management best practices, pavement condition survey, and examples of the conditions of roadways.

REFERRAL(S):

FOR THE CITY MANAGER:

- Provide a list of streets that are considered in poor and very poor condition to Council. (*Request of Councilor Tucker*)

IV. Pool Update - Holli Browder, Director, Parks & Recreation

Inspections & Code Director Ryan Pruett approached the rostrum to begin the update by providing the status of the outdoor pool project. He explained the demolition of existing pools is ongoing and the construction on the new pools will begin in November with a target of opening the pools for Memorial Day 2024 but is dependent on weather and supply chain.

Parks & Recreation Director Holli Browder approached the rostrum to provide an update on the outdoor pool renovations. During the presentation she provided conceptual renderings of the projects for Shirley Winston, Psalmound Road, and Rigdon Park Pools.

REFERRAL(S):

FOR THE CITY MANAGER:

- Contact the directors for the Boys & Girls Club and Girls, Inc. on Cusseta Road about the kids going to the pool at Rigdon Park during the summer. (*Request of Councilor Huff*)
- Set a policy that requires athletic leagues to clean up facilities after events. (*Request of Councilor Tucker*)
- Provide an update on the response to the audit of Animal Control, where we are now, recent situations with particular dogs, rumors of parvo outbreaks, and the euthanasia rate. (*Request of Councilor Cogle*)
- Have the next Work Session Agenda “Council led” with Councilors choosing three topics for discussion, one being a salary savings update. (*Request of Councilor Tucker*)

- Plan the retreat for Council as discussed in the past with the City Manager, Deputy City Managers, Human Resources, Finance, and City Attorneys for goal setting and to establish more lines of communication. (*Request of Councilor Tucker*)

With there being no further business to discuss, Mayor Henderson entertained a motion for adjournment. Motion by Mayor Pro Tem Allen to adjourn the October 31, 2023, Consent Agenda / Work Session, seconded by Councilor Garrett and carried unanimously by the ten members of Council, with the time being 1:46 p.m.

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