

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

August 29, 2023
9:00 AM
Consent Agenda/ Work Session

CONSENT AGENDA/WORK SESSION

PRESENT: Mayor B. H. "Skip" Henderson, III and Councilors Jerry "Pops" Barnes (arrived at 9:04 a.m.), Tyson Begly, Joanne Cogle, Charmaine Crabb, Glenn Davis, R. Walker Garrett, Bruce Huff (arrived at 9:20 a.m.), 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 were present.

ABSENT: Mayor Pro Tem R. Gary Allen was absent.

<p><u>The following documents have been included as a part of the electronic Agenda Packet:</u> (1) Inspections & Code Update Presentation; (2) Railroad Crossings Presentation; (3) Columbus Parks and Recreation Challenges; (4) Board of Tax Assessors Presentation</p>

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

INVOCATION: Offered by Reverend Jimmy Blanton, Columbus Baptist Association of Columbus, Georgia

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: Led by Mayor Henderson

MINUTES

1. Approval of minutes for the August 22, 2023 Council Meeting and Executive Session. Councilor Tucker made a motion to approve the minutes, seconded by Councilor Crabb and carried unanimously by the seven members present, with Councilors Barnes and Huff being absent for the vote and Mayor Pro Tem Allen being absent for the meeting.

WORK SESSION AGENDA

- I. Inspections & Code Update - Ryan Pruett, Director, Inspections & Code

Inspections & Code Director Ryan Pruett approached the rostrum to provide an update on the Inspections & Code Department, as requested by Council. During the presentation, Director Pruett explained his department is comprised of two divisions, Building Permitting and Inspection, and Code Enforcement, with a total of thirty employees. He explained they are responsible for enforcing the Georgia State Building Code, the City's Development Ordinance, nuisance ordinances, and other miscellaneous ordinances as adopted. He stated they are also responsible for project management of City building projects.

REFERRAL(S):

FOR THE CITY MANAGER:

- Look at adding a search field with keywords in the 311 app to make it more user friendly. *(Request of Councilor Cogle)*
- Overgrown grass on the right-of-way along Shelby Street between Fort Benning Road and Munson Drive. *(Request of Councilor Huff)*
- Update on home that burnt down last year on 10th Avenue and 29th Street. *(Request of Councilor Thomas)*
- Explore hiring a third-party to hand-deliver citations to code offenders and adding the expense associated with the third-party to the accumulated fees for the property. *(Request of Councilor Begly)*
- Provide a list of how many citation bills were mailed and how many were paid. *(Request of Councilor Tucker)*
- Request for a presentation at the September 12, 2023 Council Meeting on the new Judicial Center and for Council to receive updates regularly on the project. *(Request of Councilor Thomas)*
- Revisit the idea of hiring a Project Manager for the new Judicial Center. *(Request of Councilor Thomas)*
- Add the new jail to the update requested by Councilor Thomas. *(Request of Councilor Tucker)*
- Provide an update on where we are with the pool replacement. *(Request of Councilor Tucker)*
- Provide a monthly report on code enforcement issues for each Council District. *(Request of Councilor Tucker)*

IV. One Small Step - Mayor Pro-Tem Allen

Ms. Katie Bishop approached the rostrum to introduce Mr. Neil Griffith, who will be the Field Director for the One Small Step Initiative, powered by StoryCorps, here in Columbus.

Mr. Neil Griffith approached the rostrum to provide information on the initiative that will be launched in Columbus on September 13, 2023, at the National Infantry Museum. He explained One Small Step matches two strangers with different political views for an in-person or virtual 50-minute respectful conversation to talk about their life experiences and values. He further explained that the goal is to bring people who might not normally interact together to get to know one another.

II. Railroad Crossings - Donna Newman, Director, Engineering

Engineering Director Donna Newman approached the rostrum to provide a presentation on railroad crossings, as requested by Council. She explained there are 121 crossings in Columbus, Georgia, all of which are owned or leased by Norfolk Southern (NS), Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT), Georgia Southwestern (GSWR), Genesee & Wyoming (GWRR), Columbus Consolidated Government, or are private spur lines. She went on to explain the railroads maintain the tracks and crossings, with the City of Columbus being required to have the Track Supervisor present if anything is done at a railroad crossing.

REFERRAL(S):

FOR THE CITY MANAGER:

- Ask GDOT about putting in a caution sign for the tracks on 9th Street. (*Request of Councilor Cogle*)
- Check the condition of railroad crossings at Williams Road, Smith Road, 9th Street, and 45th Street. (*Request of Councilor Davis*)
- Let's also see if we can get Norfolk Southern to clean up their property where the offices are located, as well as, the sidewalks. (*Request of Councilor Davis*)

III. Parks & Recreation Update - Holli Browder, Director, Parks & Recreation

Parks & Recreation Director Holli Browder approached the rostrum to provide an update on the challenges of the Parks & Recreation Department, as requested by Council. During the presentation, Director Browder shared information and images of facilities with repair needs. She also shared the needs of the Parks and Recreation Department as it relates to capital equipment and personnel. Parks & Recreation Director Browder then outlined her recommendations for increased funding for capital improvements, the Facilities Maintenance Operating budget and four new positions to create a Parks & Recreation Maintenance Team. In conclusion, she mentioned the park patrol that is being provided by the Muscogee County Prison staff.

Public Works Director Drale Short approached the rostrum to provide information regarding the maintenance of the Parks and Recreation facilities, as this falls under her department in the Facility Maintenance Division. She explained the Facilities Maintenance Division is responsible for 652 buildings and structures, with 77 belonging to Parks and Recreation. She also provided information on the money spent to maintain Parks and Recreation facilities, with \$283,222 spent in FY 2021, \$220,000 in FY 2022, and \$220,000 in FY 2023. In conclusion to her part of the presentation, Director Short recommended an increase in funding to maintain the facilities to a minimum of \$1,500,000.00 for Parks and Recreation.

Muscogee County Prison Warden Herbert Walker, III approached the rostrum to speak on the Park Patrol that began on August 12th where Muscogee County Prison Officers and/or Supervisors are patrolling thirty-one parks, trails, and park facilities.

REFERRAL(S):

FOR THE CITY MANAGER:

- Work with the local education system to bring in students with trade certificates to work for the City. (*Request of Councilor Thomas*)
- Wants to see at mid-year what it would cost to handle where we are currently with maintenance and how much we would need to get ahead. (*Request of Councilor Cogle*)
- Next budget year provide a detailed preventative maintenance plan to be proactive and get ahead of the facility maintenance issues. (*Request of Councilor Cogle*)
- Provide Council with a list, in priority order, of what is needed for Parks and Recreation facilities. (*Request of Councilor Tucker*)
- Advertise the upcoming softball tournament. (*Request of Councilor Huff*)

DIAL-A-RIDE PROGRAM:

In response to a question asked by Councilor Thomas, **City Manager Iasiah Hugley** stated there have not been any public meetings scheduled regarding the motion made at the August 22, 2023 Council Meeting to extend the Dial-A-Ride fixed route. He further explained that a meeting was held with attorneys and consultants regarding this action for “premium service” and an update is planned for the September 12, 2023 Council Meeting. City Manager Hugley went on to state that he is going to recommend for the Council to follow the suggestions of the consultants to ensure we are complying with all regulations and there will be no issues.

A lengthy discussion was held where several members of Council expressed their desire for the required public meetings to be scheduled for the near future.

- V. Department of Audits and Accounts (DOAA) Sales Ratio Study - Suzanne Widenhouse, Chief Appraiser- Muscogee County Board of Assessors

Chief Appraiser Suzanne Widenhouse approached the rostrum to provide a presentation on the 2022 Sales Assessment Ratio Study. During the presentation she shared information on the Department of Audits 2022 Adjusted Sales Ratio and explained how Muscogee County as well as many other counties in Georgia were found to be not in compliance. Chief Appraiser Widenhouse explained how many errors were found after reviewing the information from the audit and as a result, she is recommending that the City Council and the Muscogee County School District submit an appeal.

CONSENT AGENDA

- I. **Resolution (327-23):** A resolution authorizing an appeal of the results of the State Department of Audits 2022 Sales Assessment Ratio Study (Mayor Pro-Tem) Councilor Thomas made a motion to approve the resolution, seconded by Councilor Garrett and carried unanimously by the seven members present, with Councilors Barnes and Huff being absent for the vote, and Mayor Pro Tem Allen being absent from the meeting.

Councilor Crabb made a motion for the Muscogee County School District to pay 60% and the city’s portion to be 40% instead of the 50/50 split. The motion dies for the lack of a second.

EXTERNAL AUDITOR:

Councilor Cogle made a motion to hire Troutman Pepper to work in conjunction with the Internal Auditor in a previously approved audit with the intention and goal of providing a detailed report, seconded by Councilor Crabb and carried unanimously by the seven members present, with Councilors Barnes and Huff being absent for the vote, and Mayor Pro Tem Allen being absent from the meeting.

- II. **RESOLUTION (328-23)** - A resolution excusing Mayor Pro Tem R. Gary Allen from the August 29, 2023 Consent Agenda/ Work Session. **(Add-On)** Councilor Tucker made a motion to approve the resolution, seconded by Councilor Crabb and carried unanimously by the seven members present, with Councilors Barnes and Huff being absent for the vote, and Mayor Pro Tem Allen being absent from the meeting.

With there being no further business to discuss, Mayor Henderson entertained a motion for adjournment. Motion by Councilor Tucker to adjourn the August 29, 2023, Consent Agenda/ Work Session, seconded by Councilor Garrett and carried unanimously by the seven members present, with Councilors Barnes and Huff being absent for the vote, Mayor Pro Tem Allen being absent from the meeting, and the time being 2:11 p.m.

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