

COUNCIL OF COLUMBUS, GEORGIA

CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

Muscogee County School Board Chambers
Public Education Center
2960 Macon Road, Columbus, Georgia 31906

July 30, 2024
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 and Councilors Travis L. Chambers, Joanne Cogle, Charmaine Crabb, Glenn Davis (arrived at 9:09 a.m.), Byron Hickey, Bruce Huff (arrived at 9:05 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.

ABSENT: Councilor R. Walker Garrett was absent.

The following documents have been included as a part of the electronic Agenda Packet: (1) United Way of the Chattahoochee Valley – Home for Good Presentation; (2) Infrastructure Project Update Presentation; (3) Engineering Project Update Presentation; (4) Sign Ordinance Update Presentation; (5) Waste Collection Policy Media Release; (6) American Rescue Plan Update Presentation; (7) Jail Update Presentation

The following documents were distributed around the Council table: (1) Department of Public Works, Integrated Waste Division – Waste Collection Presentation

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

INVOCATION: Offered by Pastor Jason Wade- Wynnton Methodist Church of Columbus, Georgia

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: Led by Mayor Henderson

CONSENT AGENDA

MINUTES

1. Approval of minutes for the July 23, 2024 Council Meeting and Executive Session. Mayor Pro Tem Allen made a motion to approve the minutes, seconded by Councilor Tucker and carried unanimously by the seven members present, with Councilors Davis and Huff being absent for the vote, and Councilor Garrett being absent from the meeting.

RESOLUTION

2. **RESOLUTION (252-24)** – A resolution excusing Councilor R. Walker Garrett from the July 30, 2024 Consent Agenda / Work Session. Mayor Pro Tem Allen made a motion to approve the resolution, seconded by Councilor Tucker and carried unanimously by the seven members present, with Councilors Davis and Huff being absent for the vote, and Councilor Garrett being absent from the meeting.

COLUMBUS FIRE & EMS BATTALION CHIEF KEVIN LOTT:

Mayor B. H. “Skip” Henderson, III asked the community to keep the family and loved ones of Battalion Chief Kevin Lotts of the Columbus Fire & EMS Department in their thoughts and prayers as they mourn his recent passing.

NOTE: Councilor Huff arrived at 9:05 a.m.

WORK SESSION AGENDA

I. Homelessness in Columbus - Pat Frey, Vice President, Home for Good

Vice President Pat Frey, Home for Good, approached the rostrum to provide a presentation on homelessness in Columbus, Georgia. During the presentation, she shared information on the Point in Time Count conducted by Home for Good the last ten days of January as required by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the rise in people that are experiencing first time homelessness, the coordinated efforts of various entities in addressing homelessness, the current housing crisis, and the Regional Housing Market Needs Assessment. She stated there has been an increase in homelessness over the past three years for various reasons, but this is a trend across the world where the increase in the cost of living has outpaced incomes.

REFERRAL(S):

FOR THE CITY MANAGER:

- Start setting up a meeting with officials and organizations to discuss the “process” to see where some of the homeless population is coming from and/or shifting from one location to another. *(Request of Councilor Tucker)*

NOTE: Councilor Davis arrived at 9:09 a.m.

II. Infrastructure Update - Ryan Pruett, Director, Inspections & Code, Donna Newman, Director, Engineering

Inspections & Code Director Ryan Pruett approached the rostrum to provide an update on various infrastructure projects. During the presentation, Director Pruett projected the scheduled completion date of the Judicial Center for the Summer of 2026, Synovus Park for April 2025, Sheriff’s Office Administration Building for September 2024, and the City Hall Phase II for the Summer of 2025.

Engineering Director Donna Newman came forward to provide an update on various transportation projects. During the presentation, she projected completion dates for the Williams Road/Fortson Road Roundabout to be in September of 2025, the 35th Street/2nd Avenue Stormwater Relocation in August of 2024, and the Mott’s Green Plaza Enhancement in November of 2024. She also shared projects open for RFB’s such as the Infantry Road and Follow Me Trail and the Flood Abatement Project 19th Street System.

Deputy City Manager Pam Hodge came forward to provide budgeting information and make recommendations on the Spiderweb Project. She explained this project has been delayed due to escalating material and labor cost, with the BIDs coming in so high that it was suggested that CCG wait, and the BID went out on two other occasions. She explained the proposed options to fund the shortfall in the project budget and BID is an estimated \$4,000,000.00 in FY 2025 and FY 2026 LMIG funding in addition to an estimated \$1,428,588.71 in TSPLOST Discretionary Funds.

REFERRAL(S):

FOR THE CITY MANAGER:

- Schedule public meetings as soon as possible regarding the Trade Center Parking Garage. *(Request of Councilor Cogle)*
- Send information on the closing and rerouting for 2nd Avenue on the city's text app to notify citizens. *(Request of Councilor Cogle)*
- Send someone out to evaluate the condition of the trees on Steam Mill Road. *(Request of Councilor Tucker)*
- Regarding the Northstar Drive Roundabout, reach out to the property owners as soon as possible that would be impacted by easements and/or acquisitions for this project. *(Request of Councilor Tucker)*
- Check on the traffic light coming off I-185 onto St. Mary's Road; it seems to not be changing late at night. *(Request of Councilor Huff)*
- See about installing bollards in front of the church for the Northstar Drive and St. Mary's Road Roundabout and corner off the gas station. *(Request of Councilor Huff)*
- Provide the estimated completion date for the South Lumpkin Road Project. *(Request of Councilor Cogle)*
- Look at the traffic that is expected to increase due to the increase in students at Mary Buckner Academy with school traffic going in at the one entrance to Dawson Estates. *(Request of Councilor Tucker)*
- Check into improvements for the intersection by Britt David Elementary School and Britt David Park. *(Request of Councilor Davis)*
- Need flashing school zone signs on Old Guard Way. *(Request of Councilor Davis)*
- Get with the Muscogee County School District Police on parents blocking driveways on Anglin Road when picking up students from school. *(Request of Councilor Crabb)*

III. Policy/Strategy for Signs on the ROW - Ryan Pruett, Director, Inspections & Code

Inspections & Code Director Ryan Pruett approached the rostrum to provide an update on the sign ordinance. After explaining the responsibilities of the employees of Code & Inspections, he stated the next steps are to review potential changes to the ordinance to make enforcement more efficient and/or penalties more deterrent, hand out flyers when a new business obtains a Certificate of Occupancy explaining signage requirements, mail out information to all current business license holders, and to partner with Keep Columbus Beautiful on informational campaigns.

NOTE: Mayor Pro Tem Allen left the meeting at 11:30 a.m.

REFERRAL(S):

FOR THE CITY MANAGER:

- Provide the Council with a list of the Code Enforcement Officers and their contact information assigned to the Code Enforcement Districts. *(Request of Councilor Crabb)*
- Provide a list of who is going out on Saturdays and show some of the hotspots that we still have issues with signs being attached to stop signs and the local businesses that have their signs on the city's rights-of-way. *(Request of Councilor Tucker)*
- Include law enforcement agencies in conversations. *(Request of Councilor Davis)*
- Provide copy of signage ordinance to local sign companies. *(Request of Councilor Crabb)*
- Ask media outlets to notify the business community of new changes to signage ordinance. *(Request of Councilor Hickey)*
- Include in the discussion the issue of signs being put on private property without permission of the property owners. *(Request of Councilor Davis)*

IV. Waste Collection Cart Policy Update Effective Monday, September 9, 2024 - Drale Short, Director, Public Works

Public Works Director Drale Short approached the rostrum to provide details on the new waste collection policy that will be effective Monday, September 9, 2024. She explained the residential waste policy will require all household waste to be in an authorized black or brown City issued cart, or it will not be collected. She went on to explain for citizens to acquire an additional cart, they must call 311 to make that request and they will be asked for information to include their customer and account numbers from their Columbus Water Works bill for the \$55 fee to be added to their next bill. She added the yard waste pickup will return to the normal schedule effective September 9, 2024 and there is no change in the tree-for-fee policy or pickup.

REFERRAL(S):

FOR THE CITY MANAGER:

- Provide the route map and schedule for yard waste pickup to remind citizens which day they can expect pickup. *(Request of Councilor Tucker)*
- Ask truck drivers to pick up waste they see while on route even if it is not put out properly or in the right place. *(Request of Councilor Davis)*
- Send the members of Council a graph to show what is recyclable and what is not so they are able to promote recycling. *(Request of Councilor Tucker)*

V. Parks and Recreation Q & A - Holli Browder, Director, Parks and Recreation

Parks and Recreation Director Holli Browder approached the rostrum to answer questions from the members of Council on the various divisions within the department and issues they have been approached by citizens in these regards. During the discussion, Director Browder addressed the shortage in lifeguards, which she stated is an issue that is being faced by the Parks and Recreation

Departments across the country. She also addressed the difficulty in filling the part-time positions throughout the department due to the pay offered being less than the national average and other agencies with similar positions paying more.

Inspections & Code Director Ryan Pruett came forward to respond to questions from Councilor Thomas regarding the delay in acquiring the project design permits for the renovations to the outdoor pools. He explained the Health Department interpreted the code differently than the architect did in the design process, and this caused a delay in permits being issued.

Facilities Maintenance Manager Johnny Harp, Public Works, came forward to respond to questions regarding the maintenance of the boiler, pump and other mechanical devices at the Columbus Aquatics Center. He also addressed the lack of maintenance personnel and the need for repairs to be made by outside contractors and maintenance personnel from the Public Works Department. Later in the discussion, he shared information on the lightning suppression system that was installed after the Columbus Aquatics Center was constructed.

NOTE: Councilor Crabb left the meeting at 1:06 p.m.

Deputy City Manager Lisa Goodwin came forward to discuss the renovation and/or demolition of Belvedere Park. She explained that years ago it was recommended that the City demolish the buildings and sell the property.

Deputy City Manager Pam Hodge came forward to respond to questions from Councilor Davis on the replacement of the restrooms at Lake Oliver Marina, which suffered fire damage in the past. She explained the City does have a policy for property insurance and the policy for most of the facilities is \$50,000 but the restroom did not qualify.

REFERRAL(S):

FOR THE CITY MANAGER:

- Let's do a markup of how much it would cost to increase the pay for lifeguards and the part-time employees in Parks & Recreation. *(Request of Councilor Tucker)*
- Bring information that lists the revenue versus cost for the Aquatics Center. *(Request of Councilor Tucker)*

NOTE: City Manager Isaiah Hugley left the meeting at 1:47 p.m. and Deputy City Manager Lisa Goodwin took his seat at the table.

- Provide information on how many swim meets are being held each year at the Columbus Aquatics Center. *(Request of Councilor Hickey)*
- Since part-time positions were not included in the pay study done by Evergreen, let's have the part-time position pay looked at. *(Request of Councilor Chambers)*
- Provide the number of kids that were transported and the locations they were picked up at by Metra for the summer tour program. *(Request of Councilor Chambers)*
- Let's meet to discuss the City demolishing the building at Primus King Park and getting a non-profit in to take over. *(Request of Councilor Huff)*

NOTE: Councilor Thomas left the meeting at 2:15 p.m.

VI. ARP Update - Pam Hodge, Deputy City Manager, Finance, Planning & Development

Deputy City Manager Pam Hodge approached the rostrum to provide an update on the American Rescue Plan (ARP). She explained there is funding available for reallocation left over from various programs that utilized less than originally budgeted, such as, Job Training/Workforce Development/Youth Work Program, Mental Health Training/Intervention, Substance Abuse Treatment Services, and the Gun Buy-Back Program.

REFERRAL(S):

FOR THE CITY MANAGER:

- See about utilizing Indigent Care Funds to implement the initial investment of an integrated mobile process unit for Public Safety to utilize to help individuals with mental health conditions rather than transporting them to the Muscogee County Jail. *(Request of Councilor Tucker)*
- Provide information on what compensation was provided to public safety officers who were required to be out of work during Covid. *(Request of Councilor Hickey)*
- Check into reallocating the \$292,703 from the Gun Buy-Back Program to give a bonus to Columbus Police Department employees. *(Request of Councilor Hickey)*
- Send out the report from Cure Violence on the funds expended and success stories. Have them come before the Council to provide an update. *(Request of Councilor Hickey)*

VII. Jail Maintenance Update/Phase 1 - Drale Short, Director, Public Works

Public Works Director Drale Short approached the rostrum to provide an update on the maintenance of the Muscogee County Jail. She stated that 90% of the mold remediation on the main building has been completed, with the cost to-date at \$75,815.00. She provided information on the needed repairs to the roof, with an estimated cost of \$750,000.00 and repair of the plumbing leaks with an estimated cost of \$788,000.00.

With there being no further business to discuss, Mayor Henderson entertained a motion for adjournment. Motion by Councilor Huff to adjourn the July 30, 2024 Consent Agenda/Work Session, seconded by Councilor Cogle and carried unanimously by the six members present, with Mayor Pro Tem Allen and Councilors Crabb and Thomas being absent for the vote, Councilor Garrett being absent from the meeting, and the time being 2:51 p.m.

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