

2018 Commissioners' GOALS Workshop
January 23, 2018 – 8:30 a.m.
UGA Research & Education Gardens

Chairman Hollberg welcomed everyone at 8:43 a.m. and expressed thanks for use of this UGA facility. In attendance were the following Commissioners: Cora Flowers, Rodney McCord, Cynthia Reid-Ward, Truman Tinsley, Holly Murray and David Brock. Also present were Kenny Smith, Staff Attorney Jessica O'Connor, City Attorney Drew Whalen, Airport Manager Robert Mohl, Municipal Court Clerk Melissa Brock, Citizen Engagement Specialist Brian Miller, Chief Financial Officer Markus Schwab, Chief Information Technology Officer Jack Poland, Human Resources Director Miles Neville, Planning and Development Director Toussaint Kirk, Municipal Court Clerk Melissa Brock, Executive Director of Downtown Development Authority/Economic Development Yvonne Williams, Fire Chief Tommy Jones, Police Chief Mike Yates, Central Services Director Phill Francis, Public Works/Utilities Director Brant Keller, Electric Director Dan Thompson, and Executive Secretary Teresa Watson.

Mr. Smith updated the Board on the recent Directors' Goals Workshop on January 20, 2018, held at the Electric Operations Center on North Hill Street. He briefly commented on the day, noting most of the commentary was in the nature of discussions and not necessarily goals. He said he would apprise Commissioners later of Directors' top five challenges for the City.

Mr. Smith reminded everyone of the upcoming UGA Archway Intergovernmental Retreat to be held February 8-9, 2018 at Rock Eagle in Eatonton. The Executive Committee identified three areas of concentration for this retreat: Crime (with Chief Yates and Sheriff Dix as presenters), Housing (to be addressed by Ms. O'Connor), and Education (with GSCS Superintendent Jim Smith to address). Kristen Miller with Archway will send out an updated agenda for all.

Mr. Schwab began by saying the December financials would be made available at the next Board meeting. The City, he noted, is tracking in customary fashion and finances are tracking at a normal pace. The 2018-19 budget challenges should be characterized by flatlined revenues (stagnant TAVT, fees, licenses, etc.), high capital monetary demands, additional expenses from the proposed retirement challenges which could pose somewhat of a drain to finances, capital expenditures due to landfill expansion because of increased substandard demolitions should EPD approve. Extensive discussion was held on the landfill escrow account which should increase to accommodate closure costs, noting without expansion approval, the landfill will reach capacity in about 14 months. Subsequently, if the landfill has to close, the City must go elsewhere at greater cost, such as Tyrone. We are currently doing about 4000 to 5000 tons per month at the landfill, and we could possibly increase the cost per ton to \$40 from the current \$36 to help. Mr. Poland said the new telecommunications enterprise will also assist with revenue for the provision of fiber. Mr. Whalen cautioned about legislation being considered that would affect the provision of broadband particularly to rural areas of Georgia in the rights-of-way which could be a test for the gratuity clause. Mr. Poland noted the programs for fiber in LaGrange and Chattanooga were great models and doing very well, even in residences. The offer of fiber is very good for economic development prospects, also, and just provides another tool in the toolbox. Access to good hotel accommodations is another area problem as there is nowhere to recommend for prospects to stay while they are viewing sites. This is particularly problematic, considering there has been an uptick in overnight stays for several reasons. Chief Yates noted there may be a slight increase in fines and forfeitures, as well.

Dr. Keller next addressed preparation for negotiating the Spalding County 2020 Water Contract. Our personnel are prepared and have sent a letter stating same to Spalding County but no response yet. He noted that we cannot master meter without two years of engineering and should have been advised three years ago if the County wanted that segregation. The actual date of renewal for the County is 12/31/20. The City is proceeding as planned but there is also a contingency plan. We may need to address market conditions as outlined by Morgan Stanley recently.

Ms. Williams then presented a PowerPoint on the Economic Development Alliance. She briefly provided a background for the many involved entities, i.e. Chamber, DDA, GSBTA, Downtown Council, Spalding County, and Main Street and noted she planned to present to all chairpersons in hopes of a team effort. The Economic + Tourism Community Development Alliance would provide for perpetual improvement for a more positive impact and less confusion. She presented a flowchart for ease of understanding. This concept would provide a spirit of cooperation and better collaboration; she is currently working on the budgeting/salary/benefit package aspect. She noted there was no tie to the Airport Authority, and the ties of City of Griffin and Spalding County are indirect through their various appointees. The City will be mostly out of the picture except as it relates to the provision of City services for functions/entities. There was some discussion about the required certification to remain a Main Street city and how to continue that designation, particularly with regard to how it would coordinate with GSBTA. Commissioner McCord was concerned with encouraging greater diversity in the DDA hierarchy. The Griffin Downtown Council will continue to do events and involve the Chamber, as well. This will be a stronger organizational

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structure with greater accountability and better efficiencies. There was a question as to whether or not Griffin could become a Purple Heart City, and Ms. Williams will research.

Mr. Kirk and Ms. O’Connor next addressed housing and substandard housing progress. He began by noting their initial areas of development/rehab: Springhill, Lincoln Road, Lexington Square, Infill in Fairmont, Downtown Development and Experiment Street Corridor. Funding mechanisms include SPLOST, Housing Authority, General Fund, user fees, fines, etc. He detailed redevelopment projects, such as the Oaks at Park Point, retail/commercial projects, and others.

The recently completed housing survey by APD identified 324 homes as substandard or dilapidated. APD is also providing a report to Spalding County on the areas in the County that are adjacent to the City. Some that were identified as vacant actually are occupied. Ms. O’Connor passed out a spreadsheet detailing these properties, along with identifying a nuisance program timeline, partnerships and collaborations, communications and expectations, and a comprehensive explanation of absentee owners in the process, as well as a notation to remember these are en rem processes (against the property and not the owner). Extensive discussion followed and Ms. O’Connor provided logistics about the overall process and the necessary timelines for demolition, as well as the process for rehabilitation of a property. The City of Griffin is a leader in substandard housing program, and other municipalities look to us for modeling.

The Board has indicated its desire to “clean up” the City. We have consistently provided services to reach this goal, but the priority is now greater than ever. Ideally, residents could be involved in this cleanup process, either through voluntary participation in City efforts or through the court process with ordered actions, utilizing fines, nuisance abatement, or other means. Citizens are required to keep their property clean, orderly and free of waste and debris, as well as junked vehicles. Code Enforcement is critical to these issues, both for enforcement and education of the citizenry. It’s important to educate residents that we do not enforce quality of life issues in an effort to target anyone but rather to ensure the City stays safe, clean and attractive and that enforcement ensures adherence, fairness and consistency. We can all work toward these goals, but we need support and adherence to the Ordinances.

She and Mr. Kirk also outlined issues with building inspections, noting we no longer have anyone in house performing those inspections but rather are using a contract provider. The position is still vacant with no qualified applicants to date.

Next, Chairman Hollberg stated there have been preliminary discussions for quite some time about relocating Public Works and Water/Wastewater/Stormwater from its current location at City Park to property that the City purchased from Spalding Concrete north of the Electric and Central Services departments on North Hill Street. Mr. Smith said the property was purchased from Spalding Concrete and then subleased with this prospect in mind. The City may ask Spalding County if they would be open to utilizing this area, once cleared of Public Works, for the proposed swimming pool complex. To move all the Public Works plant facilities would require about three years’ lead time at a cost of \$4 to \$5 million dollars. To have Public Works adjacent to the other City departments on North Hill Street would streamline operations and provide for greater efficiency. The consensus of the Board was to pursue a conversation with Spalding County to determine any interest in utilizing the City Park area for their pool complex. If interest is expressed, they are okay with proceeding.

Sidewalk/pathway connectivity was discussed next, with Dr. Keller providing background. There was extensive discussion regarding directing departments to accomplish tasks and then revisiting or renegeing on that direction when faced with public pressure. For instance, departments were tasked with cleaning up the corridor from UGA on Experiment Street to downtown for connectivity issues and have worked hard to accomplish this task. Yet, when Staff tackled aesthetic issues such as junk cars, merchandise or thrift store items displayed on the street or right-of-way, and general unkempt conditions, some were met with a change of direction for certain businesses/people which, in essence, meant a lack of support for the initiative. Directors would like to see a continuity of overall direction and support when they are tasked with such challenges for the greater good of the City.

Mr. Smith and Chairman Hollberg next provided some time for an exercise in determining what they perceive to be the top five challenges that the City faces currently. Each Commissioner named his/her top five, and a comprehensive list revealed 27 concerns shown below.

- Crime-Revenue enhancement
- Substandard housing.....-Proactive grant research/application
- Spalding County water contract.....-Repurposing Golf Course
- Golf Course preservation.....-City Park improvements
- Pool location.....-Drugs and gangs

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- Yard Waste-Blight/Trash
- Event Inclusivity -Roll-offs
- Evictions-Attracting small business and industry
- TSPLOST-Mid-income growth
- Retain mid-level employees -Affordable, exceptional K’ed services
- Competitive Public Safety personnel..... -Perception of local education
- Opioid crisis.....-Dog Park
- Hotel conference center -Economic Development
- Life cycle management

From the above 27 challenges, the group engaged in an exercise to narrow the list to the following five:

- 1) Blight/Trash
 - Requires vigilance
 - Requires ongoing maintenance
 - Dependent greatly on Code Enforcement
 - Recognize that Staff continues to do their jobs
 - Must be consistent and equitable
 - Staff needs support for initiatives/work
 - Bring back before Board the Junkyard and Outdoor Sales Ordinance Amendments for both businesses and residences
- 2) Substandard Housing
 - Proceed as previously discussed
- 3) Crime
 - Must change culture
 - Police Chief and Sheriff need collaborative effort in high risk areas
 - Continue efforts to reduce Part I and Part II crimes
 - Remember PD culture change involves 2 areas: 1) solving problems first, then 2) crime fighting
 - Continue efforts toward gang activity/crime
- 4) Golf Course
 - Leave the golf course intact even though it is a drain on City finances; provides quality of life
 - Consider a cemetery for service animals – none located in nation currently
- 5) Internal Workforce Development
 - Make intern programs more accessible to residents, as well as students
 - Recognize that Public Works and Police Department already actively engage in intern programs
 - Address morale issues
 - Study mid-management losses and identify rationale for exits

Chairman Hollberg concluded with thanks to Directors, Staff and Employees for their hard work, and the meeting was adjourned at 4:15 p.m. Commissioners asked the City Manager to remain for a brief discussion after adjournment.