



CITY OF STATESBORO
WORK SESSION MINUTES
JUNE 17, 2025

Mayor & Council Work Session

50 East Main Street

3:00 PM

A Work Session of the Statesboro City Council was held on June 17, 2025, at 3:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers at City Hall, 50 East Main Street. Present were Mayor Jonathan McCollar, and Council Members: Tangie Johnson, Paulette Chavers, and Shari Barr, John Riggs via zoom. Absent was Councilmember Ginny Hendley. Also present were City Clerk Leah Harden, City Attorney Cain Smith, City Manager Charles Penny, Assistant City Manager Jason Boyles, and Public Affairs Manager Layne Phillips.

1. Fire Service Fee

Ed DiTommaso with GMC presented Mayor and Council with the Municipal Fire Services fee. The project was broken up into 2 phases. Phase 1 started in January 2025 which includes data gathering, evaluation of fire dept. data, and determining full cost of services and level of service, analyze call data and correlate with property data and develop a fire fee methodology. Some of the benefits of fire fees, it's set up similar to water/sewer, sanitation, stormwater fund. It's an enterprise fund where anything that is collected with the fire fee goes into that special fund and has to be spent on those fire related operations. With the fire fee you can allocate some of the general fund to other areas. It diversifies the way the city collects money, it supports long term financial planning, and increased equity because it is based on the service people are getting unlike property tax where there are exempt properties. Some of the options for collecting fire fees including flat rate, square footage base, land use, needed fire flow, and assessed value. Our study focused on using a combination of land use analysis and square footage. We chose this method because in McDuffie County it was upheld by the Supreme Court. We broke the cities data down into land use categories; residential, commercial, exempt, and undeveloped. We looked at call data from the time period 2020- 2024, Mayor and Council were shown graphs for the call data broken down by district as well as general land use. The budget was looked at from FY 2025 – FY 2027 and the way that the fire department is currently bringing in that revenue. These graphs are prior to the special service district, looking at that and looking ahead we identified that there was about a \$4.3 million dollar gap at the end of 2027. Primary funding sources could be user fees or general fund and then you have the secondary funding sources which include special assessments/tax districts, fund transfers, fire line charges, loans or grants. The funding options we looked at are using the hybrid approach using land use and square footage to cover the full gap of the \$4.3 million dollars, to partially fund you can do tier residential which is land use and square footage for non-residential or you can phase it in with the millage rate. Mayor and Council were shown breakdowns for both the hybrid approach, the tiered approach and millage and the cost with each option. Phase II, select rate structure & methodology, develop a credit policy, adopt ordinance and setup fund, public outreach plan and identify and meet with key customers as well as conduct internal training. The timeframe for phase II will start around August- September 2025 through June 2026.

2. Fire Station 3 – Plans

Deputy Fire Chief Bobby Dugger presented to mayor and council the plans for Fire Station # 3. A committee of firefighters were put together to do a lot of research to determine what needed to be in a fire station, what that looked like and what was going to fit our community. As the community experiences exponential growth, so does the demand for fire and rescue services. Our current stations are serving at or above capacity, with

response times increasing due to population growth as well as community needs. Response times have begun to exceed the recommended national standards. We have had station 2 since it was completed in late 2000/early 2001 that was the last station the city has built. The City, Administration, and City Council has throughout the years done well with getting our staffing up and our apparatus up. We currently run 3 engine trucks a battalion. Once you get your staffing up housing becomes an issue, station 2 was not designed to house 8 people. We have analysis on where the station needs to be located, the analysis was based on population, density, response time, as well as what's coming, what commercial properties are coming, what residential properties are coming and how can we effectively serve that community. The response times on the eastside of town started increasing, we look for somewhere off of a main road this gives an opportunity to get out and control the traffic. The property on Brannen Street was bought because of the location. Next the design we wanted a community oriented approach including aesthetics, longevity, and community use. We wanted to look at energy efficient and low maintenance. Deputy Chief Dugger showed mayor and council a photo of the design for the outside and inside of the building. The benefits for having Fire Station 3 are improved response times and increased capacity for fire and rescue services. The RFP for Design-Build are Lavender and Associates as the contractor and Frank D'Arcangelo for the architect. The cost will be \$4.8 million- turn key, this includes land preparation, design, and build FF&E furniture, fixtures, and equipment. The construction timeline is 3 months for the design/engineering and 7 months build time. The timeline should coincide with the delivery of truck 3 which was approved and purchased. Full staffing levels currently authorized are adequate. Potential impacts include increased traffic on Brannen Street which includes the install emergency lighting to alert drivers of Fire Apparatus response and possible re-work of Brannen Street/301 By-Pass/Lowes.

3. Financing Options for Fire Station 3

Financial Advisor Doug Gebhardt with Davenport spoke with mayor and council on the fire station capital planning analysis. The City is evaluating potential financing options for the fire station which is estimated to cost approximately \$4.5 million dollars, the funds for the fire station project could be needed as early as Fall 2025. The City currently has funds that could potentially be used to either downsize the borrowing or be utilized to pay debt service on the financing. Surplus funds (interest accrued) from the 2019 SPLOST in the amount of approximately \$1 million, this funds are currently on hand and could be deployed immediately. The 2025 SPLOST which begins October 1, 2025 allocated \$12.8 million towards Public Safety facilities and/or equipment. Within that categorization, the City internally allocated \$1.275 million towards the fire station project. Davenport has assumed that the City would receive enough collections from the 2025 SPLOST in time to apply towards the project, however, Davenport and City staff may need to further analyze this approach in the event the City decides the application of these funds up front is the appropriate method to pursue. Doug Gebhardt went over 3 scenarios for financing the fire station with the assumption of 20 year amortization, 4.50% planning rate, closing October 1, 2025, first interest due April 1, 2026 and first principal due April 1, 2027; and, inclusive of costs of issuance.

4. UDC Proposed Ordinance

Justin Williams, Director of Planning and Development spoke to Mayor and Council on the unified development code final amendments. Creation of new section 2.5.9(E3) this language was originally proposed for in response to rapid growth, but has been removed from the amendments. This amendment would require the use of residential fire sprinklers on all new construction multifamily buildings and townhomes greater than three units, unless already underway. After recent conversation with the State Fire Marshal, it was determined that the City cannot legally require sprinklers in any 1 or 2-family dwelling that is separated by a 2-hour firewall. GA code 8-2-4 states neither the state residential and fire building code nor any residential and fire building code adopted by a political subdivision of the state adopted after May 24, 2010, shall include a requirement that fire sprinklers be installed in a single family dwelling or a residential building that contains no more than two dwelling units.

5. Utility Ordinance Amendment

Public Utilities Director Matt Aycock presented Mayor and Council with recommended changes to the Statesboro's Code of Ordinances Chapter 82- Utilities. It has been recommended by the City Attorney the language needs to be removed from the City's Utility Ordinance, Chapter 82, stating utility customers must pay for water and/or sewer at such time that it becomes available, whether or not they utilize these services. Staff is currently reviewing utility documentation to locate addresses that pay for services not used. We are also proposing to delete Section 82-5- water availability fee, private wells part (b) and the deletion of section 82-116- connection with public sewer.

When the code of Ordinances was originally written, there was no director of public utilities position with the City. The City engineer, at that time, ensured the ordinance was followed concerning public utility issues. In an effort to allow for proper assignment of duties within chapter 82-utilities, we recommend replacing City Engineer with Director of Public Utilities.

6. Burkhalter Road Transportation Plan

Assistant City Manager Jason Boyles presented Mayor and Council with the Transportation Improvement Plan for Burkhalter Road and Cawana Road. City planning and development estimates the construction of 1,342 housing units within the area of Burkhalter Rd, Herman Rushing Rd, Cawana Rd, and S&S Railroad Bed Rd on properties that have been annexed into the City, within the next five years. Estimate is based on plan submittals by developers. Development is also anticipated by the county on multiple properties in the area that have not been annexed. The key intersections are SR 67 at Burkhalter Rd, Burkhalter Road at Cawana Road, Cawana Road at Brannen St, and Cawana Road at S&S Railroad Bed Road. The traffic impact study was completed in 2024 to analyze impacts of residential developments on Cawana and Burkhalter Roads. Study analyzed traffic impacts of the new developments on Cawana, Burkhalter, and Herman Rushing Rd. The results from the traffic study showed SR 67 at Burkhalter Road a level of service (LOS) F in PM peak hour. Intersection delay will increase from 87 seconds to 202 seconds after the developments are built out, if no road improvements are completed. The addition of a left and right-turn lane on Burkhalter WB, a right-turn on Harville EB, and a right-turn lane on SR 67 NB and SB, would make the intersection a LOS D with 40 seconds of delay, after build-out of residential developments. Cawana Rd at Burkhalter Road currently has an LOS C. It is projected to become LOS F after the developments are built out, if no road improvements are done. If roundabout is constructed, intersection will function at LOS B after developments are built out. Cawana Rd at Brannen St and at S&S Railroad Bed Rd proposed roundabouts are currently in design phase. R/W acquisition has not begun. \$3.3 million is proposed budget for FY 26. Construction estimated to begin spring 2026 and be completed summer 2027. Both intersections are partially on Bulloch County R/W. Coordination with Bulloch County will be required. Approximately 80% of Cawana R/W is City. Cawana Rd at Burkhalter Rd proposed roundabout much be completed with Burkhalter Road widening (ENG-124H). Currently developing RFP for design, \$250,000 is the proposed budget for FY 26, and \$2.5 million for FY 28. The design is estimated to begin fall 2025 and be completed with R/W acquisition in spring 2027. Construction is currently budgeted for FY 2028 (\$2.5 million).

Cawana Rd at Burkhalter Rd intersection is currently on Bulloch County R/W. Project coordination with Bulloch County will be required. Burkhalter Rd Widening, from Herman Rushing Rd to SR 67 must be completed with Burkhalter/Cawana Roundabout (ENG123i). Currently developing RFP for design, \$300,000 is proposed budget for FY 26, and \$2.5 million for FY 27. The design is estimated to begin fall 2025 and be completed in early 2027. Design will include R/W acquisition and GDOT permitting. Project construction estimated to begin spring 2027 and be completed Summer 2028. Distance from SR 67 to Herman Rushing Road is approximately 3,550 feet, of that distance, approximately 1,640 feet is City R/W/, and 1,940 feet is Bulloch County R/W. Intersection of Burkhalter Road at SR 67 is on Bulloch County R/W, project coordination and cost sharing with Bulloch County will be required.

In conclusion, key intersections in the area are currently experiencing increasing traffic delays. Residential development along Burkhalter and Cawana will have significant additional traffic impacts in the next 5 years.

City's proposed CIPs can mitigate the impacts. Agreements and cost sharing with Bulloch County and GDOT will be necessary for the CIPs to proceed. The engineering staff is conducting further analysis of previous cost estimates for projects.

7. Private Streets Discussion

Assistant to the City Manager Olympia Gaines spoke to Mayor and Council regarding a Private Streets policy. There are challenges associated for property owners with the cost of improvement to private streets. The Special Services Districts is a specific type of assessment district within a city. SSDs may be created for property owners to help finance and facilitate the street improvements within specified boundary area that would be cost-prohibitive or otherwise difficult to fund by the property owner. The private street policy establishes the set procedure for paving and/or improving private streets that do not meet the city's minimum standards. It also establishes the creation of SSDs. The policy only applies to property owners holding title to the property in the proposed SSD it does not apply to tenants. Each property owner has one vote for each platted parcel. This allows the property owners in the proposed SSD to share the cost of road improvements. This process starts with a petition from the property owners there is a minimum percentage of homeowners in favor for those request to proceed. The proposed ordinance and policy states at least 85% for the SSDs as well as the private street improvements. Engineering and Planning would need to investigate the technical feasibility and preliminary cost. Residents could be responsible for a one-time upfront non-refundable fee to cover administrative cost and preliminary engineering fees. In some instances there has been additional petition requirements after the initial petition and this is to gauge support after the cost has been compiled to see if the residents are still interested in proceeding with this process. Public participation is crucial, you want the property owners to be informed throughout the process and they are given an opportunity to provide input and feedback through public hearings and meetings. The approval process normally starts with the local governing body formally adopting a resolution for the creation of the SSD. This involves a public hearing, if 100% of the homeowners sign the petition, no public hearing is required. Since a resolution is adopted for the SSD the cost of the improvements are then allocated amongst the property owners within the district for a fixed period of time to bring the streets up to the minimum standards to allow the city to take the streets into its inventory. There may be some situations where those streets cannot be brought up to standard, we would then have to look at how that impacts our ordinance and language. One of the criteria's that we have are the property owners would need to convey the street(s) and 100% of the right-of-way to the city prior to the implementation of the assessment and improvement of the street. After approval of the resolution and within 60 days of the development of the right-of-way plats and deeds, city staff will coordinate with other departments (finance, legal, etc.,) and then advise the tax commissioners/tax assessor's offices of the establishment of the new SSD. Throughout the process property owners are kept informed and allowed to address concerns through public information meetings, etc.

Mayor Pro Tem asked where the initial 85% number came from as she believes it should be a lesser percentage to begin the process.

Ms. Gaines stated this is the framework and more discussion need to be had.

Mr. Penny stated we will bring something back to you in 90 days.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:04 p.m.

Jonathan McCollar, Mayor

Leah Harden, City Clerk