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CITY OF STATESBORO  
WORK SESSION MINUTES  
AUGUST 17 2021

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Mayor & Council Work Session

50 East Main Street

3:30 PM

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A Work Session of the Statesboro City Council was held on August 17, 2021 at 3:30 p.m. in City Hall Council Chambers, 50 East Main Street. Present was Mayor Jonathan McCollar; Council Members: Phil Boyum, Paulette Chavers, Venus Mack, and Shari Barr. Also present was City Clerk Leah Harden, City Attorney Cain Smith, City Manager Charles Penny, Assistant City Manager Jason Boyles and Public Information Officer Layne Phillips. Absent was Councilmember John Riggs.

### **Quarterly Financial Report**

Director of Finance Cindy West presented the fourth quarter financial report of Fiscal Year 2021, reviewing the revenues and expenditures in the General Fund, Fire Service Fund, Water/Sewer Fund, Stormwater Fund, Natural Gas Fund, Solid Waste Collection Fund and the Solid Waste Disposal Fund. Ms. West also reviewed the SPLOST and TSPLOST collections for Fiscal Year 2020 and 2021 stating there was an uptick in these collections. Additionally Hotel/Motel revenues have increased in FY 2021 compared to the previous FY 2020.

### **Housing Plan (Affordable Housing)**

Director of Planning and Development Kathy Field stated the adoption of the Housing Plan is required to successfully compete for housing rehab grants and is on the agenda for your consideration. The following is a presentation of the plan.

Russ Marane with Coastal Regional Commission stated a couple months ago the Blakely Group presented the results to the Housing Market Study they conducted for the City of Statesboro. The Coastal Regional Commission worked with them on that project and picked it up from there to look at the affordable housing issue. Mr. Marane reviewed with Mayor and City Council the population data, household data, and employment data in Statesboro. He continued with the existing housing profile data, the age of single-family housing, and the condition of single-family housing. The current supply of new or re-sale affordable homes in good or better condition is very limited. Much of the existing affordable housing stock is older and in fair or average condition. The demand for senior housing is increasing and is the fastest growing segment of Statesboro's population. The rental housing demand preference is for single-family housing, townhome and duplex housing over the multi-family apartment complexes. The strongest housing demand is from potential buyers with incomes of \$35,000 or less. Purchase demand for townhomes or multi-plex homes is rising due to lower pricing and affordability.

The plan to meet the challenge and close the gap starts with the city initiating a city funded targeted housing rehabilitation program. This step greatly enhances the city's opportunity and competitive chances for CDBG, CHIP grants, and other neighborhood revitalization and affordable housing programs. Next would be to apply for CDBG grants for neighborhood revitalization and housing rehabilitation within the URA and apply for CHIP grants to help fund construction of new affordable housing or to assist homeowners with housing rehabilitation. Next, complete board appointments for the Land Bank Authority and enhance the City's subdivision Incentive Program to facilitate the development of lots for affordable housing for all types and income level. Engage non-profit and faith-based organizations in Statesboro to become a partner and participant in the solution of the city's affordable housing challenge. Recruit affordable housing developers in

Statesboro using Federal Housing Tax Credit program as incentives and make surplus public property available for affordable housing. To bridge the gap between affordability and market rent for multi-family housing begin using Section 8 Vouchers issued by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs. Also, provide information and guidance to those desiring affordable homeownership including down-payment assistance using CDBG, the Georgia Dream Homeownership program and other State and Federal funding programs. The City's core area neighborhoods within the Urban Redevelopment Area established by the City are a primary source of affordable housing. In order for downtown Statesboro to become a magnet for residents and students, core area neighborhoods must be revitalized and renewed for families and individuals at all income levels. The City has taken many of the early steps to begin the process. Now is the time to execute the plan.

### **Creek on the Blue Mile Update**

Eric Neese with Freese and Nichols recapped the overall concept with a reservoir to the west of the project and a promenade all the way down through Zetterower Avenue and some improvement to the channel beyond that to get the flow down to Gentilly. The overall project cost came in at a range of 44 – 72 million dollars, which is higher than expected. A huge portion of the cost is due to the dam, reservoir, and inlet & outlet structures. One way to reduce the cost would be to make the reservoir an optional alternate to the project. Currently the railroad crossing creates a natural impoundment for the whole system and there would be no changes to the current flood levels upstream of the railroad. To make this work better we changed from boxed culverts at Zetterower Avenue to a bridge. The bridge allows us to minimize the water surface levels. The last thing is to improve the channel from Zetterower to Gentilly to maximize the hydraulic capacity of this section so we don't hold water back and cause water to go up on the promenade and sidewalk area. This change will require additional stream mitigation with the Corp of Engineers. We traded off from there a lot of wetlands impacts in the reservoir area to more stream impacts downstream. Mr. Neese showed a map of the floodplain stating that upstream of the railroad it would be the same in existing and future conditions. The project downstream of the railroad would be confined to a promenade area and the channel. The existing floodplain is a little wider so this would be narrower than what the published floodplain is on the flood insurance rate maps. Therefore, we have really minimized all losses and made the best hydraulics we can out of this process. The estimated cost for the project with the removal of the reservoir is 27.6 million dollars, which is significantly less than what we had before. The next steps are to complete the flood study, add side streams, submit LOMR for existing conditions, proceed to engineering and project permitting, submit for flood map revision, and final LOMR after construction is complete.

Councilmember Phil Boyum asked if the grant we received from the state requires us to build a reservoir.

City Manager Charles Penny stated there is some connection to the reservoir. We have not completely ruled it out but we need to continue studying that issue. This is not the final report. Until we get more design preliminarily, we think we can make this work and we may not have to build a reservoir to get this done. The next big phase is to get the design so that we know how the storm water project will go forward and then we can bid the project out.

Councilmember Paulette Chavers inquired about the financing for this project.

Mr. Penny stated we have a 15 million dollar line of credit so that funding is already there. We also received a 5.5 million dollar grant, have spent about one million of that, and will be spending more to design the project, which is included in the total cost of the project.

Councilmember Phil Boyum stated that as equally as important as the cost is what is going to be our benefit. If the floodplain is going to be smaller than what it claims to be on the map that means the economic impact is going to be smaller than it otherwise would have been. It would be necessary to see which properties will be impacted and what kind of value are we going to get out of it, as we do with the TAD district. If we are going to put this much money in, how much are we going to get out of it.

## **Recycling Report**

Assistant City Manager Jason Boyles presented his findings regarding recycling in Statesboro/Bulloch County. Bulloch County began recycling operation in early 1990 with staffed countywide recycling collection centers and recycling processing facility. They received a grant from DCA in 2008 to purchase equipment to expand recycling operations and to begin a voluntary recycling program. At the height of the program, Bulloch County has approximately 900 recycling carts with approximately 600 in Statesboro. The cost for the pilot curbside recycling program resulted in a net loss for the county. However, they continued the curbside recycling until 2015. Curbside pick-up ended due to contamination of recyclables and inadequate equipment. Due to the implementation of China's National Sword policy in 2018 there was a 50 percent reduction in recyclable commodities market in the US. As a result, Bulloch County immediately suspended receipt of plastics and glass for recycling. Then in April 2020, due to COVID-19, Bulloch County suspended cardboard recycling at their recycling sorting facility and at all collection centers. Staff recommends hiring a consultant to perform a study for recycling in Statesboro and develop operational program and budget.

City Manager Charles Penny stated we would partner with the county to have the analysis done.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:23 pm.

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Jonathan McCollar, Mayor

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Leah Harden, City Clerk