



CITY OF STATESBORO
WORK SESSION MINUTES
JANUARY 16, 2024

Mayor & Council Work Session

50 East Main Street

4:00 PM

A Work Session of the Statesboro City Council was held on January 16, 2024 at 4:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers at City Hall, 50 East Main Street. Present was Mayor Jonathan McCollar; Council Members: Phil Boyum, Paulette Chavers, Ginny Hendly, John Riggs, 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.

1. Whitesville Park Assessment and Improvement Plan

Director of Public Works and Engineering John Washington presented the Whitesville Park Assessment and Improvement Plan beginning with a map of the parks existing conditions. The estimated cost for the proposed plan is \$1,850,000.00 and includes improvements to Raymond Street Ext., pervious pavement parking area, playground, restroom building, walking trail, pavilions, community garden, landscaping, lighting and security, and a resurfaced basketball court. The city is applying for a community development block grant which has a maximum award of 1,250,000.00. The application is due in April and will be awarded in October. Other funding sources are TSPLOST in the amount of \$300,000 and ARPA funds in the amount of \$200,000. If the city is awarded the CDBG the design for the park is slated to be completed April 2025 with construction completion slated for March 2026. If the city is not awarded the grant park improvements will be done through a phased approach. Beginning with the removal of the restrooms building, the installation of a new pavilion, walking trail, resurface basketball court, installation benches and tables, community garden, landscaping and lighting and security. Other funding options include capital debt financing or pay as you go.

2. Housing Rehabilitation Update

The housing rehabilitation program began in 2022 with the authorization of the use of \$500,000 in ARPA funding. The program authorized the rehabilitation of eligible owner occupied homes within the City's designated Urban Redevelopment Area. There were a total of 83 applications received during the application period and many inquires after the fact. The assistance policy set a cap of \$50,000 per rehab with an option to allow for \$70 per square foot per rehab. These numbers seemed good at the time but with the existing housing market the cost for rehab has increased and caused a number of the projects to be rebid. Back in 2023 Council earmarked \$450,000 of interest from the ARPA funds to be utilized for the reconstruction of 3 homes. As of today staff has awarded contracts for approximately \$1,822,326 which includes the \$450,000 for reconstruction. The next bid package is slated to go out in early February and there are four homes nearing completion.

3. Art Park – Selection of Art/Process

Assistant to the City Manager Olympia Gaines stated the Art Park is a place which will showcase sculptures on a rotating basis. The idea is to have these sculptures loaned to the City for a period of two years. When the two years are finished the City could return the sculptures or purchase them to be displayed along the Willie McTell trail. A committee would need to be established and be comprised of 3-5 representatives from the Averitt Center, Betty Foy Sanders Art Department, SCVB, and a local artist. A city staff member would be assigned as a liaison and a member of the DSDA would serve as an ex-officio member. The estimated cost for each sculpture could range from \$1,000 - \$2,000 per year as a loan fee. The funding would be a part of the City's annual budget. The goal is to promote sustainability, creativity, and innovation. Art pieces should be long lasting with little upkeep and suited for local weather conditions. They will also incorporate a variety of media, styles, and experiences. The timeline is to have the art committee issue a call for art

by early spring 2024 with art installation taking place in May 2024. A ribbon cutting would be scheduled after the art is installed. Councilmember Shari Barr asked on behalf of Councilmember Phil Boyum for the council to budget \$40,000 annually starting next fiscal year for a sculpture contest. The second request would be the city maintains oversight of the process even if the Averitt is involved in the handling of it in order to ensure the stability project. Olympia stated it takes 3-6 months to issue a call, also what that funding will look like. City Manager Charles Penny stated that once everything is finalized it will be brought back before council.

4. Proximity Issue in Central Business District

City Attorney Cain Smith began his presentation with City Ordinance Chapter 6 section 7(e) which sets proximity requirement for issuance of on premise consumption alcohol licenses. This regulation is entirely at local government discretion pursuant to OCGA 3-3-21(b)(3). The City's current regulation prohibits the issuance of on premise licenses with 100 yards of a church or educational facility. However council may grant proximity waivers for restaurants, pubs, and low volume licenses. A proximity waiver is not allowed for bars or bars with kitchens which makes it nearly impossible for such establishments to exist throughout a significant portion of downtown Statesboro. The city has had many contacts from potential business owners wanting to open a bar or bar with kitchen in downtown but the current ordinance prevents staff action. Applications for these establishments in most of the downtown area cannot be brought before Council due to the distance requirements and not having an option for proximity waivers. There are a couple of options council could consider, one would be to eliminate this prohibition in all or a portion of the Central Business District downtown, two allow council to consider proximity waivers for bars and bars with kitchen in the Central Business District, or three leave the ordinance as it currently stands. Mr. Smith presented a map of the open container area in downtown. City Manager Charles Penny asked council to look at the area and think about the possibilities, and will be brought back before council for another presentation.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:17 pm.

Jonathan McCollar, Mayor

Leah Harden, City Clerk