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CITY OF STATESBORO  
WORK SESSION MINUTES  
NOVEMBER 18, 2025

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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 November 18, 2025 at 3:30 p.m. in the Council Chambers at City Hall, 50 East Main Street. Present was Mayor Jonathan McCollar; Council Members: Tangie Johnson, Paulette Chavers, 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 Affairs Manager Layne Phillips. Absent was Councilmember Ginny Hendley and John Riggs

### **1. Public Facility Authority**

Jason Boyles, Assistant City Manager, provided details on the Public Facility Authority to Mayor and Council. Jason Boyles explained that a Public Facilities Authority is a quasi- governmental entity created by the Georgia General Assembly to finance, develop, acquire, or operate public facilities or local government operations. He noted that Georgia local governments are constitutionally limited in their ability to commit funds beyond one year, making authorities like this necessary for long-term financing. Similar authorities exist throughout Georgia, including one in Bulloch County. He mentioned that Representative Franklin had already discussed the matter with Speaker Burns and Senator Parrish to help move the legislation forward. John Pannell, our bond council joined via zoom, stated they would work with the City Attorney and legislative council to get the legislation ready for introduction in January 2026. Mayor Pro tem Shari Barr inquired about the structure of the authority once created and approved.

John Pannell, stated the proposed authority would have 5 members appointed by the Mayor and Council, with no more than 2 council members permitted to serve on the authority. This limitation ensures the authority remains a separate entity from the Mayor and Council.

The item will appear on the regular agenda for approval.

### **2. Fire Service Fee**

Ed DiTommaso from GMC presented an update on the fire service fee. He explained that the study was divided into phases, with the first phase focused on information gathering to determine if a fire service fee was a viable option for the City. He noted they are now at the decision point where council needs to decide whether to move forward with the second phase.

The second phase would involve developing a more detailed methodology for the fee, establishing billing mechanisms, and conducting public education and outreach, establishing the necessary fund and ordinances, and preparing for implementation. He went on to explain the City faces a significant fire department funding gap, particularly after the loss of revenue from the fire district. He presented two primary funding options: increasing the general fund millage rate or implementing a user fee system. Ed Ditommaso recommended the fee approach as more equitable since it would apply to all properties receiving fire protection services, including tax-exempt properties. The timeline for phase 2 would have a targeted implementation for July 2026. City Manager Charles Penny clarified that approving the contract on tonight's regular meeting agenda would authorize proceeding with Phase 2 but would not be a final decision on implementing the fee itself.

Tim Grams, Fire Department Chief, stated this is the appropriate approach to take, the cost of services are going up and this is going to be the most equitable and fair way to share that cost to everyone that is receiving the benefits. He stated there is the option of cutting services and reducing personnel, but would strongly recommend against that, 40% of businesses don't reopen after a fire. The more damage that the structure endures raises that exponentially. We do a really good job of confining and putting fires out quickly. Four or five firefighters per apparatus has made an impact on how quickly we can get in and confine that fire. Cutting services is going to impact homeowners insurance rates, it's a lot more than just what is on the surface. Public outreach and public education is an important part, making sure they understand that the intent is trying to keep the taxes from going up and find a more equitable way of funding this service and all the benefits that come along with it. Chief Grams, stated we just underwent an ISO evaluation and is hoping to hear back from that before the end of the year.

The item will appear on the regular agenda for approval.

### **3. Purchasing Policy**

Darren Prather, Director of Central Services, presented proposed updates to the city's purchasing policy, noting that it had been approximately 15 years since the last comprehensive review. Due to key challenges such as vendor and supply chain disruptions, rigid traditional procurement methods and impacts of rising inflation and budget constraints. Staff is recommending several key changes to our procurement policy. These updates are intended to streamline processes and increase efficiency. These changes include increasing procurement card (P-card) limits from \$1,000 to \$5,000, increasing written quotes process over \$1,000 to over \$5,000 (up to \$50,000), changing the formal sealed bid threshold from \$20,000 to \$50,000, eliminating telephone quote process in favor of validated written quotes, and eliminating the open purchase order policy due to its infrequent use.

Mr. Prather explained that these changes would align with current economic realities and inflation trends, noting that the State of Georgia had recently increased its public works project threshold from \$100,000 to \$250,000. He emphasized that all existing procurement processes would still be followed, but the threshold levels would be adjusted to expedite smaller purchases while maintaining appropriate oversight.

City Manager Penny explained the monthly procurement card reconciliation process and oversight mechanisms are already in place to prevent misuse. He also noted that while the policy changes would increase his authorization threshold from \$20,000 to \$50,000, controversial or sensitive purchases would still be brought to council regardless of cost.

The revised purchasing policy will be brought back to council for formal consideration at the first council meeting in December.

### **4. Special Service District**

City Manager Charles Penny reviewed the Special Service District ordinance, which is scheduled for its first reading at the evening's regular council session. He reminded the council that this ordinance would provide a mechanism to help property owners in neighborhoods with substandard streets, such as Cobble Stone, to bring their streets up to city standards. The city would front the cost of improving the streets to city standards, with property owners paying back the cost through special assessments on their tax bills over a period of 5-10 years, and if they sell the property, the special assessment is assigned to the new owner until that assessment is complete. Once streets were brought up to standard, the city would assume responsibility for their future maintenance.

### **5. Lank Bank Presentation**

Justin Williams provided an update on the Land Bank Authority, which was established by intergovernmental agreement in 2002 for the Statesboro Point development. The intent was to obtain title and obtain vacant and dilapidated properties, returning those said properties to productive use and to ensure the provision of housing, new industry and jobs for the community. The authority was revitalized in 2022 with new members appointed by the city and county, it had been defunct for a number of years, and in 2024 the intergovernmental agreement was updated to allow the authority to utilize powers established in the 2012 Land Bank Act. He explained the Land Bank's acquisition options, including direct transfers from local governments, tax sales, private donations, purchases, and land banking agreements. The Land Bank considers various factors when acquiring properties, including: take a direct transfer from the local government, acquire properties at tax sales, and receive donations of property from private entities, they can go out and buy individual properties if the funding allows, also go into land banking agreements. The Land Bank considers various factors when acquiring properties, including: City and county needs, properties subject to demolition orders, properties that can be assembled for redevelopment, properties in historically redlined or underinvested communities.

A more detailed discussion was requested at the upcoming council retreat.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:01 pm.

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Jonathan McCollar, Mayor

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Leah Harden, City Clerk