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CITY OF STATESBORO  
WORK SESSION MINUTES  
DECEMBER 20, 2022

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Mayor & Council Work Session

50 East Main Street

4:00 PM

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A Work Session of the Statesboro City Council was held on December 20, 2022 at 4:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers at City Hall, 50 East Main Street. Present was Mayor Jonathan McCollar; Council Members: Paulette Chavers, 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. Absent was Councilmembers Phil Boyum and Venus Mack.

### **1. Statesboro Housing Authority Presentation**

Statesboro Housing Authority Executive Director Monifa Johnson gave an update to Mayor and Council of the things the Housing Authority is doing. She began with a presentation of their new website. She stated this is the first time the Statesboro Housing Authority has a website. The homepage has a space for announcements, there is also an online portal for applications. The application process is closed at this time. We opened applications online for the first time on Monday October 24<sup>th</sup> as well as advertised it in the paper and sent out a digital flyer to our partners here locally. In three days we received over 600 applications on line. We have over 709 families on the waitlist currently. 544 are considered extremely low which means their income is below 30% of the average median income for this area. 58 are considered very low with an average median income of greater than 30% but lower than 50% and 81 are low income with an average median income of greater than 50% but less than 80%, 25 families are elderly, 7 families have a member of their household with disabilities, 40 of the families are white, 661 of the families are black, and 5 families are Hispanic. This information is made available through our annual plan which is on our website and is currently out for review. The plan includes statistics and the goals of the Statesboro Housing Authority. These goals include, meeting the industry standards for public housing, promoting economic and social upward mobility for our residents, and to expand supply if assisted housing in the City of Statesboro, Georgia. The Statesboro Housing Authority now has tax exempt bond guidelines for developers who are interested in building affordable housing in Statesboro. The plan also includes capital improvement funds we receive from congress. For Fiscal Year 2023 we are looking at installation of energy efficient HVAC units, energy efficient water heaters, renovations to kitchens and bathrooms, replacement flooring, and replacing kitchen appliances for 11 of the 148 housing units.

Mayor Pro Tem Shari Barr asked what the website address is and what units the housing Authority manages. Ms. Johnson stated the address is [www.statesboroha.com](http://www.statesboroha.com) and that they manage Groover Homes, Braswell Homes, Cone Homes, and Butler Homes which makes up the 148 units.

Mayor McCollar asked how many families are on the waiting list.

There are 709 families on the waiting list and because the application was accessible on line along with the digital flyer we had to shut down the applications after three days due to so many applicants. In addition with the application on line applications were received from all over the country not just this area.

### **2. Blue Mile Project Update**

Director of Public Works and Engineering, John Washington gave an update on the Blue Mile Streetscape Improvements Project. Phase I of the project is complete and included, drainage updates, sidewalk widening, utility relocation, bus shelter installation, enhanced driveway access, and landscaped pocket parks. Phase I goes up South Main Street beginning at Tillman Road ending just before Fair Road. The estimated cost for Phase I was \$5.4 million but our contract came in at \$4.2 million. During Phase I there was the relocation of main power poles and lines, cable lines, telephone lines, and all water sewer and gas mains. The stormwater infrastructure is complete as well at 98% of the streetscape. Mr. Washington showed before and after pictures of the drainage issues along the corridor. Before construction there

was frequent driveway flooding due to undersized or outdated stormwater infrastructure, so a GDOT standard highway drainage structure was installed and we re-established curb and gutter to improve storm water conveyance. Other issues along the corridor includes business signs on GDOT right-of-way, overhead utility lines causing clusters of cables and poles, sign encroachment to right-of-way, and a lack of measurable greenscape. So business signs were relocated behind the right-of-way allowing for increased landscape, overhead utilities relocated to the west side of the road beneath the road to prevent aerial service lines crossing the road, trees and landscaped islands were installed increasing the streetscape aesthetic, decorative street lighting in partnership with GSU was installed to give Downtown Statesboro the “College Town” presence. A roundabout will be going in at the intersection of Fair Road and South Main Street construction will begin in 2026. Construction for Phase II will go from the intersection of Fair Road on South Main Street up to East Grady Street and Phase III will go from East Grady to up past the Courthouse on just beyond East Main Street with an estimated cost of \$5 million each.

### **3. SafeBuilt Building Code Process Update**

Director of Planning and Development Kathy Field began her report with a timeline stating back in July a contract with SafeBuilt was passed with an initial term of 12 months with an automatic renewal if both parties agree. Steve Walburn started with us August 15, 2022 and provides building, mechanical, plumbing, and electrical inspection services as well as plan review services. SafeBuilt provides the truck and along with the inspections services we have Community Core Solutions software which is online permitting and allows for online payments. To date Mr. Welborn has performed approximately 300 inspections. He served as director of inspections for the City of Hinesville and as a consultant in Bryan County. Mr. Welborn was previously a member of Coast Georgia Inspectors Association, Building Officials Association of Georgia, and the International Code Council. The contract performance observation is that no inspection is late, if a request for an inspection is called in by 4 pm the previous day they are addressed the following day. Mr. Welborn maintains flexibility in terms of completing inspections and because he has worked in this region he has a pre-established relationship with many of the area’s contractors. To date there have been no complaints and we are happy with the services provided as well as the Community Core software that we are getting up and running.

City Manager Charles Penny stated that before this contract is up we will go back out and see if we can hire a person, but at this point it is working fine for us.

### **4. Community Planning Process**

City Manager Charles Penny stated that the Hyundai Community impact began on May 20, 2022 with the announcement of Hyundai coming to our community. Eighteen leaders in our community met for a day and a half on November 9, 2022 and November 10, 2022 to identify challenges, define opportunities and state the aspirations of the future. This group consisted of the City of Statesboro, Bulloch County Board of Education, Georgia Southern, Bulloch County Board of Commissioners, Bulloch County Development Authority, Statesboro Chamber of Commerce, Ogeechee Tech, and local state representatives. The vision statement created is “To be an innovative community for economic, cultural, and sustainable opportunities driven by collaboration, transparency, inclusion and community spirit.” During the community planning workshop a list of priorities. First priority is “we are the case study on how to do it right.” In order to make this happen we need to have trust and cooperation with all of our partners. We need to have a unified vision and alignment on what we are trying to achieve. One of the challenges in our community is housing, housing, housing. We need workforce housing, affordable housing, and mixed income housing. One thing that people think about when they move into a community is how their children will be educated. Another priority listed is to become number one in literacy in the state, because that sends a big message. A couple more priorities is to have a vibrant downtown we need a destination downtown. We also need to identify and establish structure/milestones. This plan is a plan of action and we are not talking about a 10 year plan we are talking about something in the next 12 to 14 months. The other thing is we need to have one brand/one story. Based on the mentioned priorities the four focus areas are infrastructure, education and workforce, vibrant community, and communication. On the path moving forward we need to formalize existing workers group and add other Bulloch County town representatives. We need to identify a leader to spearhead the effort, commit funding support, create a strike force for the 4 focus areas and identify chair persons for each focus area, populate work teams with forward thinkers, identify short term action items per focus area, establish goals and accountability, agree upon cadence of meetings, and develop a consistent communication plan.

Mayor Jonathan McCollar stated that the thing the group had gotten from other communities that have been through this process is that a lead person or consultant is needed to guide us through this process.

Councilmember Paulette Chavers commented she is pleased that one development Hyundai can bring these entities together. We need each other to make this happen for the good of our community.

Mayor McCollar concluded that our community is at a critical juncture and asked that Council reconsider bringing the branding piece back. We have to tell our story that will be an in depth collaborative effort to get an understanding of who we are. Branding is about a development of a story and we have to claim our story.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:08 pm.