



**CITY COUNCIL PLANNING RETREAT
SUMMARY MINUTES
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 19, 2025
9:00 A.M.**

Mayor & City Council

Mayor Anthony S. Ford
Mayor Pro Tem LaKeisha Gantt – Dist. 1
Councilmember Alphonso Thomas – Dist. 2
Councilmember Kyle D. Berry, Sr. – Dist. 3
Councilmember Yolanda Barber – Dist. 4
Councilmember Elton Alexander – Dist. 5

Administration

Vacant, City Manager
Vanessa Holiday, City Clerk
Frank Milazi, City Treasurer/CFO
Ari Essien, City Attorney

Mission: Is to provide visionary leadership and superior municipal services that enhance the quality of life for citizens while creating a welcoming business atmosphere focused on sustainability and expansion of tourism and cultural events.

Staff Present: Decius Aaron, Public Works Director, Ryan Anderson, Community Development Director, Richard Godfrey, Assistant Police Chief, Demeatrius Ivey, Information Technology Director, Rosalynd Rawls, Executive Assistant to Mayor & Council, Genea Stanley, Court Administrator, Gerald Sanders, Economic Development Director, Shana Thornton, Public Information Officer, Frank Trammer, Police Chief, Charisma Webster, Events Manager, and Renee Wheeler, Human Resources Manager

Day 1 Retreat Planning Session – Facilitated by: Mayor Ford (Acting City Manager)

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Ford at 10:16 a.m.

All members were present except Councilmember Berry and Councilmember Thomas.

Roles and Responsibilities - GMA District 3 Representative, Michael McPherson

Mr. McPherson gave an overview of Roles and Responsibilities of the Governing Body and Staff, highlighting four key points:

Key #1, Working together.

Key #2, Build trust among officials and staff.

Key #3, Civility, and meeting decorum.

Key #4, Collaboration.

Mr. McPherson noted the importance of members of the Governing Body addressing issues during the public meeting should always be tasteful, and that reprimands should be done quietly, or behind the scenes; noting the time for officials to ask questions of staff should be during the Work Session Meeting, with the exception of emergency items that may need to be addressed, and the City Council meeting should be a voting meeting only as standard practice, and his recommendation.

Mayor Ford noted the former City Attorney advised the Council that voting is allowed at any meeting where there is a quorum, and the Council conducts Work Session meetings and City Council meetings in the same manner.

Mayor Pro Tem Gantt agreed that when mistakes are made, staff should not be shamed in public.

Councilmember Barber questioned the increased use of the Consent Agenda.

Ms. Holiday noted the Consent Agenda is typically placed on the Agenda for routine or housekeeping items, and that any member of the Council can request that an item on the Consent Agenda be removed and placed under a different section of the Agenda for discussion.

Mr. McPherson noted good governance is knowing how to operate in the public sphere, and elected officials are in place because they won, and that top level officials should be hired because they have the experience to do the job, and because of that, he/she deserves a level of trust, with writing protocols in place that ultimately protects everyone, when adhered to.

Mr. McPherson also stressed the importance of celebrating the successes of the city and staff in public, noting the victories are not celebrated enough.

Code Cares

Councilmember Barber opened a discussion about a program she learned about that is active in the city of South Fulton called Code Cares, noting the program is coordinated by their Code Enforcement staff of twelve.

Councilmember Barber indicated the program could be operated respectively to each Council District or citywide, noting the program would involve volunteers and other organizations would assist seniors, age 62 and older, with home repairs, and lawn services, when they have been cited by the city's Code Enforcement, or there is obvious neglect of the lawn or structure, to bring the property into compliance.

Councilmember Barber noted she spoke with Chief Trammer, who indicated the city of Stockbridge has a Code Enforcement team of three members with the Supervisor position currently vacant and could not take on the program with the current staff.

The Council discussed different departments that may be better suited to manage the program, in coordination with Code Enforcement, Municipal Court, Public Works, and Community Development and discussed allowing offenders to participate as community service, and noted the city of South Fulton has a population of 110,000 and is why they have more Code Enforcement Officers.

Councilmember Alexander noted the city's Police Department was tasked in December of 2024 with bringing a Code Enforcement Plan to the Council in six months to evaluate; and noted this new program may need to be District specific and include policies and procedures to be put in place.

Ms. Stanley noted there is a steady supply of people who could be available to participate as community service.

Ms. Wheeler, noted transportation could pose a problem for some individuals, noting there is no public transportation available.

Mayor Pro Tem Gantt noted the offender could be provided with community service as an option and inquired about the city's Beautification Committee that was approved and consists of volunteers.

Mr. Sanders noted the program is not up and running just yet and is at the beginning stages.

Councilmember Barber stated this program would be separate from Beautification Committee, although those volunteers would assist in maintaining the appearance of the city.

Councilmember Alexander noted a policy could be adopted from the Code Enforcement Plan similar to what Henry County's Connecting Henry program does, or other non-profit organizations, and not have the city be the main source; and referenced the city's court diversion program that would be under court supervision.

Mr. Milazi noted the City should not get in the lane of social services that are already provided by the County and covered in the SDS (Service Delivery Strategy) Agreement.

Mayor Ford asked what the funding source for the program would be.

Councilmember Barber noted she has reached out to Home Depot and Lowes who have programs in place to assist, and the program would include other organizations, churches, students, and others, to get involved with community service projects.

Mayor Pro Tem Gantt noted this to be a great idea and concept, and that the concern is that if you repair one home, others will want to follow suit; noted she is not in favor of not issuing citations; noting the proposed program would be a great activity for volunteers, sororities, fraternities, and students, and would need to determine if there is a real need and create a database of those properties in need.

Mr. Aaron noted in his previous position in Perry, GA the Police Department supervised the community service workers.

Councilmember Alexander noted he believes the Sheriff's Office is assigned to community service workers in Henry County.

Councilmember Barber thanked the Council and staff for their input, will table the discussion for now, and follow up and meet with the Municipal Court, who will compile the data, and she will draft a program with specific eligibility requirements and criteria and would include the age group of 62 years or older and those who are disabled and bring the proposed program back to the Council for approval.

Budget Process Overview and Procedures Frank Milazi, City Treasurer/CFO

Mr. Milazi gave an overview of the Budget Process and Procedures, noting the Operating Budget is annually, and the Capital Budget is 5 years; noted the city is governed by Federal, State and Local Law, noting all entities as the funding source.

Mr. Milazi noted the Budget Officer will present the Budget, and recommends a Fund Balance for the City of Stockbridge to be a minimum of 10% with up to 5% Contingency Funds, to have available in case of the unknowns, or disasters; noted the city's current millage rate is 3.77, and does not recommend using Fund Balance to balance the budget, and instead would ask that if there is not enough funding available, you must reduce expenses.

Mr. Milazi noted the Annual Audit is to verify what the city has done with its finances, noting the city owns the reports, not the auditors, and that Findings by the Auditor can cause the City to be written up, which can affect the city's ability to borrow or bond. Mr. Milazi reviewed the city's Homestead Exemptions, noting the amount will not be known until after the deadline to apply of April 1; noting these exemptions will be a reduction to the city's revenue.

Councilmember Alexander questioned why the information from Henry County's exemptions could not have been used for the city's exemptions, for an easier process for homeowners.

Mr. Milazi noted the information, and the process was put in place prior to his tenure and being brought on board, and the department is working diligently to accommodate residents through the process and will certainly review with the Henry County Tax Commissioner's office; and noted residents of Manderlay subdivision raised questions about being in/out of the city limits.

Mayor Pro Tem Gantt noted the former City Manager was tasked with drafting a letter to all residents of the Manderlay subdivision noting the benefits and reduced taxes as a city of Stockbridge resident.

Mr. Milazi noted it will be customary for his department to provide a Mid-Year Budget Review and will present the FY2025 Mid-Year Budget Review at the July 2025 Work Session meeting, and monthly financial reporting will be submitted to the Council as a matter of routine.

Councilmember Barber stated for the record that she has made a request for the City to conduct a Mid-Year Budget Review for the last five years.

Mr. Milazi reviewed the FY2026 Budget Calendar and Timeline, noting a minimum of (2) Readings and Public Hearings.

Ms. Holiday noted the Publishing and (3) three Public Hearings required for the Millage Rate Adoption held in July of each year.

Mayor Ford asked that the Tax Commissioner be invited to those hearings to be on site to answer questions from the public.

Internal Controls and Fraud Risk Frank Milazi, City Treasurer/CFO

Mr. Milazi gave an overview of the Internal Controls & Fraud Risk, noting the procedures are in place to prevent temptation and opportunities and asked for Council to support the policies and procedures that are being implemented.

Mr. Milazi noted the city's biggest asset is its people, and that you must invest in your people.

Mr. Milazi noted the components of Internal Controls, noting by definition, Internal Control is an integral part of an organization's management that provides reasonable assurance that the city's objectives are being met in the following categories: Effectiveness and Efficiency, Reliability and Financial Reporting, Compliance with Laws and Regulations, and Safeguarding of Assets.

Mr. Milazi reviewed the Components of Internal Control: Control Environment, Risk Assessment, Control Activities, Information & Communication and Monitoring Activities.

Mr. Milazi reviewed the Primary Internal Control Weaknesses: Improper Segregation of Duties, Lack of Management Review, Override of Existing Controls, Poor or No Succession Planning, Lack of Competent Personnel in Oversight Roles, Lack of Independent Checks, Lack of Employee Fraud Education and Lack of Clear Lines of Authority.

Mr. Milazi defined Fraud and Abuse as defined by Generally Accepted Government Auditing Standards: Fraud - A type of illegal act involving the obtaining of something of value through willful misrepresentation; Abuse – involves behavior that is deficient or improper when compared with behavior that a prudent person would consider reasonable and necessary business practice given the facts and circumstances, which can include misuse of authority, position for personal financial interest, does not always involve fraud.

Mr. Milazi referenced the Fraud Triangle: Pressures, Opportunity, and Rationalization, and Common Motives: Incentive, Opportunity and Rationalization; noted the Risk Categories: Operational Risks and Financial Risks, noting Common Risk Areas: Payroll (Ghost Employees), Stealing Time (having someone clock you in/out), or clocking in remotely before your start time, and clocking out after you end work; Accounts Payable, Favoring vendors in return for kickbacks or creating fictitious vendors; Cash Collection, Manipulate Cash Register Transactions (clear receipts, delete transactions, remove overages), Cashiers Working From Open Cash Registers; and Travel, claiming higher than incurred expenses.

Mr. Milazi reviewed Behavioral Red Flags: Living Beyond Means, Financial Difficulties (borrowing from co-workers), Divorce/Family Issues, Including Health, Addition

Problems (Gambling, Drug Use), Close Association with Vendor/Customer, Legal Problems, Bragging About Significant New Purchases, Refusing to Take Vacations.

Mr. Milazi reviewed the Impact of Weak Controls: Higher Insurance Costs, Higher Audit Fees (more work for auditors), Difficulty Recruiting, and Downgrade on Credit (more expensive to borrow).

Mr. Milazi reviewed the Good Internal Control Measures – Proper Segregation of Duties, Transparency in Decision Making, Culture of Integrity and Accountability, Financial and Succession Planning, Limited Access to Sensitive Data and Controls, Insurance for the Unforeseen or Unpredictable Knowledgeable and Responsible Personnel, noting the process for Internal Controls: Review and Assess Regularly, Evaluate and Make Needed Changes, Keep up with Industry Changes and Take Ownership of Your Area of Responsibility.

Mr. Milazi noted the City does not have a Comp Time Policy in place and reviewed the 4-hour rule for Exempt employees, noting the Department Director has the flexibility to adjust schedules, and noted the city uses timeclocks and not timecards; and noted cross-training is the first line of segregation of duties and includes payroll and accounts payable.

Mr. Milazi noted he recommends the Property Tax Specialist position approved by Council be renamed, with no monetary changes, to be an Accountant, and will primarily working with Police Department and Public Works expenditures; noted he will present the Finance SOP (Standard Operations and Procedures) to the Mayor & Council to review and submit comments and input and will also seek input from Human Resources for Risk Management, Information Technology for input and Council Adoption at a later date; and noted the State Gratuity Law is \$50 for individuals, and page 9 in the SOP references gifts.

Motion to adopt the Budget Process Overview and Procedures and Internal Controls Policy and Procedures was made by Councilmember Barber; seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Gantt. The motion passed 3-0.

Police Department Update - Frank Trammer, Police Chief, Richard Godfrey, Asst. Chief
Chief Trammer asked for an update from the Mayor & Council regarding Enterprise Fleet.

Mayor Ford stated the Enterprise Fleet program is not a feasible program and needs to seek a different funding mechanism.

Mayor Pro Tem Gantt noted it would cost more money than the city would save and is therefore not beneficial.

Councilmember Alexander noted it to be a loan program and is not going forward.

Councilmember Alexander asked that the Mayor & Council be made aware of major crime stories or public safety matters in the City before items are made public as a heads up, noting a major story within the city was reported on the news, and the Governing Body had not been notified.

Councilmember Barber agreed that information should be shared equally and across the board with all members of the Governing Body.

Chief Trammer noted that overall, crime has decreased in all areas across the board.

Mayor Pro Tem Gantt noted that the city of Stockbridge is still considered a bedroom community of approximately 19.3 sq. miles, and that this community does not have an influx of violent crimes.

Chief Trammer noted that he would make sure the Mayor & Councilmember receive the police department monthly crime reports.

Councilmember Alexander asked Chief Trammer to respond to the claims that the Henry County Police Department is responding to crimes in the City of Stockbridge.

Chief Trammer responded that Henry County officers are not responding to crimes in the city of Stockbridge, and that there is a Mutual Aid Agreement in place.

Chief Trammer noted there are currently 67 sixty-seven full-time police department staff members with the need for (4) four additional positions; and there are currently (6) six vacancies; and gave an overview of staffing challenges and workforce sustainability, noting the growth and future growth of the city; department turnover and reasons for attrition, noting the impact of staffing challenges; and reviewed suggestions for incentives and retention.

Chief Trammer reviewed the Public Safety portion of the City of Stockbridge Strategic Plan, noting the Police Department is to enhance and improve public Safety and Aesthetics; reviewed the 3-year crime comparison for Calls for Service, Reports, Violent Crimes and Property & Financial Crimes; reviewed the Key Initiatives for the Department: CALEA Certification, IACP One Mind Trust Building Campaign, Comprehensive Policy & Procedure Rewrite, Real-Time Crime Center & Technology Upgrades, RMS System Replacement, Facility Enhancements, Enhanced Crime Scene Capabilities, Federal Task Force Partnerships, New Sub-Precinct at Bridges of Jodeco, Customer Satisfaction Survey Tool and AI Enhanced Public Safety Technology.

Chief Trammer presented status of the Code Enforcement 6-month Plan Update, noting the program is at the halfway point, and the schedules for Code Enforcement Officers have been adjusted to include weekends; and noted Sages Software is being used, and interfaces with SeeClickFix; noted the department has been conducting compliance blitzes, and conducted a ride-along with Councilmember Alexander.

Councilmember Alexander noted there will be a joint meeting with Henry County on April 26th; and suggested a Code Enforcement ride along on the Street Sweeper routes to identify illegally/improperly parked vehicles that impede the street sweeper.

Mr. Aaron noted the street sweeping occurs between 2am and 10am.

Chief Trammer noted the Code Enforcement Supervisor position is currently open, noting an Interim Code Enforcement Officer is in place now, however, if that individual is not selected as the permanent Supervisor, they would need a position to return to.

Chief Trammer noted the Department is working on a Lease Agreement for a Sub-Precinct in the Bridges of Jodeco and will bring the contract to the City Council for approval and determine the number of officers required for the location; and will follow up regarding the details of the insurance requirements.

Chief Trammer reviewed the Fleet Acquisition and Replacement Plan, noting EV's would be assigned to Administrative staff, and the department would be replacing the vehicles with the highest mileage.

Mayor Pro Tem Gantt noted the department is less than three years old, and asked which vehicles were on the list to be replaced.

Chief Trammer noted Detectives were on the list.

Councilmember Alexander noted the Governing Body would review the request and determine the need for replacement vehicles.

Chief Trammer referenced a Job Fair that will take place on April 5th, noting there has been a 50% decline in applications, and an increase in turnover; noted two members are attending the Academy, and that the Chief's Association, of which he is a member, is looking to change the retention from two years to three years for officers, and noted they are currently hiring non-certified and sending those individuals to the Academy, where it will take approximately (8) eight months before they can be put on the street.

Chief Trammer noted overtime has doubled, primarily due to the security assigned to the Amphitheater Events, noting that because the City uses an outside contract, those events are considered third party events and not city events.

Mayor Pro Tem Gantt stated the Amphitheater is owned by the City of Stockbridge, and the Consultant manages the concerts, and asked if the officers who attend the City Council members are paid overtime.

Chief Trammer confirmed; and referenced comparison of salaries of DeKalb County, and the recent press regarding an increase in salary of \$74,000.00.

Mr. Milazi stated there is a substantial difference between DeKalb County and the City of Stockbridge, primarily the size of the budget, the population and overall size of the county.

Ms. Wheeler noted all benefits (total compensation) greatly increases the salaries.

Mayor Pro Tem Gantt asked for the radius of take-home vehicles, noting the City needs to re-evaluate the program, and noted the citywide fuel analysis report has not been received by the Council.

Chief Trammer noted the radius is thirty-five miles.

Mayor Ford noted the RedSpeed legislation is currently being modified.

Chief Trammer noted the recommended modifications are to reduce the hours when the cameras are on, and that flashing lights be installed, noting currently, the lights are not a requirement.

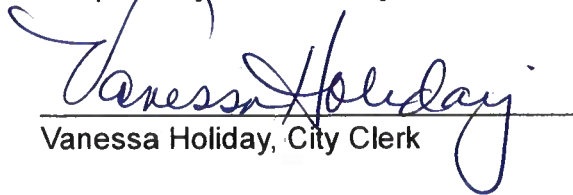
Chief Trammer reviewed the Police Foundation Funding, noting as of March 4, 2025, the balance is \$71,339.50, and noted that he has been advised the department cannot spend any of the Foundation funds until it has been legally setup; noting Pulte Homes and Waffle House have made contributions.

Ms. Holiday noted she has requested copies of the Foundation documents for the city's records.

Chief Trammer noted the major goals of the department include a Comprehensive Salary Study, and Short-Term Solutions for retention and recruitment.

Motion to adjourn the meeting at 4:15 p.m. was made by Councilmember Alexander; seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Gantt. The motion passed unanimously 3-0.

Respectfully submitted by:


Vanessa Holiday, City Clerk


Anthony S. Ford, Mayor