Stockbridge

Where Community Connects

CITY OF STOCKBRIDGE
CITY COUNCIL BUDGET RETREAT
Summary Minutes
Friday, September 26, 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

Shawn Edmondson, City Manager
Frank Milazi, City Treasurer/CFO
Vanessa Holiday, City Clerk
Quinton Washington, City Attorney
Megan McCullough, Staff 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, Lisa Fareed, Downtown Manager, Najaa Hammonds, Human Resources Generalist, Demeatrius Ivey, Information Technology Director, Tranita Jones, Ex. Assistant to City Manager, Rosalynd Rawls, Executive Assistant to Mayor & Council, Gerald Sanders, Economic Development Director, Genea Stanley, Court Administrator, Shana Thornton, Public Information Officer, Frank Trammer, Police Chief, Charisma Webster, Conference Center & Events Manager

Day 3 Budget Retreat

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Ford at 9:13 a.m.

Invocation by Mayor Ford

Pledge of Allegiance recited by all members in attendance.

Roll Call: All members were present except Mayor Pro Tem Gantt and Councilmember Thomas.

Motion to adopt the Agenda as amended was made by Councilmember Berry; seconded by Councilmember Alexander. The motion passed unanimously 3-0.

Mayor Ford noted this is a public meeting, however there are no public comments.

Mr. Milazi gave an overview of the department budgets for Events, the Conference Center and the Amphitheater noting the Conference Center is being managed by Events, however, there are no salaries or benefits associated, and will be moved to make the correction; noted Events is an Enterprise Fund, and the Conference Center does not generate enough revenue to self-sustain, noting revenues have not exceeded $250,000; and noted the City Manager will present ideas to make the Conference Center sustainable.

Department Budget Presentations

Merle Manders Conference Center Department Budget – Presented by Charisma Webster, Events & Conference Center Manager

Ms. Webster reviewed the changes being requested for the Merle Manders Conference Center noting an increase of $10,000 for overtime salaries to support the expansion of the number of events/rentals; made a request to add training, travel, dues and education; requested an increase of $5,000 for in-house printing; and an increase of $3,500 for uniforms, noting events are taking place year-round.

Councilmember Alexander noted the Council is aware of the Merle Manders Conference Center not being self-sufficient and is more of an asset where the community is able to enjoy the facility; however, as has previously been stated, the use of the facilities for initiatives takes away from the potential profit, and there are costs involved.

Councilmember Alexander noted his use of the facility once per year for an initiative, and stated the facility needs to be available for profitable events, and asked that the members of Council use the facility once per year as well, noting the so-called partnerships from various entities is an ask so that there is no rental paid for the facility and the city is absorbing the cost to pay staff labor, breakdown, setup, clean up for these free events, and needs to be limited so that the facility is available for rental.

Councilmember Alexander requested a copy of the Planned Maintenance Schedule or the facility, noting there should be a routine maintenance schedule for cleaning of the facility, pressure washing, changing filters, bulbs and other maintenance, noting that when there are no events scheduled, there should always be a schedule of work from 8am to 5pm, and asked what the workers do when there is no scheduled event.

Ms. Webster responded there is maintenance cleaning of the facility and includes the kitchen and restrooms.

Councilmember Alexander noted the facility needs to have a detailed maintenance schedule, and there needs to be more structure for maintenance; and noted funds were approved in SPLOST to make renovations and improvements to the conference center.

Mayor Ford clarified payments are made from the Initiative fund for the Merle Manders Conference Center when he utilizes the facility.

Ms. Webster noted the partnership events pay a discounted rate.

Mr. Milazi stated the city's General Fund is funding the Conference Center because it is not self-sustaining and does not need to be classified as an enterprise because by definition, it should be self-sustaining.

Mr. Edmondson asked what the intention for the Merle Manders Conference Center was, noting the whole idea of an enterprise fund is to generate revenue, and if the intent is to remain as an enterprise where the facility is rented out with a fee schedule to cover costs, and include a package deal, then it needs to be marketed and promoted as an Events Center by being more intentional, and noted the only two options are to make it self-sustaining or fund it.

Ms. Holiday noted the Merle Manders Conference Center was built as the premier location to host weddings in this area, Christmas parties, anniversary celebrations, baby showers, conferences, state elections training, and GMA training session, and over the years, the number of city events increased, and the focus shifted to events and the events that were once hosted at the MMCC chose other locations.

Councilmember Alexander noted that number of events increased, however, the costs associated with the events continue to escalate with expenses above $750,000, as indicated by Mr. Milazi, the revenue has not exceeded $250,000, and the gap continues to grow; noted the city events and the partnership events taking place at the facility are contributing to the costs, but not the revenue; and noted, the facility was once in the top tier, and is now, it is in the bottom tier because the building has aged, and has not been properly maintained at that level with significant investment, and has not kept up with current today's designs, and as a result, the number of weddings have decreased, along with other paid events; and stated the numbers don't lie, understanding that facility was not meant to be profitable, however, the gap needs to be closed and cannot continue going in the current direction, and would like to see a solid plan with less partnerships and discounts with a pricing fee to have to facility be closer to being self-sustaining; and raised the question regarding the request from the Events Manager for overtime pay for employees who are being asked to work the free and partnership events, and asked whether or not the request is for more staff instead of paying the overtime.

Ms. Webster's response was yes.

Councilmember requested a self-sustaining plan to close the gap for the Conference Center to be submitted to the governing body.

Mr. Edmondson confirmed, noting there is going to need to be some investments into the facility, along with marketing, noting the metro area is inundated with events facilities; noted the facility has great potential, and that this is an opportunity, with the appropriate investing and be intentional about making this facility top tier again, noting the facility is in a beautiful area with nice landscaping, and take advantage of what we have, noting the building design and space are good, and noted that people will spend the money if you have a nice facility with great ambience, and offering them a great experience, they will pay, and noted this conference is a great has the opportunity for that, and stated he will work with staff on preparing a self-sustaining plan.

Councilmember Alexander referenced the parking lot of the Conference Center, noting there are potholes and needs to be repaved, and asked if there are repaving funds in the current budget.

Mr. Edmondson noted he met with Mr. Aaron and talked about resurfacing projects within his budget, noting maintenance is big with him; referenced the pressure washing of city hall that had not happened in years, and noted he is being intentional about the city's aesthetics and maintenance and making improvements, noting the city needs to get a return on its investments.

Councilmember Alexander asked about using the WI-FI as a guest.

Ms. Webster noted there are different wi-fi options, such as Elections, Guest, Employees and Contractors, and works consistently.

Councilmember Alexander suggested making signage available to see there is Free Wi-Fi for guests and asked that the EV Charging stations be added to the Conference Center and asked if the intent is to bring on additional employees or add overtime.

Mr. Edmondson's response was yes that is the intent.

Events Department Budget – Presented by Charisma Webster, Events & Conference Center Manager

Ms. Webster noted there are five requests for changes in the Events Department Budget, Hospitality from $1,500 to $5,000 to cover expenses for water and water stations; a request for the Breast Cancer Event to add an additional $7,500 to cover expenses; and to decrease the Juneteenth Event from $140,000 to $120,000 and increase the July 4th Event from $140,000 to $160,000 to cover additional expenses.

Councilmember Alexander objected to the reduction of funding for Juneteenth, stating the events should be equal with a fireworks celebration for Juneteenth, highlighting the celebration, noting the events is one of the best events in the country; and noted sponsorship should be sought for these events to help foot the bill, noting the number of people who attend, sponsors should be willing to write a check; and noted when Crown Pizza, Frozen Smoke are overflowing with customers, and Publix is doing well, that is an economic impact to the local economy of the city.

Ms. Webster noted the July 4th event is $150,000 and $70,000 - $80,000 for production at the Amphitheater.

Councilmember Alexander recommended cutting back on other events and focus on the Big 3 events, Juneteenth, July 4th, and BridgeFest; noting Usher's mother said Stockbridge has a gem that nobody knows about, and noted the concert where Usher came in as a surprise was featured in major magazines, and the Amphitheater received free advertising, and commended staff on their work.

Councilmember Barber stated that she reviewed the budgets for the Merle Manders Conference Center, the Amphitheater and City Events and noted the advertising budget combined was $245,000.00; noted all of the city events are free events, and each year the budget has increased for free events, and looks as this as wasteful spending given the city's current financial situation, where the city's CFO and Financial Advisor recommended a 2-3 year plan for the city to build up its reserve and cut expenses, the Mayor & Council approved and supported the plan during the Retreat in March; noted she has never supported increases to the budget for free city events, and does not support the proposed increase, noting she is aware that this is a wish list, and that she supports Juneteenth and July 4th activities as well, however, given the city's current finances, the amounts need to be reduced.

Mayor Pro Tem Gantt joined the meeting at 9:58 a.m.

Councilmember Barber noted the Governing Body has not adopted a Rental Policy for the Amphitheater, and asked what criteria was being used to approve Amphitheater rentals.

Ms. Webster noted city residents receive a discount of 20% to rent the Merle Manders Conference Center Ballroom and Lower-Level meeting room spaces.

Councilmember Barber noted she was referencing rental of the Amphitheater and will pick up that discussion when the Amphitheater budget is presented; and reiterated that the city should be finding ways to eliminate waste and finding ways to save money, and reducing expenses, and cannot support the increases in the budget for free events.

Councilmember Alexander asked Mr. Edmondson to order an Economic Development Study to show the impact of bringing people into the downtown area, and how the economic trickle-down effect, and the return on investment.

Ms. Webster asked for approval of the items requested in the proposed budget.

Mayor Ford noted he is fine with the proposal.

Mr. Edmondson noted he needs clarity on moving forward, so that staff has a clear direction on how to proceed, with the options being to either stay the course, reduce, or increase.

Councilmember Alexander referenced the non-revenue partnerships that are taking place at the Conference Center, which cost the city, and don't generate revenue for the city; and noted he supports the Big 3 City Events, Juneteenth, July 4th and BridgeFest, and does not want to slight the Juneteenth celebration by reducing its budget, noting it should be on equal footing financially have fireworks, the same as July 4th ; and referenced the recent free Kickback event that took place in the downtown and brought thousands of people to the city, and generated revenue for the businesses, and creates the economic impact for the city.

Councilmember Barber stated that one of the things that she thinks about daily is, are we doing enough to make sure that our city is protected in an emergency or a catastrophic event, and noted the city has already mismanaged $32.9 million dollars; stated the City Council pledged in support of the recommendation from Mr. Milazi, the city's Chief Financial Officer, and Mr. Ed Wall, the city's Financial Advisory, where the city would adhere to a 2-3 year plan, as pledged in March of this year at the Retreat, to save money and reduce expenses; noted it is not that she does not support city events, she does, however, given the fact that the city has mismanaged $32.9 million dollars last year, she does not support wasteful spending, and noted there are other priorities of the city that need to be looked at, noting it is her desire that all of the businesses throughout the city to be successful, and that her first priority is to the residents, the city and the staff, to make sure that we are operating in the best financial situation moving forward, as we cannot continue to operate like this; and suggested the proposed City budget of $681,000 for FY2026 be cut in half, and you will have her support, and staff can determine how much is spent on each of the events, such as BridgeFest, Juneteenth and July 4th, but ridiculous, and it is wasteful spending.

Mayor Pro Tem Gantt stated that she understands this to be a wish list, and that if it works within the budget, she is fine with it; and stated she is not going to politicize the message, and stated the city did not mismanage $32.9 million dollars, noting the funds were spent on city projects, and; noted the city needs to be on one accord and presenting the city in a positive light, and that the expenditures were for road projects; noted the city events are about the community, and to be able to congregate; noting taxpayers want to see and enjoy; noted the city is growing; and stated yes, there may need to be some tweaking in some areas for some of the events; and stated the City of Stockbridge was once known throughout GMA as an example of what not to do, and now the City is sending a positive message of what others want to emulate; and offered support of the city events, and suggested cutting back on the events that may not be well attended, and noted it is about the city and working together.

Councilmember Berry noted the events are well attended, and that the amount of the wish list is marginal going from $670,000 in 2025 to $681,000 for 2026; and noted the Breast Cancer Event was particularly impactful to see the ladies come out and share their journeys, and referenced his mother, a breast cancer survivor; and noted the ask for $5,000 for water and the remainder for the Brease Cancer event is a simple ask; noted he supports the events, and agreed with making the tweaks where they need to be made.

Mr. Edmondson noted these are not staff events, but community events and affect the quality of life.

Councilmember Barber stated she does not support wasteful spending; and stated the term mismanagement of $32.9 million dollars came from the city's Chief Financial Officer, and echoes his sentiments; and stated that no matter what, the $32.9 million dollars was unbudgeted, and asked whose projects and what projects was the $32.9 million dollars used for, noting she has still not been made aware of the projects that used those funds; noted in 2023, the city adopted a millage rate and imposed a city tax on the residents and challenged anyone to tell the residents that tax is being used to fund free city events, noting the city events department was not the only department to go over budget, noting there were other departments as well, however, these are free city events; and other departments; and suggested the free city events at a minimum be cut back to the 2023 level before the millage tax was adopted, and to use the millage rate as it was intended, to fund the police department; and stated that to increase the city's Events budget would be irresponsible, and asked what the intent of the approval of the millage rate, because the Police Department is underbudget, and does not have what they need; stated she wants her stance and position to be well documented that this is not how she manages the tax dollars that have been entrusted to her, noting all there is to show for the for the $32.9 million dollars in her opinion are pictures of a good time, noting she has intentionally avoided the free events, noting the city events budget as escalated from $284,500 two years ago to $$681,000, where it has more than doubled, considering the city's current financial situation, and the failure to focus on the city's other priorities, noting residents in Councilman Thomas' District 2 and her District 4 still have no curb and gutters and yards flood, where this problem is not an issue the other council districts, and yet the city continues to fund free events, and the concerts are affecting the people that she was duly elected to represent, and in a negative way, and the Council has not considered a line item in this proposed budget to mitigate the issues for the residents around the Amphitheater, and the members of Council continue to party without any resolution or approval to improve the quality of life for those residents, noting she was not a member of the Council that approved the construction of the Amphitheater in the middle of a neighborhood; noted the concert lineup has no diversity and takes issue with the frivolous events where the city tax should be for public safety, not city events; and stated $681,000 for free events is frivolous, irresponsible, and not being fiscally responsible at all.

Mayor Ford noted he believes there is a general consensus to move forward, keeping in mind the recommendations.

Mr. Edmondson stated it is very important that the city tell the full story and put things into perspective, because if you don't do that, you are sending the wrong message; noted the suggestion is to change the title from city events to Community Events, because that's what it is about; noted community events are an investment, noting is free, and two things can be true at the same time; noted bringing citizens into the city brings revenue, but the events cost; stated he would get the data to see the true economic impact, and will operate based on facts, not feelings and determine whether it is a service or disservice, and change the perception by telling the truth, and we need to debunk the bad perceptions, and noted words have consequences, what we say, do, and don't do have consequences; noted we have to be honest with ourselves, and asked everyone to look outside of here and honestly find out what is the perception of Stockbridge and see what it is we are known for, and what would we like to be known for.

Amphitheater Department Budget – Presented by Frank Milazi, City Treasurer/CFO

Mr. Milazi reviewed the FY2025 year to date Amphitheater Revenues as of August 31, 2025 noting Ticket Sales were budgeted at $2,000,000 million dollars and so far, has received $1,000,000 million dollars year to date; noted Concessions Sales were budgeted at $45,000 and to date nothing has been recorded; noted Rents and Royalties were budgeted at $400,000 and received $42,875 year to date; and Sponsorships were budged at $155,000 and $304,000 has been received year to date, noting the majority of the sponsorship funds have come from VyStar.

Councilmember Alexander asked about the sponsorship funding from AFLAC, Georgia Power, and Piedmont Henry.

Mr. Milazi noted he was aware of the sponsorship payment(s) from VyStar and would provide a year-to-date breakdown of sponsorships for FY2025 by the end of the day; and noted Mr. Edmondson will speak about the Amphitheater for FY2026 and how to fund it.

Mr. Milazi reviewed the following FY2025 year to date Amphitheater expenses as August 31, 2025, noting there are expenses that may not have posted; noted Consultant Fees were budgeted at $180,000 and $123,000 has been paid; Entertainment/Talent Fee was budgeted at $1.2 million dollars and $2,119,582 has been paid; Production was budgeted at $405,000 and $560,748 has been paid; Advertising was budgeted at $140,000 and $387,987 has been paid; Building Improvements was budgeted at $5,000 and $222,467 was paid; and Furniture & Fixtures, 0.00 was budgeted and $53,850 was paid.

Councilmember Alexander asked if the Budget Amendment made earlier this year includes the overages referenced.

Mr. Milazi noted $1 million dollars has been included, however, the additional overages of $2.6 million dollars will be included in the next budget amendment, noting the Amphitheater has borrowed money, and needs to reimburse the General Fund; and noted all expenses associated with the Amphitheater including time, labor, and material expenses should be charged to the Amphitheater as required for Enterprise accounts.

Mr. Edmondson noted the city needs to determine if the Amphitheater will be an Enterprise Fund or if the city will front the money; noted the goal for 2026 is to fund it and create the revenue using the Enterprise Model, where the Conference Center & Events Director will be Ms. Webster, and the city will hire a Venue Management Company who will be responsible for Talent Acquisition, noting 40% of the Ticket Sales should cover the expenses, understanding the Amphitheater was underbudgeted, and the new model will include events 365 with graduations, and plays, in addition to the concerts.

Mr. Milazi stated the revenue will dictate the budget, which must equal expenses.

Mr. Edmondson suggested an in-house combination of Director and Venue Management Company, or an outside third-party company.

Mayor Ford spoke in favor of the combination model, noting it will be a learning curve and will have to tweak the process, and to continue with the security, ushers, and will-call staff.

Mayor Pro Tem Gantt noted she reviewed the Amphitheater budget and stated there needs to be a set amount for the concert series, noting the budget did not increase over the years, and was set too low; noted there needs to be a force majeure clause; noted the entertainment lawyer was a good addition; asked how many acts are proposed for 2026; noted if the Council agrees on in-house, there needs to be a POS system as approved by the Council; asked how much will each show cost on average; and noted the city of Stockbridge was featured in a Channel 11 story, noting the city is growing.

Mr. Edmondson noted regarding the concert series, he will need Council input, noting the concert series would be from May to October and operate as a true enterprise.

Councilmember Berry noted he agrees with the 365 model of having events other than concerts, and that there needs to be benchmarks and baseline testing.

Councilmember Barber noted she has been asking every year when the solicitation was going to be posted and advertise for a 3rd party venue management company and allow the company to manage the Amphitheater 100%; noted the in-house model will continue to place a strain on the city, specifically the city's finance department, noting the Amphitheater and Events are consuming the city's daily activities, and there needs to be more attention on the daily operations of the entire city, not just the Amphitheater and Events; noted the Amphitheater recordkeeping; and referenced comments made by Mr. Milazi on Wednesday where it was stated that the Finance Department is short-staffed, and managing Amphitheater payments is consuming the department, and the department has to manage the finances of the entire city, not just the Amphitheater and Events, and asked when the venue management company would be advertised.

Mr. Edmondson stated it has been advertised.

Councilmember Barber stated members of Council want the Amphitheater to remain in-house so they can continue to control the operations; requested Amphitheater Rental Policy that has been used to rent the Amphitheater for concerts; requested all Rental contracts; referenced the 2-3 year plan to help save money and increase the fund balance and instead, the city just continues to spend money; noted she understands the economic impact, when it's done right; noted millions of dollars have gone out the window, and is concerned if the city is faced with an emergency, or catastrophic event; and asked why not let an outside vendor be responsible for all of the expenses of the Amphitheater and pay a negotiated fee, noting the Amphitheater is not a private venue, it was paid for with public taxpayer dollars; noted all contracts need to be approved; and that the Trade Secret Affidavit was not approved by the Governing Body, and that the Amphitheater is not a night club, it is a taxpayer venue; requested the Budget Amendments for 2025.

Mr. Milazi stated he would provide following the end of the Retreat; and noted it should have been brought to the Council for approval, noted he had corresponded revenues and expenses; and that 2024 going forward – funds were not budgeted for 2025.

Councilmember Barber noted she will not approve the Amphitheater budget, noting the expenses and concessions for 2025 have been underreported, and this information has been brought to the Council's attention; noted the city should not pay 100% for concerts for acts of nature; noted conversations have been had where Attorney Washington has been asked to address the language in the contracts and the affidavit to protect the city; noted her request for profit and loss statements still have not been presented; and noted it is problematic that she has to request documents and information that should be coming to the governing body without having to ask for the records.

Councilmember Barber requested copies of all of the artist contracts for 2025, and stated contracts should be reviewed by the Governing Body and follow the same process that binds the city to a financial obligation; stated it was never a good idea to build an Amphitheater of this size in the middle of a neighborhood without any regard for the residents who live there, and not have the problem mitigated four years later; stated the city should take the position of controlling its downtown area, as she has suggested, and as was recommended by the City Manager of Sandy Springs; and asked why patrons are being charged to park on the 3 acres across from city hall, and where are those funds being collected in the budget; noted that for all these reasons and so many more, the Amphitheater should be turned over to a true management company to operate 100% without any interference; noted the city needs to adhere to the 2-3 year plan to rebuild the city's fund balance, noting that we may not be in a financial crisis, but we are doing a whole lot of borrowing from Peter to pay Paul between our SPLOST, TSPLOST and General Fund, and we need to be more fiscally responsible; and noted the mismanagement of $32.9 million and the negative publicity includes her too, however, she knows it starts with being fiscally responsible about the way that we govern; noted there should be no Amphitheater discussions in Executive Session, and should be in open session to be transparent, and does not support the in-house model, noting financial statements for 2025 are incomplete; requested copies of all 2025 Amphitheater rentals and what were the rental amounts and criteria used, and asked who approved those contracts; and reiterated her support of the 2-3 year pledge to get the city back on good financial footing that was made at the Retreat in March 2025, and stated the city should get rid of the Trade Secret Affidavit that was not approved by the Governing Body; do a better job of record keeping; and noted for 2026, the Amphitheater should be 100% run by a professional and experienced 3rd party venue management company as was proposed by the former City Manager during a Special Called meeting on April 30, 2023 in the Green Room.

Mr. Edmondson stated that he knows there will be issues and challenges, and that is why we are having the conversation and to be able to provide options; noted none of the new staff has mismanaged funds, and is forward-thinking, and offering solutions, and will respond with action.

Councilmember Alexander noted that you are wasting your time if your don't have the votes of three members of Council, and agrees with the 365 model and operations of the Amphitheater; and suggested adding a M L King concert in January, a Daddy King 5k Dash in December, New Year's Eve event, Thanksgiving Holiday event; not just concerts, but also graduations, wrestling events, trade shows, comedy shows, and bring the Amphitheater to its true form of being an Enterprise, noting the city cannot continue to operate this venue only six months out of the year and expect to generate sufficient revenue, and noted when the Amphitheater was built, there was nothing around it, and no activity in the downtown, and that has changed significantly with restaurants and businesses who are contributing to the economic impact of the city; and the ability to draw in COSTCO, and Sprouts in the Jodeco development and townhomes with $2,000+ rents, where other officials envy the growth and development that is happening in Stockbridge, including the ROSCI Orthopedic and Spine Institute and Surgery Center, that was sold to them for $2.8 million dollars through the Henry County Development Authority, and now has a $40 million dollar thriving business, and who recently celebrated their ten year anniversary, where he and Mayor Ford attended their celebration; noting these are all contributors factors that support the economic impact for the city; noted he misses Councilman Thomas as he was a supporter of the building of the Amphitheater, and understood the direction in which the Council was going, and the vision for the downtown area, and being from this community, he witnessed the political shift to now where everyone is welcome, and things are moving forward.

Community Development Department Budget – Presented by Ryan Anderson, Community Development Director

Mr. Anderson gave a brief introduction of the department, noting the Community Development Department serves the community and provides technical assistance to all city departments, and is an extremely motivated and highly energetic team; noted that while not formally an enterprise fund, the goal is to generate enough revenue to pay for our operations and not be a strain on the general fund; and noted this may not always be the case as there could be a major economic downturn which would impact our ability to generate revenue.

Mr. Anderson gave a briefing on House Bill 461 which mandates that certain permitting and OTC fees collected are used community development operations only and can't be co-mingled with the general funds, noting, if the department does not utilize all the revenue we collect back, the department could possibly be forced to issue refunds and/or lower our fees.

Mr. Anderson presented the following FY2026 budget recommendations:

1. Department Re-Organization, noting the department moved away from a consultant firm and moved all operations in-house, and this resulted in an increase in revenue, but it placed additional duties, functions, and responsibilities on staff, with most of the staff performing tasks that are outside of their job descriptions and have been doing so for over a year; noted the department must be re-organized to reflect that, and referenced other local community development departments in the region who are trying to purge staff with job offers that are paying higher salaries; noted the proposed re-organization was presented last year, but was asked to delay the request until FY2026; and noted there is a request for proposed fee increases, nothing the fees have not increased since 2019 and has not kept up with inflation, and noted that with the increase, the city of Stockbridge will still have the lowest fees in the area.

2. Long Range Planning- Department needs to move more towards long range planning to match the unprecedented growth we are experiencing, noting all the studies on file are outdated, and is requesting $200,000 to conduct 3-4 planning/area studies in the city targeting some of the city's most distressed areas or areas in need of re-invigoration noting two potential study areas; Hwy 138 and Highway 42 corridor, East Atlanta Road and Old Conyers Rd area, an Overall Annexation Strategy to map out the City's future growth pattern, Tye Street, Rock Quarry Rd, and North Henry Boulevard and to plan for the funding of a professional Comprehensive Plan for the city in 2027.

3. Drone Inspections – Proposing to purchase two drones to assist with our inspections. This will help in the area of stormwater, roof, and erosion control inspections efforts.

4. Purchase two trucks for our Building/Permitting/Inspections. Currently, we do not have any vehicles assigned for inspections.

5. Requesting a new position, Business License Inspector. This position will randomly check business license, assist in revenue collection, ensure all businesses including home based business have the proper licensing to operate in the City, and will free up Code Enforcement.

6. Upgrade our GIS Department to include 3D GIS mapping and latest software.

7. Staff training - we are fully staffed and that warrants an increase in staff training, certification costs and uniforms.

Councilmember Berry exited the meeting at 12:06 p.m.

Councilmember Alexander recommended staff complete a survey on the fees to make sure the new fees are in line with the demand, and commended staff.

Mr. Edmondson noted there will be an implementation of software that will track AirBNB's to make sure they are paying the appropriate fees.

Mr. Ryan noted that will be a part of the role of the proposed Business License Inspector position.

Councilmember Alexander recommended the city update the Wage & Salary Analysis, noting it has not been updated in a few years.

Councilmember Barber noted the police department included a drone program during their presentation, and asked if it would be feasible to consolidate the programs instead of duplicating the programs; and requested a Master Development Plan for City Council District 4.

Mr. Anderson noted he has requested funding for an Area Study in the FY2026 budget that will cover 8-10 areas of the city based on demographics and socioeconomics.

Councilmember Barber noted she has requested an area study for District 4 in 2024 and again at the Retreat in March of 2025, and requested a detailed report of the funds for professional services, and stated she has been disrespected, and that discussions are taking place behind the scenes, and she chooses to have discussions in public and on the record.

Mayor Pro Tem Gantt called for a point of order.

Councilmember Barber asked that the record reflect that Mayor Pro Tem Gantt has not been present in the room for the last 30 – 45 minutes.

Mayor Pro Tem Gantt stated it takes three councilmembers to approve any item, and that this is a discussion for Executive Session, and it a liability when it concerns staff.

Councilmember Barber restated that Mayor Pro Tem Gantt has not been in the room for the last 30 – 45 minutes; and noted the area study that she has been requesting in well within the City Manager's spending authority.

Mr. Edmondson stated it was his understanding that the item was previously voted down by the City Council, and can be placed in the FY2026 budget, noting a request for a moratorium requires the vote of the City Council.

Councilmember Barber requested the dates when the LCI Option B was approved by the City Council; and requested a copy of the Meeting Minutes, noting the current Council did not approve the LCI Option B, and stated that per the city's Legal Counsel, specifically, Attorney Washington, no previous City Council can bind the current City Council; and referenced the sidewalk project along North Henry has not been approved by the City Council; and asked how the Task Order was approved.

Mr. Aaron noted the Task Order was approved for the sidewalk design under the former City Manager's spending authority.

Councilmember Alexander stated three votes of the Council are required to place an item on the Agenda; or the Mayor can place items on the Agenda.

Mr. Anderson noted he provides a monthly report to each member of the Council with matters in each of their respective districts.

Councilmember Alexander noted that he calls Mayor Pro Tem Gantt and Councilmember Berry to discuss items where he is seeking approval.

Mayor Ford reminded everyone that the meeting would resume in the upper level of the Conference Center at 1:00 p.m.

Mayor Pro Tem Gantt exited the meeting at 12:15 p.m.

When the meeting resumed at 1:15 p.m. there was not a quorum of the City Council.

Respectfully submitted by:

______________________________	______________________________
Vanessa Holiday, City Clerk	Anthony S. Ford, Mayor