

Summary/Final Minutes – Work Session – March 31, 2016

Savannah City Government SUMMARY/FINAL MINUTES COUNCIL WORK SESSION & CITY MANAGER'S BRIEFING March 31, 2016 – 10:00 a.m.

PRESENT: Mayor Eddie W. DeLoach, Presiding
Mayor Pro-Tem Carol Bell
Alderman Julian Miller, Chairman of Council
Alderman Brian Foster, Vice-Chairman of Council
Van Johnson, II, Tony Thomas (arrived at 10:20 a.m.)
John Hall, Estella Shabazz (arrived at 10:15 a.m.), Bill Durrence

City Manager Stephanie Cutter
City Attorney W. Brooks Stillwell
Assistant City Attorney William Shearouse

Mayor DeLoach called the meeting to order.

Alcohol Ordinance Revisions

Jennifer Herman, Assistant City Attorney presented a PowerPoint Presentation (**Presentation on file in the Office of the Clerk of Council**)

The following questions and comments were made during and after the presentation

Alderman Thomas expressed his concerns about the enforcement issues asking why so many limitations are being put on the bars and venues. He stated the decision should be left up to the business owner.

Attorney Herman stated staff is working on reconstituting the ABC Team.

Alderman Johnson stated he feels this is a law enforcement nightmare. He stated it starts with a vision but nothing happens.

Alderman Hall stated this isn't the perfect document and probably will never be perfect but it is something and he feels since we have it Council should use it and make changes as they see fit.

City Manager Cutter reminded Council that this is a framework for Council to begin thinking about. She stated Mayor DeLoach is planning a retreat at which time Council needs to have discussions on how they want alcohol to look in Savannah.

Mayor DeLoach stated a decision needs to be made as this has been going on for, four years. Council needs to make a decision and at least have a framework to work with, it needs to be voted on and Council needs to move forward and act when necessary.

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Attorney Herman stated SCMPD has been present at every meeting held to discuss the ordinance.

Alderman Durrence stated there are a variety of companies that offer the Bar Card training online and in his opinion because there isn't a way to ensure the person testing is the actual person he suggested the training can be online but the testing process should be live.

Alderman Thomas expressed his concerns about individuals during the St. Patrick's Day festivities that were carrying backpacks walking down the streets refilling their cups.

Alderman Thomas asked who will address particular uses in the tour service ordinance? Attorney Herman stated if there is a use that has been found to be problematic the tour service ordinance sets forth the guidelines for the operation of those vehicles. As opposed to placing that in the alcohol ordinance as a blanket proposal staff has chosen to deal with each type of tour service vehicle as there may be some that are not problematic. Alderman Thomas asked who is going to address it if the tour service company doesn't approve of something that is being imposed on them? Attorney Herman stated any licensing action would have an appeal process to Council. Chief Lumpkin stated the Mayor and Council can appoint someone to hear the initial appeal and then Council as a whole can make a decision.

Alderman Shabazz asked if she understands correctly that Mayor DeLoach is suggesting eliminating the Alcohol Beverage License section of the agenda and having an administrative council to make a decision as to who does or does not get an alcohol license? Mayor DeLoach replied yes. Alderman Shabazz stated she has an issue with that as it relates to the uniqueness of where she serves as there may be serious issues in the neighborhood that the administrative person isn't aware of. She continued stating the individual could potentially make a decision that isn't conducive to the neighborhood and she is objective to it for her area. Mayor DeLoach stated Alderman Shabazz makes a justifiable position and asked staff to look at ways to address the issue. Attorney Stillwell stated the license would not be issued until after the appeal process is complete.

Alderman Johnson asked how the issuance of a license can be handled as an administrative process if there is a public hearing requirement? Attorney Herman stated it would be an open hearing the advertisement requirement would still occur it would just be handled in a different room with the right of an appeal. Alderman Johnson asked will it be televised? Attorney Herman replied that can be considered. Alderman Johnson stated alcohol is one of the most important things Council does and he isn't willing to give up his right to look applicants in the eye to ensure they understand the severity of the process. Alderman Thomas stated the administrative person would not be held accountable in the event something should go wrong Council would and that is something that should be considered as well.

Mayor DeLoach suggested that Council move forward with the provisions that staff has recommended but pull the administrative hearing portion and keep it as it is currently.

City Manager Cutter stated staff spent a great deal of time on this and it is the intent to encourage Council to move forward with adoption realizing that there may be other changes in the future.

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Possibly with an effective date not within the next 60 days but allow time for the public to be educated and get forms established.

Alderman Johnson asked how will Council's feedback be incorporated in the adoption? City Manager Cutter stated that decision would be left up to Council.

Alderman Johnson asked that Council be given 2 weeks to provide any question or concerns they may have and in turn give staff 2 weeks to respond.

Mayor DeLoach stated all comments need to be given to staff by April 14th to be considered. The alcohol ordinance will be brought back to Council at the meeting of June 9th.

Appointments to Boards, Commissions and Authorities

Council came to a unanimous consensus to appoint Parker Morgan to the Savannah Zoning Board of Appeals. Mayor DeLoach stated Council will review the remaining applications and schedule interviews for some boards.

Executive Session

Upon motion of Alderman Johnson, seconded by Alderman Shabazz, and unanimously carried Council went into Executive Session for the purpose of discussing Litigation and Personnel.

Upon completion of this session, a motion was made to come out of Executive Session by Alderman Johnson, seconded by Alderman Miller, and unanimously carried.

City Manager Stephanie Cutter presented the City Manager's Briefing of the agenda items for the Council Meeting of March 31, 2016. The agenda is attached and made a part of the permanent record.

Mayor DeLoach adjourned this meeting.



Dyanne C. Reese, MMC,
Clerk of Council