

Summary/Final Minutes – Work Session – June 9, 2016

Savannah City Government SUMMARY/FINAL MINUTES COUNCIL WORK SESSION & CITY MANAGER'S BRIEFING June 9, 2016 – 10:00 a.m.

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

City Manager Stephanie Cutter
City Attorney W. Brooks Stillwell

PRESENT: Mayor Pro-Tem Carol Bell (out of town)
Van Johnson, II
Assistant City Attorney William Shearouse

Mayor DeLoach called the meeting to order.

Film Savannah

Trip Tollison, Savannah Economic Development Authority President and CEO introduced Beth Nelson, Interim Film Office Director, Patrick Bentley, Emerging Industries Project Manager, Scott Brinson, Stephen Green, SEDA Board Chair, Brynn Grant, Chief Operating Officer, SEDA and Staci Donegan, Downtown Neighborhood Association Membership Chair. **(Presentation on file in the Office of the Clerk of Council)**

Mr. Tollison stated they are proposing the creation of the Savannah Area Film Office to operate under SEDA's management with continued financial commitment from the City of Savannah. SEDA has approached Chatham County and Tybee Island leadership to discuss joining the alliance with investment and good intent. Depending on activity, other municipalities may be approached. Permitting would remain the responsibility of each governmental entity, coordinated through the Savannah Area Film Office. In January 2017, an advisory board will be formed to include appointments in proportion to each body's investment. Details to be determined. The SEDA investment: \$300,000 annual operating \$1.5 million annual incentive, 2016-2018
City of Savannah investment: \$205,000 from annual operating budget.

Why SEDA? The constitutionally mandated economic development authority responsible for facilitating jobs and investment for all of Chatham County; To create cohesion and unify all invested parties/government entities in the effort to grow the entertainment production industry
Developed and administer Savannah Area Entertainment Production Incentives to grow the industry; Experienced in selling and marketing Savannah as a location for business; Experienced in balancing economic development goals with the needs and protection of our community.

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

Alderman Miller asked what will happen to the Film Ordinance. City Manager Cutter replied there are still guidelines that have to be followed. It will not go away immediately as there are still regulations that have to be met as it relates to traffic control and public safety. The integrity of neighborhoods still has to be protected.

Alderman Miller asked is the Film Ordinance expected to go away at some point. City Manager Cutter replied just like any other ordinance as events and the industry expands the ordinance will need amending as the City grows, and issues surface.

Alderman Miller asked if the current Film Commission was consulted. City Manager Cutter replied it is her understanding that the Bureau Chief and Acting Film Director have been very engaged with the Commission. It is also her understanding that SEDA has been in conversations with them as well. She continued stating as Mr. Tollison pointed out, as things grow and change there will be suggestions coming back for change, none of which are known at this time. The City of Savannah is trying to expand the industry. SEDA represents the entire Chatham County not just the City of Savannah up to this point the City has been carrying the ball since 1994 funding the entire Film Office while other municipalities have benefited but have not contributed. She ended stating she thinks this is a good fit.

Mr. Tollison stated SEDA made a presentation to the Film Commission approximately 10 days ago.

Alderman Miller asked Mr. Tollison if the Film Commission will remain or if SEDA has plans to do something else.

Mr. Tollison replied there has been a recent edit to the Memorandum of Understanding where that is addressed as he doesn't believe they were very clear in the first draft. He stated the Film Commission will stay intact until the end of the year and beginning January 1st based on the municipalities or taxing authority's contribution the remainder of this year will be used to figure how the new Film Commission will be comprised.

Alderman Miller stated because of the nature of what SEDA does has to be rather confidential however, this is something that will involve the entire community. How will the two be juggled? Mr. Tollison replied in this effort everything will be subject to Open Records due in large part to the many different industries paying in.

Alderman Durrence stated his concern is that the City has real authoritative management in place for the growth of this concept in the years to come. He suggested having a designated person that is knowledgeable, senior enough and authoritative enough to make decisions that will stick.

City Manager Cutter replied as this has been worked through they have also worked on getting the pieces in place. Those staff members whether the Citizens Office or the Bureau Chief office will be merged and will work for the Bureau Chief and will have the authority to manage the process. When the City walks into an agreement they walk in willing to work not looking for a fight and talking about issues if they arise and coming up with a workable solution.

Alderman Thomas stated his concern is that SEDA doesn't answer to the tax payers Council does and if problems arise they won't have to answer to the calls that would potentially come in. He also expressed his concern about the amount of funding SEDA is asking Chatham County

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and Tybee Island for as they are both big players in this process. He asked Mr. Tollison if there is a reason the County wasn't asked to contribute more.

Mr. Tollison responded they reviewed the last five years of productions in Chatham County and 70% were in the City limits. He stated the beautiful part of this agreement is that it will be a part of the City's budgeting process each year and at any time an audit can be requested. He ended stating they believed this was a first good start, the point is to create the funding level based on where the productions are occurring.

Alderman Thomas stated the City is a part of Chatham County and this should be a shared investment not just shouldered by the City.

Alderman Thomas then asked with such an important matter as this why did SEDA wait so long to meet with the Film Commission.

Joe Shearouse, Leisure Services Bureau Chief stated it was being discussed and the Film Commission was supposed to meet the week prior but because it had not been brought before Council he did not want to meet with the Commission before Council was made aware.

Alderman Thomas stated he doesn't have a problem with the proposal but after speaking with some of the Commissioners he feels it was a shotgun approach as Council was expected to make a decision at the last meeting.

Mr. Shearouse agreed that it could have been done better but stated again that he did not want to meet with the Commissioners before Council was made aware of the situation.

Alderman Shabazz stated she is pleased how the Savannah Film Commission is made up and as with anything there is always room for improvement but she had no knowledge of the negotiations which took place with SEDA and feels Council needs time to make a careful thought-out decision. Everything needs to be transparent and meetings need to stop being held secretly.

Alderman Miller stated he likes the idea of SEDA taking over but he wants to be sure he is able to answer the questions that are arising and ensure everyone knows what is going on and how things will proceed.

Attorney Dana Braun, President Emeritus Savannah Film Commission appeared stating in the past all productions that came to the City of Savannah went through the City Manager's Office. He stated his issue with this is the process, there is a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) which states the ordinance will be repealed, it also states at the end of the year SEDA will control who will be on the Commission. He stated he doesn't believe anyone is against improving the office. Attorney Braun stated the Film Commission unanimously approved a Resolution at their meeting which stated the following: It is the recommendation of the Film Commission that City Council undertake a full review of the handling of film production in the Savannah area, including the Film Ordinance, Commission and Office, and explore the best avenue for creating a broader and better film office, whether that be in conjunction with SEDA or other entities, and secondly, if City Council wishes to proceed with the current proposal that the MOU be revised to be clear and definite as to the role and structure of the advisory committee, the participation of other local government entities, and that it perhaps be more than a two party agreement and preferably a four party agreement including the City of Tybee Island and Chatham County from the start.

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Attorney Stillwell stated the City of Savannah currently has an MOU with SEDA which was passed January 2015 which recognized the fact the sales effort were being handled by SEDA to promote the market. He stated the MOU written in 2015 states there are three functions of the Film Office 1. Marketing directly to the industry; 2. Services to the industry once the film arrives; and 3. The permitting and protecting interfacing with City departments. Under the current MOU function one is covered by SEDA and two and three are covered by the City of Savannah's Film office. It was recognized that we were getting in each other's way and it would be more efficient for SEDA to handle function two and take the budget the City was spending and allocate it to SEDA. The City of Savannah will continue to do the permitting once functions one and two have been handled the City gets involved in permitting to see if it would work and issuing and interfacing with the citizens. Attorney Stillwell stated the City is covered and he believes this is a good thing for the City of Savannah. SEDA's involvement will encourage local people to get involved in building production facilities which is the economic spur the City is trying to achieve.

Alderman Durrence stated in the latest version of the MOU it states the Film Commission will be made up proportionate of the contributors.

Alderman Durrence requested another revision to state the current ordinance will be revised versus repealed.

Alderman Shabazz stated she doesn't think Council should move forward with this since everyone has not received the revised version of the MOU.

Alderman Thomas stated anytime when dealing with items that need to be voted on it should go to all members of Council regardless who request it.

City Manager Cutter stated her staff did not receive the revised version of the MOU as she was in the office late last night.

Mr. Tollison thanked Bill Hubbard and Jim Marinelli for all their hard work.

Mayor DeLoach thanked Mr. Tollison for the presentation.

Coastal Georgia Indicators Community Blueprint

Tara Jennings, Coastal Georgia Indicators Coalition Director presented a PowerPoint Presentation on the Coastal Georgia Indicators Community Blueprint. Ms. Jennings stated the Coastal Georgia Indicators Coalition is comprised of community members and advocates working together through a comprehensive, coordinated approach for planning and accountability and serves as a resource for agencies addressing overall health and well-being while leveraging resources for community initiatives. The purpose of the Coalition is to improve community well-being by engaging and leading the community to work collectively in its development of strategic priorities that guide policy, programs and resource allocation. **(Presentation on file in the Office of the Clerk of Council)**

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

City Manager Cutter stated the kick off for the Pre Apprentice Program is June 13 at 10 a.m. in the Johnny Mercer Theater. The youth will be matched with their employers Monday. The support of Council is important as it shows them that the City cares.

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Alderman Hall stated education is the key and is more important than the recreation. He stated there are many libraries across the City that are empty and the only time children go to them is when they are made to.

Mayor DeLoach stated there's nothing like having an example and asked Crystal Ross to come forward and briefly describe her experience.

Miss Ross stated she is interning with the Chatham County Metropolitan Planning Commission this summer and believes what Ms. Jennings and Council have stated is true. She stated with the support of the program many youth like herself can benefit from it. She was a part of the program last year and stated it has grown a great deal since then,. She thanked Council for finding the program and stated she hopes it will continue.

Mayor DeLoach thanked Ms. Jennings for her presentation and stated he looks forward to seeing everyone at the Pre Apprentice kick off on June 13th.

Boards, Commissions & Authorities

Appointments were deferred to the meeting of June 23rd

Executive Session

Upon motion of Alderman Thomas, seconded by Alderman Miller, and unanimously carried Council went into Executive Session for the purpose of discussing Litigation and Real Estate.

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

City Manager Stephanie Cutter presented the City Manager's Briefing of the agenda items for the Council Meeting of June 9, 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