



## SAVANNAH CITY GOVERNMENT

### SUMMARY/FINAL MINUTES

#### SPECIAL CALLED MEETING - PUBLIC HEARING REGARDING THE MILLAGE RATE

July 30, 2020 – 6:00 p.m.

Due to the Coronavirus Pandemic, the City Council Special Called Meeting was held at 6:02 p.m., via Zoom video communications. Mayor Johnson recognized Alderwoman Lanier who then offered the Invocation.

**PRESENT:** Mayor Van R. Johnson, II, Presiding  
 Alderwoman Kesha Gibson-Carter, At-Large, Post 1, Chairman  
 Alderwoman Alicia Miller Blakely, At-Large, Post 2  
 Alderwoman Bernetta B. Lanier, District 1  
 Alderman Detric Leggett, District 2  
 Alderwoman Linda Wilder-Bryan, District 3  
 Alderman Nick Palumbo, District 4, Vice-Chairman  
 Alderwoman Dr. Estella Edwards Shabazz, District 5, Mayor Pro-Tem  
 Alderman Kurtis Purtee, District 6

#### **OTHERS PRESENT:**

City Manager Pat Monahan  
 City Attorney Bates Lovett  
 Clerk of Council Mark Massey

#### Special Meeting Agenda Items

##### [1. Public Hearing Regarding a Millage Rate Increase](#)

Mayor Johnson opened the meeting and offered information regarding the three (3) required public hearings being held, to include the current meeting, along with two meetings to be held on August 13, 2020 at 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. He detailed three (3) specific ways to offer public comment: written or by phone; registering to speak online; and in-person participation at City Hall. Then Mayor Johnson indicated that there were two options to consider: the current millage rate at 12.856; and, a rollback rate at 12.739.

Mayor Johnson indicated written public comment received by the Clerk of Council has been distributed to the Mayor and Aldermen in advance of the meeting. He then started the public hearing with the following speakers who offered public comment:

1. Jennifer Salandi, Ballastone Inn - Opposed to tax increase
  - What has the City done (as a body) to reduce its costs?
  - She suggested that the City utilize the County to collect it's taxes, like they do for the other municipalities.
  - She asked the City to generate income from the 80 buildings that are downtown and owned by Colleges.
2. Marie Redmond - Opposed to tax increase
  - She expressed her displeasure with raising taxes.
  - She requested Council to look deeper at waste.
3. Steve Magulias - Opposed to tax increase
  - He stated that raising taxes is insensitive, mean-spirited, and callous..
  - He opposed the inventory tax and does not know what purpose it serves.
4. Deb Broderick - Opposed to tax increase
  - She stated that now is an inopportune time to increase taxes.

- She recommended the City look into having the 501(c)3 organizations who own real estate to pay their fair share, since they also receive City services like the Police.
  - She is concerned about the use of storefront windows along Broughton St. hurting trade, like BLM signs.
5. Sarah Thompson - Opposed to tax increase
    - Thanked the Mayor and Aldermen for being stewards of our great City.
    - She stated that she wants to see limited government, speaking as a patriot concerned about our children.
    - She does not want to be asked for more money.
    - She read a prepared statement written by someone else.
  6. James Hall - Opposed to tax increase
  7. Pete Robine - Opposed to tax increase
    - He stated that a change in revenue needs to occur, and the City should reduce spending.
    - He asked for the costs associated with Governor Cuomo's visit and the banner on City Hall regarding wearing of masks.
    - He stated his belief that the City has no legal grounds to require masks given the Governor's Order which does not require masks.
    - He stated that he believes that the Mayor and Aldermen should be at City Hall, in-person.
  8. TJ Burrison - Opposed to tax increase
    - He stated that increasing taxes is a burden, especially to businesses.
    - He indicated that the City is taking more money out of pockets, while mandating masks which he believes helps nobody and is a burden.
    - He did not agree with the millage rate proposal and believes that taxpayers should not be burdened with this matter.
  9. TK Burrison - Opposed to tax increase
    - She stated that the millage rate is a burden to a lot of families.
    - She also stated that raising taxes is adding to fear and thereby causing illnesses.
  10. Mark Armstrong - Opposed to tax increase
    - He stated that the City should fix potholes outside of the downtown area, if they are going to raise taxes and there should be a good reason for doing so.
    - He expressed concern about a lack of street lighting between Truman and Waters Avenue.

After the last speaker, the Mayor and Aldermen discussed the Notice of Property Tax Increase and the press release that was used to publicize the public hearings. They also talked about the Budget/Tax Millage Rate agenda item discussion held at the last meeting, July 23, 2020, during the work session. Lastly, the Mayor and Aldermen made comments about the public hearing and speakers who appeared.

Hearing no further business, Mayor Johnson adjourned the meeting at 8:02 p.m.

The audio recording of the Council Meeting can be found by copying and inserting the below link in your url:

Mark Massey, Clerk of Council

Date Minutes Approved: \_\_\_\_\_

Initials: \_\_\_\_\_

