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 COMBINED WORK SESSION

 AND CITY COUNCIL MEETING AGENDA

 MAYOR AND COUNCIL

 JUNE 17, 2025 @ 6:00 P. M.

 CITY HALL – 204 W. CHURCH ST.

Present: Mayor Jeffery Lundy, Council Juanita Bryant, Council Fred Hartesveldt, Council Sandra B. Marshall, Council Carla S. Gowen, Council Laronda F. Eason, Council Henry Howard, City Administrator Mr. Gary Lee, Fire Chief Woodard, Mr. Rosco Miller, City Attorney Jim Elliott, Executive Admin. Keisha Baldwin, Recorder, Attorney Charles Jones, Recorder- Diane Brown, City Clerk

1. CALL TO ORDER-6:00 P.M.
2. INVOCATION-Council Eason
3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE
4. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

Motion - Council Gowen

Second - Council Eason

All in favor motion carried

1. MINUTES REVIEWAND APPROVAL**–** May 2025
* Committee Meeting
* Work Session Meeting
* City Council Meeting

Motion - Council Eason to approve the minutes with any amendments.

Second - Council Hartesveldt

 All in favor motion carried

1. ANNOUNCEMENTS-Mayor and Council

Council Bryant requests the city provide a proclamation for Ms. Simmons’ Memorial (details will be provided by Council Bryant)

1. GEORGIA HOUSE DISTRICT 150 REPRESENTATIVE-Mrs. Patty Marie Stinson (Updates)

Representative Stinson has a new summer intern (Ms. Isabella Benjamin Askew)

The legislative session is over, use this time to work on issues important to the district. and invited the audience to share any questions or concerns.

During the fall of 2022, a work session meeting was hosted by Ms. Stinson in Atlanta Ga. With some city officials attending. The status of the city's charter, which was last updated in 2022 but has been on hold since 2023 due to audit issues.

The Charter’s language creates confusion, the current charter calls for a city manager position, while the previous version from 2022 specified a city administrator role. The council discussed concerns

about starting the charter revision process during an election year, with some members suggesting waiting until after November's elections.

Council Bryant agrees with having a City Manager.

Council Marshall concern that the mayor is the only one to necessitate a Called Meeting and would like to see that changed.

Mayor Lundy stated the city is working to become audit-compliant by the end of the year, the 2022 audit is completed. The UGA Charter update did not move forward, the fee was $25,000.

Council Bryant asks to plan a meeting to discuss the charter, the mayor added with the assistance of the City’s Attorney,

There are plans to possibly schedule a meeting in late 2025 or early 2026 to review and potentially update the charter language.

1. GMA-MUNICIPAL LEADERSHIP PROGRAM– Mr. Freddie Broome

The meeting focused on addressing community concerns and upcoming developments in Fort Valley. City officials discussed the need to move forward on pending issues and emphasized the importance of being included in state economic development plans. The group also recognized Jeffery F. Lundy, Mayor and Laronda F. Eason, who completed the leadership program that focused on local government and community development.

1. PERSON WISHING TO ADDRESS-Mayor and Council
* Victor Harper / Maya Hall - Austin Theater Drainage Issues

Victor Hopper and Maya Hall raised concerns about ongoing drainage issues affecting their property adjacent to the Austin Theater, which has been causing thousands of dollars in damage since September 2023. The council expressed a willingness to help resolve the problem.

* Mr. Marcus Agostino-Ethics & Other

The meeting focused on several key issues, including a proposed FLOST tax allocation plan that sparked concerns about Peach County retaining 70% of funds while only offering 14% to Fort Valley and 14% to Byron, while expressing that this was unfair to the homeowners and taxpayers of Fort Valley.

Fort Valley has the largest Blue Bird and new housing coming to Fort Valley, Byron has the larger commerce therefore how are we going to reap the benefits of the FLOST tax at 14%. suggest the city standdown and renegotiate a higher percentage.

Next, he highlighted the need for a fully functional Ethics Commission, as the current one is only operational in name without proper training and swearing-in of members.

Additionally, there were concerns raised about the handling of FOIA requests, with City noting that only half of requests are being answered, if there is an ongoing investigation attached to the records, let them know there is an ongoing investigation and after completion records may be released.

Finally, the IRS visit to City Hall and the need for transparency and clarification regarding tax payments paid to the IRS, are we going to be short or something else because we paid the debt, suggested in the next 7-14 days the City’s Officials should be transparent with the taxpaying community and give clarification, of what is going on let us know what happened, why it happened and what has been done to prevent it from happening again. We want to know what is going on with our tax money.

* Nathaniel Rayford-(1) Police (2) Explain Reserve Officer.

Mr. Rayford addressed police retention issues, emphasizing the importance of community knowledge among officers and suggesting that property owners with large gatherings adhere to the city’s party ordinance, and apartment managers should have security people in place to support police efforts. There should be equal pay for officers’ retention at present reserve officers are paid more than regular officers.

* Council Juanita Bryant-(1) Clarification (2) Policy-Personnel

Requested copies of Crime Suppression financial statements of who, where and when the money was spent.

Ask for copy of the ordinance passed as to distance in miles a hired police officer can live and be employed at the Police Department.

Asked for exit interviews and received a few and they are not favorable. No names on them and can be matched with the position. An Officer is leaving after 24/25 year he is leaving.

Ask Mr. Elliott the City’s Attorney, about Reserve Officers liability to the city, wearing the City’s uniform and shield is the City is responsible for them, as they go back to Atlanta and something happens while wearing the city’s shield.

Discussion: Line items for clothing $12,000 for uniforms

Council Bryant- has asked for a copy of the contract the City should have for the reserve officers.

According to the sunshine law I should have received all the records requested.

Mayor Lundy suggested consulting the city administrator for personnel matters.

Ask for a recap of the ARPA funds all the money that was spent on who, where and when.

On 6/11/25 Council Bryant requested a list of all credit cards for 4 years for everybody who has a city card.

Annexation she was told the city only has copies of the covenants, talking to the ex-Mayor she did not put copies in the Mayor’s Office we need the originals with the seal. There is no clarity regarding annexation processes and a need to locate original.

Council Bryant asked the City’s Attorney what should be done about annexation.

Jim Elliott, City Attorney- stated find the original covenants, or we go back to the property owners restart the process, it possible a lot of the properties probably have changed owners. The covenants should have been recorded at the Court House records.

Council Bryant stated we should be working on the new budget now,

Mr. Gary Lee says he is working on getting that to all.

Council Bryant - We do not have any trained election officials, and suggested we put an ad in the paper advertising for election qualifications, and fees for the city and utilities.

No money was missing from the city for the audit according to Kyle.

We have been hiring and not posting or advertising jobs.

Nepotism we need to work on a Nepotism Policy one should not be influenced by others in positions to hire our relatives.

Mr. Lee stated answers to some of the questions will come from HR.

Records requests are responded to receive within 3 days; and need to address nepotism through a policy and Ethics board. There was a discussion about the lack of response to open records requests under Sunshine Law.

**Andrew L. Felton- Fort Valley Downtown Development Authority**

Andrew Felton expressed disappointment over not being reappointed to the Fort Valley Downtown Development Authority, questioning the integrity of the public process and the decision's basis on merit or service. He emphasized his commitment to community service and training, and the negative impact of the decision on the board's ability to maintain quorum and conduct business.

Council Marshall was disappointed that the DDA had no quorum at the last meeting that holds up business in the city, would like for mayor and council to do what it takes to appoint members so the DDA can handle business.

* **Tisa Horton-Fort Valley Downtown Development Authority**

The meeting discussed the appointment process for the Downtown Development Authority (DDA) board, where several applications were received but some were incomplete or missing the required information. The nomination committee, following established bylaws, identified three qualified candidates: Billy Parker, LeIan Mangham, and Andrew Field, while Andrew Felton's term had also expired. The committee requested complete applications by April 25th, but some applicants provide all necessary documentation, leading to their disqualification.

Mayor Lundy highlighted concerns about the transparency and fairness of the appointment process, suggesting more applications were submitted and did not go through the vetting process. Certain candidates were unfairly excluded, though the exact reasons remained unclear.

The meeting discussed ongoing issues with obtaining funds for downtown development and historic building repairs in Fort Valley.

Ms. Tisa Horton expressed frustration that despite multiple requests since 2023, they have not received the $75,000 allocated in the 2008 SPLOST for downtown improvements, including fixing the drainage issues at Austin Theater.

The city administrator and mayor were criticized for not providing the funds, with the DDA noting that while the money was initially used for the Troutman house painting without proper authorization, they are now seeking to use it for Austin Theater repairs emphasizing that the funds were specifically allocated for downtown development and historic preservation purposes.

Ms. Horton is willing to go to court to request the $75,000.

Mr. Gary Lee stated the referendum was written wrong, Ms. Horton replied it was not when you were asking for help to fix the Troutman House to prevent damage to the structure.

The council discussed and approved three applications for the DDA board, including Andrew Felton, Billy Barker, and Lelan Mangrum. Only complete applications were considered, and any missing pages would result in disqualification. The council emphasized the importance of following proper procedures to avoid legal challenges and ensure fair representation on the board.

The council discussed the disbursement of $75,000 from a 2008 SPLOST to the Downtown Development Authority (DDA), previously known as the Redevelopment Authority.

The legal team clarified that the DDA is the successor organization to the Redevelopment Authority and is entitled to receive these funds to fulfill the original intended purpose of rehabilitating authority properties.

Motion - Council Bryant to amend the agenda to include 3 applications for appointments to the DDA Board.

5 Council Bryant, Council Hartesveldt, Council Marshall, Council Gowen, and Council Howard

1. Opposed-Council Eason
2. Mayor not voting

Motion to discuss the 3 applicants A. Felton

Motion—Council Bryant

Second – Council Gowen

Discussion: 3 submitted by Ms. Tisa Horton

Mr. Bill Peterson, Ms. Daphne Peterson and Mr. Carson Brooks, Jr., submitted application only to hear back the application is incomplete.

Motion on the floor all in favor of accepting the 3 applications submitted by the Chair Ms. Tisa Horton

Council Marshall, Council Gowen, Council Hartesveldt, Council Howard, and Council Bryant

Council Bryant-Moton to release the $ 75,000 from the 2008 SPLOST to the DDA.

City Attorney Elliott- That money goes to the Fort Valley Redevelopment Authority.

Mayor Lundy went on record saying it is a conflict of interest for Ms. Horton to be on the DDA and lease the Austin Theater. Ms. Horton lease expires in 2026; Ms. Horton agrees to give a copy of the lease to Mayor Lundy.

Motion- Council Bryant to amend the agenda to disperse $75,000 from the 2008 SPLOST to the DDA

Second-Council Marshall

Vote Yes-6 /Council Eason, Council Marshall, Council Gowen, Council Hartesveldt, Council Howard, Council Bryant

Motion to disperse the $75,000 from the 2008 SPLOST to the DDA

Motion – Council Bryant

Second – Council Gowen

Discussion: Council Howard, has it been changed, from the RDA to DDA explained Atty Charles Jones the DDA was the Redevelopment Authority, the DDA now stands in the shoes of the RDA in 2008 when the language was CHANGED in the referendum there was a RDA after that it became DDA, the purpose of that SPLOST language is to ensure the funds will be used

Attorney Jones stated that under the SPLOST language the money will be spent for the same purpose that was intended in the referendum if you choose to act.

Attorney Elliott those are two different statues, the language simply says Fort Valley RDA $75,000

To accept that it is not a successor organization means you can never spend the money you will have to give it back.

Gary Lee we can reactivate the other Authority. RDA

Attorney Jones everything that the RDA has is shifted to the DDA

The vote all in favor of dispersing the $75,000 from the 2008 SPLOST to the DDA

Yes Votes- Council Marshall, Council Gowen, Council Eason, Council Hartesveldt, Council Howard, Council Bryant

Motion carried.

Council Gowen asked, “Do we have anything in writing to establish the Redevelopment Authority was abandoned”.

1. RESOLUTIONS AND AGREEMENT

The council approved several resolutions, including a $14,580 project for interior and exterior work at Fire Station One, a $7,850 HVAC replacement at the same location, and the purchase of two Polaris Ranger vehicles for medical use at events for $29,733.96. The council also discussed a rezoning request for 611 South Canadian Boulevard, where the property owner sought to change the classification from industrial to R-2 (single family, two-family, and multifamily), but the council clarified that the property should remain classified as single-family due to banking restrictions for multifamily units.

The council discussed and voted on an intergovernmental agreement for a flow-through tax, with Fort Valley receiving 14% and Byron receiving 14%, while other entities would get 3%. Council member Augustino moved to table the agreement due to concerns about the distribution not reflecting the referendum results, but the motion failed. The council then voted to approve entering into the MOU, which will allow the tax issue to be put on the November ballot for voter approval.

1. Resolution to hire Southern Painting Perfection, Inc. to paint Fire Station 1 interior walls and exterior trim for the estimated cost of $14,580
2. Resolution to hire Bradshaw Heating and Air to replace the Fire Station 1 HVAC unit at estimated cost $7,850

Motion - Council Eason

Second – Council Hartesveldt

All in favor motion carried

1. Resolution to purchase from Capitol Cycle Co, Inc. 2 Polaris Ranger 570 full size side by side for events usage estimated cost $29,733.96

Motion - Council Gowen

Second – Council Eason

Discussion Council Marshall- the vehicles will be used for medical calls during city events to gain entry to emergency locations, the fire truck cannot access.

All in favor motion carried

1. Rezoning of 611 South Camellia Blvd. change from Industrial to R-2 Multifamily

R-2 consists of a single family, two families and a multi-family. The property next to it was rezoned R-2

Ms. Gosier the Peach County QPublic website description is (a) the abovementioned description of single family.

Motion to amend the agenda to state R-1 Single Family as the description.

Motion - Council Bryant

Second – Council Marshall

All in favor motion carried

Motion – Council Bryant, that we accept the rezone of 611 S Camellia Blvd to R-1 Single Family

Second – Council Marshall

All in favor motion carried

1. Intergovernmental Agreement- Floating Option Sales Tax (FLOST)

Motion - Council Eason

Second Council Gowen

Council Marshall stated that Peach County get 70%, and both Byron and Fort Valley get 14% and the others get $3 something of the FLOST tax, the math does not match. Some people forget Fort Valley is the County Seat, like to see all the homeowners get their fair share.

Discussion followed, City Attorney Elliott advised there is no discussion on motion to table

Council Eason – Want the citizens to remember, the majority of the council voted for the FLOST tax, Council Eason did not, the Council listened to the citizens at the FLOST meetings, it was said then the county would get most of the money. The citizens voted for it in November.

Mayor Lundy, the percentage each will receive is based on population, it is a county tax, they make the call, taxpayers voted for this in November, we are here to sign the agreement.

Marcus Agostino go tell them (Peach County) 14% is not enough.

Council Marshall, opted in after getting a better understanding, Byron gets revenue; go back to the county and redo the numbers to help the citizens of Fort Valley

Council Marshall – Motion to Table

Second – Council Bryant

Motion Failed 4/2

Council Gowen, Council Eason, Council Hartesveldt, Council Howard.

Mayor Lundy - Motion to enter into MOU FLOST agreement.

By show of hands 4-vote Yes.

Council Eason, Council Gowen, Council Hartesveldt, Council Howard,

Abstain 2 votes -Council Bryant and Council Marshall

Motion carried to enter the FLOST agreement

EXECUTIVE SESSION-No

ADJOURNMENT-Motion to adjourn the meeting.

Motion- Council Bryant

Second Council Eason

All in favor motion carried

Meeting adjourned at 8:00 P.M.