

MINUTES
WAYCROSS CITY COMMISSION PLANNING & INFORMATION SESSION
MONDAY, AUGUST 12, 2024, 5:00 P.M.
WAYCROSS CITY COMMISSION CHAMBERS
(417 PENDLETON STREET, WAYCROSS, GA)

I. CALL TO ORDER:

The Planning and Information Session of the City of Waycross was called to order August 12, 2024, at 5:00 p.m. by Mayor Michael-Angelo James. The meeting was held in the Commission Chambers of City Hall. Present was Mayor James, Commissioners Katrena Felder, Sheinita Bennett and Diane Hopkins

- A. Invocation: Commissioner Diane Hopkins
- B. Pledge of Allegiance

II. GUESTS:

None-

III. TRAVEL/TRAINING SCHEDULE AND REQUESTS

IV. PLANNING & INFORMATION SESSION

- A. Bids: n/a
- B. **Discussion Items: ***SEE ATTACHED DISCUSSION NOTES*****
 - 1. Year End Review
 - 2. Finance Update
 - 3. Infrastructure Update
 - 4. South Carolina State University Marching Band
 - 5. Contract for Service Agreement
- C. **Privilege Licenses Renewals: n/a**
- D. **Privilege Licenses:**
 - 1. Bhabharam Inc. dba Om Food Mart, A. Patel, 935 Tebeau Street, Waycross Georgia 31501, Beer and Wine Package Sales Only.
- E. **Proposed Ordinances: n/a**

F. Proposed Resolutions:

1. A Resolution to Approve the City of Waycross Budget for Fiscal Year July 1, 2024, Through June 30, 2025.

There was a consensus to place this on Tuesday agenda.

2. A Resolution to Approve Contract for Services Agreement with Ware County, Georgia Acting Through Ware County Tax Commissioner to Collect Municipal Ad Valorem Property Taxes for The City of Waycross, Georgia.

There was a consensus to place this on Tuesday agenda.

3. A Resolution of the Waycross City Commission to Request a Waiver to Utilize Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) from the Department of Community Affairs (DCA) Towards Completion of Housing Rehabilitation Projects for Homeowners and Residents of the City of Waycross, Georgia; and for Other Purposes.

There was a consensus to place this on Tuesday agenda.

G. City Attorney Report:

H. City Managers Report:

I. Last Call

J. Adjourn to Executive Session

There was a motion made by Commissioner Hopkins to adjourn to go into executive session for the purpose of personnel, seconded by Commissioner Felder. All voted in favor and the meeting adjourned at 7:01 p.m. to go into executive session.

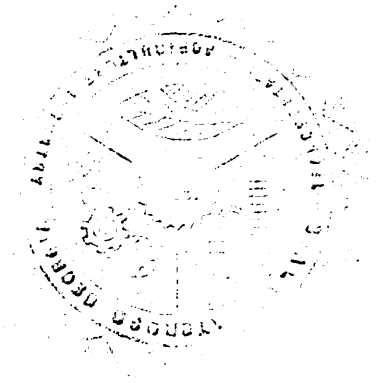
K. Adjournment

CITY OF WAYCROSS

BY:
Michael Angelo James
MICHAEL-ANGELO JAMES, Mayor

ATTEST:

Jacqueline Powell
JACQUALINE POWELL, City Clerk



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City Manager:

Damage. We did get some lessons learned though for future fixes, so hopefully the next time the storm comes we'll be even better prepared. I just want to say that up front, -, this time we go into the first discussion item. It is the year review, and this is just a quick snapshot of this past year. just to keep everybody abreast of some of the things we've done very well and a few things we need to still work on moving forward.

As you recall Commissioners and Mr. Mayor, this was the vision and the mission that we agreed upon at that first retreat. Nothing's changed here. This is the slide. These are the priorities that we kind of did the circle connection into. We did end up adding quality of life at a later date to the slide. But this is everything as far as progress in the city. These are the priorities that we initially had, -, agreed upon at that first, uh, retreat. But then over time we did add, uh, homelessness, uh, gangs and drugs morale, all of which the directors would cover on their portions and kind of talk about some of the things or highlight some of the things we did to improve those three areas mainly. This is a ten-year plan that we agreed upon at that first retreat. We're still in phases of the first two years. We'll say we're slightly ahead of schedule in some in some situations, uh, counting backwards and a few others, which we'll discuss, -, in the next set of slides. -, but I am pleased that the direction that we're going right now, as far as the city. And I paused there for a few seconds just to.

Mayor:

Commission do you have any questions about our city manager.

City Manager:

And we will do a deeper dive into these as we go along on the following slides. These are some of the milestones and wins. I want to talk all of these. But I will say, based off the hard work of the team, uh, some of the things that we, we see as wins, uh, we did get our operations down as far as scheduling and Benchmarking. I feel confident now in saying that, you know, we can pretty much give a time schedule on everything, how long everything takes at this point. Uh, I could not do that before. but we stick to the schedule now. And like I said, with our benchmarking, we kind of can predict when things will get fixed and corrected, uh, when we fall behind. Uh, also, I want to highlight that we did a great job. HR and the finance department and the business integrated department, as far as reworking some of the contracts. As you know, we restructured ESG and both of those contracts to better meet the demands of the city. And they are very great teammates to us, as well as AC and BC3. But rather than ESG going the extra mile and kind of rescoping what they do for us to save us a little bit of extra money and do more for our citizens at the same time. IT systems, I'll talk about the dashboard later on. But I do want to recognize the business integration and IT systems we are currently going through updating our software. Uh, I think we're about six months in the app, which we'll talk about during his slides, which launched last week. I'm not sure of the overall numbers behind that. He'll probably talk on that. but then, that's a really big movement because that that new app, you know, of course, it has geo tagging and all kinds of capabilities, different pay options and all those things. So that's a big milestone win for us as an organization. -, our social media and live stream, as you know, we conducted about six meetings monthly over social media and live streams, which is really branched out communications with our citizens. We got a lot of great feedback from our citizens now, through social, through social media and also face to face. So that was a great man there too. And then this was the first year that we met the audience compliance. You know, that was big because, that's been about 13 years. We failed to meet that requirement. so great, great kudos to the finance department again by making that note, because now we can really see how we look financially when we're coming forward. So great things there and then some other things. -, the engineering department is not here, but just creating the robotics, working with gDot and a few other things they're working on to make us more proficient at our job. So those are some of the milestones and wins that I think the city did a great job on over this last year. And I want to highlight those. And like I said, the directors will go a little step deeper on some of these achievements in their next lives.

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All right like I said, we did a lot of things well this past year. These are some things. And we discussed this before, so I won't hit these too hard today. but you're trying to figure out, some of the communications, uh, externally, uh, with legislative and some of our stakeholders across the community, still trying to define them, the charter and policy guidance. As we said before, the charge needs some updating. We have found some discrepancies in our policies throughout the year. which is which is, you know, nothing, nothing new. Uh, most serious discovered this because times are changing right now. then the budget we talked about this, the necessity to increase some of the revenue, some rate increases. We are reviewing all our all our fines and fees and services right now. We did find a lot of things that need to be adjusted or moved to other directorates. So, we should have that list ready sometime in October. And the infrastructure we still having a problem with the storm water and sewer drainage. as I made a note to y'all last week during the storm, we did turn in some fixes. I did call the Corps of Engineers today. supposed to come back this week. We're going to kind of hope to get them down and look at some things. These are some decade-old problems that we have recognized as being problems for a long time. So, we're trying to get very creative at the fixes. But I will say once again to the Public Works Department and our stakeholders. ESG. They did do a lot of work already. -, by increasing the capacity of some of the drains. We went from 12 to 24in. That's going to be a standard for us for now when we do any kind of construction work. It's just if the ground opens, we're going to increase the pipe size. We know that works now. we got some of those canals a little bit wider, a little bit deeper to make sure that water goes through. So, and then figure out those old lines in the ground right now that's causing the issues, how-to kind of replace all those, which is going to be a big task. But those are some things that I thought needed to be kind of mentioned as improvements and concerns. -, nothing super major, but a lot of this is long term. -, it's been a problem for a long time already. So, we'll take a, you know, a little bit of time to fix. -, but I'm confident that we can do that. -, we've got the team together now. Uh, everybody's on the same mission. -, same understanding. So I think it should be. There shouldn't be anything that we can't figure out long term, What I'm going to do now. I'm going to turn this over to the directors to kind of brief a little more in depth, some of the milestones, some of the wins and some of their concerns. And then we'll, -, at the end, we'll pause for your questions or recommendations, and we'll start with the business integration information systems director.

Patrick Simmons:

Good afternoon. Mayor. Commissioners, I just want to mention a few things. -, so, some of the milestones, you know, like we said earlier, we've increased communication just this year using text. MyGov, we sent over 1500, I'm sorry, 1050. text messages. I'm sorry, 100,050 text messages through text My gov. And we just integrated the new text app, which is my Waycross, GA. You can download it on iTunes and Google Play. We've had so many 200 downloads to date since last week. That'll be a game changer because it will allow citizens to check their water bills, pay their water bills, check codes, check different things. The geo tracking that can make a report instantly knows where they are. They can also see if somebody's already made that report, so they don't have to duplicate it. But some of those things will come later as soon as we get the fully implemented tech Tyler technology. That's one of the things we're working on to make sure we're on time with that. We have a launch fully launch date of early 2025 and we're on task for that. Getting the data converted with our finance team and also purchasing helping with that. So, we're very grateful for that. Some of the concerns we have are some of our aging computers. Some of our computers are still running Windows 7. You know that that affects our security. So, we're trying to get those replaced as we can. Some of the things we're still focusing on are working with community and city growth. So, we're working with our partners to make sure that we have that interaction, realizing how the city can help them grow. A city can help them accomplish their tasks and they can help us with ours. Increasing that social media presence. I currently have Facebook. We interact with over 10,000 followers, so we get a lot of comments, a lot of concerns. Things that we can do better, we can improve, and we're enjoying that interaction. And as I mentioned earlier, our text app is really working for us. We had so many text messages, we had to increase our number last year. So, we're hoping that the new app will also take off just as well, and also enhance our relationships with state agencies and organizations so we can continue to meet the needs of our citizens and have those connections when we need things done. And I'll pause there if anybody has any questions for me.

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Mayor:

I do have one question in our code that we have in the hallway. Does this also assist ours.

Simmons

Yes. So, I'm glad you mentioned that. The. If you want to download the new app, there's a poster in the hallway. You just scan that QR code it'll. Will automatically. Take. You to either. Google or iTunes based on your phone. We also have that in some key places around the community. We have some video boards, and we're working on some other things to get that message out because we want. We're going to phase away, text MyGov by the end of this month and fully implement the new app. So, using that going forward,

Mayor:

We found that the new software has been working well for you. So, I know you've got much more to do. We got a lot more. So really, we haven't had the opportunity to test it yet.

Simmons

We're right now we're in the conversion phase of it. So, some staff have started some training. -, it'll be a major learning curve. But, you know, once we get there, we'll. I'm sure we'll really enjoy it. Uh, Greg has talked to people that's already using it, and they really enjoy that software. And one thing about Tyler, they offer tons of training. It's all cloud based. So, if we need to, you know, work from home, one day you can just log in and get all your work done. Again, like I said, citizens can check things on laptops and cell phones. So, it'll be a real game. Changer for us. Thank you.

Mayor:

Any questions? Thank you.

Marc Hawkins:

Afternoon, mayor. Commissioners for the community improvement Department. We did see quite a few achievements this year. One of the biggest was our enhanced communication. As you know we have monthly meetings with two different stakeholders. The first one is on the second Tuesday of every month. We have our code information sharing session. And then the third Wednesday of the month we meet with realtors and landlords. -, and even some tenants have come to those. When we first started, we had a lot of questions, a lot of concerns. We addressed those concerns. We saw where educating them on the city ordinances, city codes. We have seen that a lot of those questions and concerns have dropped back. So, we've seen where now they're seeing why the why of what the city had in mind. We did make some changes in the house and some of the things that we did. So, we think that that open line of communication has helped there. One of our biggest concerns that we're facing right now is the animals running at large and overcrowding at our shelter. And again, I've talked about this multiple times. This isn't just here. It's not just in the state of Georgia. This is nationwide. -, what we're seeing is just as soon as we get 1 or 2 open kennels at our facility, within an hour, they're full, and it's just it's nonstop. The other shelters, other rescues. We actually sent ten out Saturday. So, would anticipate by tomorrow those ten kennels will be full again. -, but those rescues and other shelters, they're at max capacity as well. So again, this is a problem that, uh, the groups are trying to come together and figure out solutions. One of the biggest things that we, we think the citizens, could help would be to keep their animals fenced in or on the chain, the appropriate chains. But the biggest thing is to make sure that they're spaying and neutering their animals. -, and they're not just d-ping animals out. -, that's what we're seeing. We're seeing a lot of animals just turn up everywhere. We're having them drop them off at the front steps. Even when we're full, they drop them off at the front steps. So, it's just an issue that we're facing and we're trying to work through that. And then our focus items one would be the safety of citizens and public. And we tie this in with our milestones working also. Uh, one of our needs is quality housing. So, we do that by bringing up the housing stock, using our codes to bring out the current housing stock, and then also, -, getting new developers to come in to build new housing as well. -, and then the beautification of Waycross again, we would use the codes that we have, we implement that through education. And then in the rare

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instances that we have to take the major ones to court, we will still continue to do that. But that's our goal. We've got a lot of businesses coming to the city of Waycross, and we need affordable workforce housing. We're working with developers now, so what we're going to try and do is to get with these owners, to get them to quit just sitting on these properties and letting them overgrow and just become abandoned and eyesores to either fix them up knowing that this influx is coming, or to possibly sell the property to somebody that will do that. So, we're going to be, you know, looking to do that within the community here in Waycross this year. So, and with that, any questions? Any questions.

Commissioner Bennett

Yes. Thank you, Mr. Mayor. As for the animals, is there something that we can do, like when it's raining and there's no shelter and You see them tied up against a tree. How do we go about reinforcing that?

Hawkins:

So, we go out and we get those calls. We do go out and investigate those, and we give them time to get the proper housing. if they don't, then we can cite them to court. which we're seeing a lot, but we have seen quite a few get proper housing, so.

Bennett:

Okay. And my second question is, -, as I ride around town, I see people doing construction work or gutting out a house or a trailer. Do we have permits for that? How can you tell?

Hawkins:

Most of them do. Every week you'll get. I guess you're still getting reports. And then there, where the permits have been issued. -. Or they can call our office. -, we're looking at that. They're supposed to be posting those permits on the job, and we have made a lot of phone calls lately. -, to make sure they get those posted. Some of them put them inside the window. So, it's kind of hard to see. So, we're trying to get them outside. -, we have looked at other places. They require document boxes. Again, that's one of those things that contractors are not at fault for because that's an extra cost that they have to do. We've looked at some other places where they include that in the permit fee. So, you're basically paying for that document box, and it has to stay on there. So that's some things that we can look at to do for sure, so that we make sure that they're out there. But then you would still have to get out and open the document box to make sure it's there. But yeah, a lot of them, they post them inside because they're just paper cards. You don't want them getting wet and messing up, so. Yes. And then with our new software, it'll be easier to see that way as well as well.

Okay.

Mayor:

Thank you. Commissioner Hopkins

Commissioner Hopkins:

Well, Mark, I know several members of houses in my neighborhood who don't have phones and they don't put them in the windows, and I thought. Required them to do. Neon paper is so bright and visible. And we talked about one of those boxes. And my suggestion is When we get a permit to include that in. The fee and make them pick up those boxes like you get at Lowe's, but you have to put a neon permanent in it and it's posted out front. That way when you ride by, it's very visible because half the time they put them in the windows, sometimes they fall down and not look like for a month. So, we have an issue there because numerous people have been remodeling houses that require permits. Not just changing the carpet or flooring, anything like that, and they don't have permits because I don't have anything That I'm calling a question about, because those fees are very important, Because when they start doing inspections, we need to make sure the electricity and all of that is safe. They just can't hire anybody on the street to come and do that electricity. And you know that because I have experienced that. I own a shopping center. So that's my suggestion about those boxes. So, we talked about that before.

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Hawkins:

And the cards are still there. Neon yellow. -, but again, when you see when they stick them in the window, it's kind of hard to see. Or if they are outside, a lot of times they'll put them in a Ziploc bag. -, and then the sun, the rain, they'll kind of fade. But we'll definitely look at permit boxes. They have different kinds now instead of the big commercial type boxes, they have some others. So, we'll look at some options. And bring those back. So, we should.

Hopkins

The other thing is I'm in control and we have cameras out there at one time. And those people. Sometimes they're not from Waycross and they put those cameras out. But we're not trying to find out where they're coming from because we don't take the animals or the county animals. We take the city on. So how are we controlling that?

Hawkins:

So, we're trying. We've looked we've caught a couple, uh, some of them just the quality of the camera and where they parked. You don't get a tag, so they're not there. You can see the people, but you can't. It's not good enough quality to see a license plate.

Does it cost to get a camera? I got one in my garage. It's right by there. And it isn't that Expensive because we got enough animals in the city that we could probably take care of now, much less anybody else. Just throwing them out the fence. So, I think we need to invest in a Clear camera. And a couple more cameras so that you can get the car from the front or the back or. Whatever the situation is. Yes, ma'am. And that's mine. How many animals are we euthanized?

Hawkins:

Not a lot. I think last month, -, I think there were 7 or 8, but four of those were vicious dogs that attacked someone. -, and we held them to the mandatory ten days. -, they were starting to get aggressive towards staff. We weren't going to knock them out because they had already attacked. The last call we got, they had attacked someone, but that was the second or third time that those dogs had attacked someone. So, -, four of those dogs were from that that location. And the owner, the owner basically signed the papers wanting them euthanized. So, its owner surrendered to Euthanization.

Hopkins

I know that feral cats were that population during those, uh, feral cats.

Hawkins

I mean, right now our purple category and the brown category are pretty much full. -, we had we were working with Thomasville Animal Shelter. They were getting some, but now they're full. So, we just had somebody drop off. I think it was last week or the week before. -, drop off a mama cat and I think 5 or 6 kittens in a Tupperware tote, uh, had it taped up and it was sitting on the front steps. You know, they were tame.

Hopkins

Well, everybody's having a feral population. And I noticed where Jacksonville, some of the vets were doing a new deal free of the feral cats. So, when they're released, they can have more kittens. And that's our problem. We have cats roaming everywhere in our neighborhood, and they only come out at night because you can see them on my cameras. And -, and I don't know if they're feral or somebody's cat that just let loose, but we've got numerous cats in our neighborhoods now. -, so, I just wondered what we were doing about that and if we were controlling the feral population or not anymore.

Hawkins:

No, ma'am. -, we've never had a I think the old Humane Society and the friends had a catch and release, -, program, but the city has never had one. The counties never had one. Again, that's just money. -, you know, the extra money to catch those. And then there's also been studies that show that catch and release. -, even though it reduces the number, still doesn't reduce the issues with sicknesses

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that they can transport or other issues. So, it's still a 5050 with that, that it fixes some the numbers come down, but you still have issues with stray cats running and diseases and things like that.

Hopkins:

Well, we just have a lot of complaints from businesses where they're going up, the station, Comcast going up and urinating in the drive-thrus and causing the huge odor that they were having to pressure wash the business every morning before they could open the windows. And I haven't heard from them lately, but we.

Hawkins:

So, the answer to that is we have not had a lot of those since there were, I think, 2 or 3 ladies that were going around town feeding cats. I think two of them have passed on. One moved. Uh, so that eliminated that problem. So, we haven't had any complaints from business owners. Okay.

Hopkins:

All right. I think that's all I have, Mr. Mayor. Thank you, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor:

Commissioner Bennett has a question regarding boxes.

Bennett:

Okay. -, will we provide the box, and if so, how much would we rent them out too?

Hawkins

So that'll. I'll do some research on those, if that's what you want me to do and get the prices on some boxes and look at either adding it into it, and each time they get a permit, they get one. -, that way we're assured that they have it for that. -, or some way of mandating that they put one up. But the easiest way, I think, would be to issue that with the permit and just include the cost of that. Yes. Thank you.

Very good. Any other questions, Commissioner?

Commissioner Felder:

No. I'm quite familiar with Mr. Hawkins' report. He stated this to us previously. Thank you. Thank you.

Mayor:

Chief Eddins

David Eddins

Mayor and commissioners. I'm going to rely on my Piece of paper. My eyes aren't as good. I need to get them checked. Milestones that we have achieved in October. They're supposed to start building our last fire truck that was ordered through suppliers. Hopefully we'll have it here by the end of the year as the projected timeline. This will be the last one that will completely turn our fleet over since I came here. So, all of our four fire engines and the ladder truck had been bought in my last 16 years here. That's a good thing. That puts us in good shape for many years to come into the future. And then we've also started a mandatory physical fitness program. I don't know if anybody knows the rigors of doing the firefighting that we have to do, but it's not just for that. What we're trying to do, and hopefully in the years to come, Marissa will be able to report less injuries. So, we're still going to have sprains and strains. But what we're hoping is there's less time off of the job when those things happen. This won't make us perfect, but it will help us in the long run. And we've had two people in our department, captain Lance Card and driver Brittany Prall that have taken this and have done a very good job with it. We actually do quarterly physical assessments where they do a variety of different tasks, and we time them within. So, what we're doing is looking for improvements in that. And I appreciate the department as a whole that has bought into this. And it's only to improve them. And our

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goal is to when their time comes to retire, that they're healthy and they have many years to enjoy retirement without aches and pains and ailments. Some of the concerns that I have, one of my main jobs as the fire chief is to be a forecaster, not a weather forecaster. But I have to look into the future for trends of what happens in emergency calls, what's coming down the pike so I can keep my folks informed and keep the city manager and commission informed the things that we may need to look for, whether it's purchasing or items we need to do as far as codes or ordinance changes. One of the things that concerns me is our overtime due to our driver shortage. We currently have five driver positions open right now and that's no fault of anyone's. We're a young department. We have most of our firefighters who are probably 26 and younger and new in the job. We've had a turnover rate, which would be my next one. For years. We didn't lose people to other departments. We've had three in the most recent time that have gone to other departments, and it wasn't firefighters leaving to go, it was drivers and one that we've talked about. We had a captain that left, which is very uncommon, that it happens. And it's for a variety of reasons, whether it was a change, whether someone else, a spouse may have gotten a job, whether it was for money, or an increase in pay. We generally, over the years in my time here, have people that have just left through, whether it's retirement or just decided this wasn't their job. You know, it's one of these. We have one of those jobs. You don't know if that's what you want to do until you get in it. And then as you get a few fires or a few accidents that you go to, you may decide, this isn't what I'm made to be. So, we have a turnover rate that I'm concerned about. We are fixing to hire our third class for this year. That's uncommon. -, so, if the rate keeps on, then we may be at number four and number five before the year ends, I hope not. I hope this helps. Take care of it. And then that I my hope is encouraged by the focus. Items that you'll see are we are working on promoting drivers. We have a 12-session program that we've come up with to address the five-driver shortage. We're in session eight and nine where they're actually flowing water now. So, we started them from the very basics of, you know, nothing about a fire truck, except it's red and it's got tires and there's a siren on it. Oh, did I say that correctly? So, there's a so we wanted to know more about it. So, they've gone from the very basics to now they're actually going out and they're setting the p-p up and they're flowing water through the hose. We call this a driver recruit class. The idea was to look at it as a firefighter recruit class. They work together as a group. So, each shift all the firefighters on that shift are three shifts or that class that are moving forward. I want to thank everybody in the fire department because they all have to go out there, whether you're in that recruit group or not. The officers, the drivers, the battalion chiefs are out there with them when they're doing that. So, it's encouraging this idea that we're all out there to encourage and we're all out there to learn, because one day I've got to teach somebody to do this again. We picked five individuals that have gotten their driver's license. That's big because they cannot drive on the road unless they have a permit or the driver's license for the class to drive a fire truck. So, since this program began, we have picked five firefighters that have received their license. They're able to get more driving time, which is great because it gives them more experience of handling that vehicle. You've got to realize none of these have driven vehicles bigger than passenger vehicles. So now you put them in this big fire truck and set them out on the road. It can be intimidating, very intimidating. So, this gives them that opportunity. I want to thank the mayor, commissioner and the city manager and even the department heads for working on recruitment and retention. Package. Ordinance will come for final vote tomorrow night on the reduction for retirement. I think that's going to be huge in helping us to recruit people, and it's going to be huge in helping us retain people here. And then in the future, we've got to look at employee pay. -, I've said it many times before, and I don't mean to be ugly about this, but you can look in the private sector and the fire department. Hourly rate. We can't keep up with the people in the private sector. -, our firefighters work 24 hour shifts so that the crew to come on this morning. Come over at seven. They won't leave until tomorrow at seven. A third of their life is away from their family. Weekends, holidays, things like that. That takes a toll on you. So being able to reduce that time to where they can retire early is going to be a great benefit. But if you offer them more money per hour and they can be home at night and on weekends, that's kind of hard to beat. So, we've got to do something to make and encourage because it takes and I'll say with public safety, period, I'm going to include the police, EMS and 911. It takes a special person to do that kind of job and see the things that these have to see on a, on a day-to-day basis, not knowing what they're going to and what they're going to see when they arrive on that. So, it takes a mental toll on them in a long haul. So, we need to make sure that we're getting the best people here, that we're doing our best to retain them. And that's going to be through

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benefits and it's going to be through pay. So, our future is we've got to really make a strong look at pay. And I think the city manager has a plan. And I think, -, if we if it works out well, we'll be able to see some positive turnaround in the very near future. That's all I have. If there's any questions.

Mayor:

Commissioners. Do you have any questions for the Chief?

Bennett:

I don't have any questions, but I commend you. And I believe that when you spend long periods of time with someone, you build a bond. And that's family and that's away from home. So, you also develop a great connection with each other. So, it starts with how you treat people, how you talk to people That goes a long way and including the pay. So, whatever it takes, I'm on board to accommodate. Thank you.

Eddins:

And we do appreciate it. And our folks may not tell you as a commission. They may not see you to be able to tell you, but they're fully aware that you're on board with helping to improve their benefits and pay for that. That is just a process we've got to work for. So, on their behalf, I want to thank you. You're welcome.

Mayor:

Thank you. Chief Cox

Chief Cox:

I think the most out of the slide that you have on the police department, probably the most important thing that you'll see on here. It's probably a 47% reduction in violent felony crimes. That's one of the biggest and a lot of that overwhelming majority of that does have a gang tint to it. And so, some of our milestones or some of our plans that we've even had in our five-year strategy at the police department was the expansion of some of our community outreach programs, which we've done to try to address some of this. How effective is it's hard to scale. We know what we're trying to do, but we've been going to more and more places. -, teaching gang prevention. -. A mentoring program at the police department. I'll bring that up as a milestone. When it was originally put into place, it was meant to be a mentoring program for some of the youth in our community. And I'm glad to say that we just hired our second police officer that has come out of our junior auxiliary program. So, we're seeing our success, our expansion and victim services. Oh, speaking of that, I'm speaking of the Family Justice Center who just had its opening. And we'll have a detective station over there. -, some of the concerns that we're seeing, -, Chief Eddington just spoke on its losing for me. It's losing certified officers to other agencies and some that we just cannot compete with, like the Port Authority. We've lost two very recently, -, going over there because, I mean, they're going to be making several thousand dollars more a year. And so, some of our focus items, -, continue. Or one thing I think is very positive for us, if we hire you on at the police department, we will have a lot of specialty pay built in. If you receive certain certifications, you get a b-p in pay, uh, to include the college incentive that we got, you know, just, you know, a year, year, and a half ago that's kicked in. And so, they're benefiting from that. But we have K-9 officer pay, field training officer pay. So, we got several things in place where officers can advance and can increase that pay. So, I think we're doing well there. But one of the areas that would kind of or that I have kind of dropped the ball on is when it comes to our, our non-sworn staff, there's really no specialty pay associated with them. We've got some employees that are approaching 20 years of service, one over 20 years of service, and they're still down in the 12, 13, \$14 range, -, for pay, which is one of the reasons one of my focus items was \$1 flat raise for our six record technicians, and a seven and a half and a half percent increase for, -, for two of those clerks, which would be a what we call a terminal agency coordinator certificate, -, certifications, which would be a 7.5% increase for just those two positions. And technically what that would be doing. We have something called a records clerk two position, which is an unfilled position. We have no but we have record tech one classifications. The second classification would be a supervisor position. -, that supervisor position is sort of dictated, -, very easily during the day because you have staff officers there to

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supervise such at night. It's dictated to the watch commanders who oversee what's going on in the front office. And so, we don't think we would be best served by promoting one of these record techs to a supervisory position. But I think it's very justifiable to, -, to recognize two of them who have received that terminal agency coordinator certification. -, which has to do with oversight of our GSoC, NCIC, our computers up front run criminal histories, things of that nature. They make sure that we're doing everything that we should be doing. And so, I will consider that a focus item. -, and also, we continue to adjust the community outreach programs. We've expanded what we're doing. We there's not a, you know, a month that goes by every couple of months that goes by where we don't have something planned that we're doing in our community as far as outreach is concerned, but we're always reevaluating that. What we had five years ago, we may not have today, or we may do it a little bit differently. And so, with that said, -, are there any questions I might be able to ask or answer for you?

Hopkins:

I'm just saying, you're saying, you know, in the budget you have right now for this coming fiscal year, you have seven people that's going to get raises.

Cox:

That's what we're asking for. No,

Hopkins:

it actually would be six and administrative or what?

Cox:

Well, in 2021, we had a plan in place to move our salaried employees from a 2080 schedule, which is a 40 hours per week, basically to a 43 hour a week schedule. So, it goes from 28 to 22, 36 hours per year. And one of the reasons why we went from 64 positions to we're down to 51 allotted positions. Everybody's having to do more. -, we adjusted the department a little bit. We've become very flexible. And there's at times we have to pull detectives from their position and go and work the streets in the patrol officer positions. -, you have staff officers having to serve as watch commanders from time to time. So, we have just handled it. So that's a way of, -, just compensating them more for the hours. More realistic. What they're actually doing.

Hopkins:

So really shipping up an insane amount of pay is what you're saying. So, by adjusting this, it sort of puts them in between whether they're working on a position that the.

Cox:

The majority of them, because all the staff are on 24 over seven calls, are not compensated for being on call status. There were 24 over seven calls. So, it's going to be a roller coaster ride going up and up and down. But there's weeks that they're working 40 to 60 hours a week on average, just based on what's going on in the community. And so, what we're trying to do is go from 40 hours a week to 43 hours a week. We started in 2021, -, eight we've already accomplished, and now we're looking forward to. Finish off the other six.

Hopkins

And so how much of an increase is that? 7 or 8%?

Cox:

No, the actual percentage of no I don't. For the certifications it's 7.5% for two individuals. That's a lot of that. Just looking at what they're doing, knowing what the promotion to a supervisor or whatever would be, which would be 10%. We settle on seven, 7.5%, just looking, sitting down, evaluating and seeing, because that's one of the most important aspects. If you want the Waycross Police Department to get in trouble, tinker around and do something you're not supposed to do with GCSE and NCIC that would get us fined. -, uh, and that would get us in. But two young ladies that were looking at that are

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certified in this. They make sure that everybody's got their annual training and make sure who's on those computers being operated the way they should be. Those terminals are being operated where they should be operated. And like I said, these are almost 20-year employees and they're still.

Hopkins:

So, you're just Compensating what they're already doing, but just giving them a little price doing it right.

Cox:

Okay. All right. Well, like I said, the sworn have certification, please. -, the non-sworn. And so, we're just wanting to create an avenue for them to do it also. And there's only two slots that's available. For about seven and a half years.

Mayor

Thank you, Commissioner Bennett

Bennett

Thank you, Chief Cox, for everything that you and your officers do. My goal is to make sure that you as well get what you need for your officers so they can stay here, because this is a great place, a great city for them to be here. But I do have one concern. What about the people? I'm sorry. Your vehicles. Are all your vehicles Intact.

Cox:

Well, that's actually listed as one of my, -, one of my concerns.

Bennett:

I mean I've witnessed some in some situations. That's why I'm asking you.

Cox:

I want to say it's 13 vehicles that we've got road vehicles that are over a decade old. It's 13 of them. Right now, we've got five vehicles, two with blown motors and three with transmissions that are totally wiped, that are just sitting in the garage because they're so old and we don't want to put more money with them. And hoping that we'll be able to get six in this upcoming budget to replace those. But that's I want to say it's 18% of my current fleet is over a decade old.

Bennett

And then, like I said, I've witnessed some situations with your officers and their vehicles and that could have turned bad. So hopefully the budget will be passed, and we can grant you the things that you need and make sure that our officers are very well protected when they are there.

Cox:

Yeah. And I actually got one vehicle that's 20 years old and so that's what we had one of me. And then if you get in a scenario where you end up, we don't do many of them because we got very, very when it comes to one of the police officers being involved in a chase, there has to be threshold. It has to be met. Just don't chase for anything. I'm talking about there is a very, very high need to apprehend whoever's running from. It has to be a forceful felon and then a whole lot of things afterwards. And I just, you know, you're in a bad scenario if you're out there chasing somebody and those speeds get high and you're in a dilapidated vehicle. And that's why I had to be here, because. It's more important Yes. Yes

Hopkins:

Tom. Now we had a Rotation thing where you're supposed to rotate old ones out and new ones every year. And you remember that deal with enterprise. It was going to be so great. That would be great. And we can't help hell behind for that or some reason. -.

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Cox:

Well, you had a -, there was a little transition that we thought no longer here, and it's, uh, but I can tell you this and maybe Greg can speak up a little bit better, but it's my understanding. Whenever we got in that program, it was like the very following year, you couldn't get a vehicle, right? And they and they were talking about, you know, it's going to be a year or two years for a vehicle. So, I'm sure that had a whole lot to play in it and why we didn't start trading vehicles in and out. But I want to say the schedule was -, was maybe for non-administrative vehicles, you would trade them in within three years. And for administrative vehicles, not something I would drive. It would be five years for me to switch them out, right?

Hopkins:

And they would keep an old change and the whole nine yards. And they were going to provide us with vehicles throughout. And then you could get the inventory right. So that sort of threw us behind, I guess, and our rotation too, because when I first came on, we agreed that we remembered chiefly, and Cox was on here then. And so, you remember we had some old, old dilapidated. So, we started a rotation program where you took those things and bought them every year. So, we don't have that program anymore.

Cox:

ma'am. The only thing I can't speak to that for, -, that that far back, I can tell you what is routine if we get a new vehicle. Yeah. Next thing we're going to be making a surplus in vehicles. And then they go on with gov deals or whatever the case may be. And so that is consistent. We still do that. The only way we would not do that is the fleet is just so short and we cannot give anything up. We need to hold it in reserve.

Hopkins:

Are we doing state contracts now?

Cox:

Ma'am, I got an email the other day asking for state contracts, which got sent to me. And so that is something that we always look at.

Hopkins:

Yeah. Because -, that enterprise things did not work out. I was not paying for that because that was a bunch of tall, tall stuff that was. And they never could produce. So, I was nervous for that to start with. And then you sell your car today and keep the same amount back for next year so that I can do it. And I knew that was a big crew to start with, and then we couldn't get the vehicle. So that thing went south. But we never had a problem with state contracts, as far as I know. If we've got the state contracting any, bid it out and go to the state contract. We've always got the best price. And we had some locals that were upset because they didn't get it, but they were so much higher than what the state contract was, and they wouldn't meet the price. So that's the reason we Went to state contracts.

Cox:

Now don't quote me on this, but I think I'm telling you correctly, I think there's been once or twice that we got from enterprise that they were actually deferred to a state contract. Most of the vehicles that they actually got for us; I could be wrong on that. And I remember being involved in paperwork and, you know, looking at everything.

Hopkins:

How the vehicles that they drive home, everybody still drives to Oklahoma, every officer regardless of the miles. We used to have a limit on the miles. So, what's the furthest away do we have that someone lives?

Cox:

Well, our policy is within 30 miles.

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Hopkins:

30 miles? Yeah, we used to just have a cap on the mileage.

Cox:

At one time, we tried to limit the actual mileage they put on them to their not mileage, but actual gallons of gasoline. They used 115 gallons a month. But -, once again, the more as our positions have minimized over the years from 64 allotted positions, now we're down to 51. A lot of people are having to drive a whole lot more just during their shifts and things like that. So that's people that's their calls. And so, they're having to go back and forth across town or whatever the case may be. and so right now I'm not going to sit here and tell you that. Yeah. You know, they're limited to 115 gallons. Instead of having that restriction, we just pay close attention to them, to the budget itself and just see where we're at with their expenditure, -, with their expenditures. And if we see that we're going sideways, we try to back everybody off.

Hopkins: so that we could be within the budget next year and put those out to bid with the state contract.

Cox:

We got these six vehicles that we've asked for. You can expect some to be, -, surplus to go in there.

Hopkins:

And we'll get some surplus, but you'll still use the state contract, right?

Cox:

Yes. If we can find some. There's been times when we can find vehicles cheaper than the state contract and that's available. Absolutely do it.

Hopkins:

Ms. Mamie does a good job, so I'm sure she'll find it.

Cox:

It. Oh she does take.

Hopkins

The best folks with your dollar.

Cox:

Now she's an email, she shoots me one right back. What I need. So, thank you.

Marissa Hendrix

Good afternoon mayor. Commissioners. So, some things that we did achieve was one of our biggest things was our orientation overhaul. -, orientation should be the most important part of onboarding. You want your employees to know about policies, procedures and simply where to go if you need something. We realized that our current new hire orientation was lacking in information. A lot of information. So, we did a complete overhaul of that. -, unfortunately, it does take a little more time for the employees, but they are well informed when they leave our department, and we feel better that they have the knowledge that they need to succeed on their first day. -, some of our top concerns, of course, morale and retention and competitive salaries. Uh, inflation has been one of the top contributors to low morale, in my opinion, and retention. We are losing employees to other agencies and businesses for higher paying positions with better benefits. -, we've been trying to slowly combat this, uh, one little step at a time. Hopefully we can make more progress and add further to our recruitment and retention package. -, our focus. With that being said, with inflation on the rise, recruitment and retention have been a top concern for our department. Uh, we are looking always for

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new ways. -, talking to other cities and counties to see what they are doing, whether that be monetary or nonmonetary. to boost the number of candidates that we receive for each. Application, as well as retain the employees that we have. A second focus item is assessing and closing out our outstanding workers comp cases. Some of these have been going on for quite some time. -, but we were still continuing to work diligently with our worker's comp attorney, and hopefully we can bring all of those to a close shortly.

Mayor:

I have a question. So how many claims do we have right now.

Hendrix

On our old, -, worker's comp or self-insured? There are currently five open claims.

Mayor:

Commissioner, if you have any questions.

Hopkins:

I do. Mr. mayor. So where are you seeing on the employee's changeover? Where are you seeing employee changeover. What departments are you seeing the most?

Hendrix:

honestly. Public works. And right now, police department? -, fire department as well. Honestly. It's everywhere.

Hopkins:

I think our administrative help is pretty compatible with what other people in the city are doing. And I know we've worked on I know I spoke several times about public works. That's hard work. And you can't keep them. You can't keep CDL drivers. So, we've talked about that, uh, numerous times. We know where we are on the police, and we know that, uh, Chief Eddins gave a long talk about what our future plans are for the fire department, and he's trying to get them to hang on to them so we can. So, we can do something about that. It's not going to be easy to fix. It's going to be costly. So, we know about those. But my main concern was those public the public safety and the code works because there seems to be the ones that are lacking on filling those positions. Yes.

Bennett:

-, Marissa, I understand you say that the city clerks and fire department, police department need help, and we are basing this on race and the budget. When the budget is passed. But how are you as a department head. It's just a question. Can boost morale. What can you do to boost morale on another level?

Hendrix

So, some of the ideas that I came up with and I shared with the other department heads, I found a lengthy list of different incentives that you can do, just simple acknowledgments or like we do, employee of the month, employee of the year, or simply when we got some feedback about employees out and about working really hard. to share that with them. Say, hey, I don't know if you saw this, but great job. You know, people are noticing other things. And I brought this up as something as simple as it's no cost to the city but offering like a membership to air Evac through payroll deduction, something like that. Little perks and bonuses here and there. Okay, so this.

Bennett:

This is something that you said you shared with the other department heads. So, I'm asking also did you share it with the city manager. That way we could collaborate and make this stuff happen.

Hopkins:

So, what kind of Membership was talking about?

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Hendrix

The Air Evac membership is the county does it as well. -, they check it monthly.

Hopkins

What is the Cost of membership.

Hendrix:

There are different tiers, but we do get a discount if we opt to go with them.

Hopkins:

So did you. Present a budget to the city manager on that?

Hendrix

I shared information with them.

Hopkins

So about how much would that cost? Do you know?

Hendrix

To the city? Nothing. It's for the employees to elect.

Hopkins

That sounds good. So, we need to look into that.

Hendrix

That's all I have, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor:

Thank you. Any other questions? Thank you.

Greg Smith:

Good afternoon, Mr. Mayor, and Commissioner for the Finance Department. The two left quadrants go together. The milestones we've achieved are, uh, we're still we're still using the milestones we're working on. We were. And what we're doing is, of course, we have training and cross training. Now we have additional accounting, internal controls, which is we don't have an internal audit department. But that that would go with the same theory of having one. We're also working on succession - training and also the new IT system. We're getting on all these all these works together. They've helped us, you know, get all scheduled for the audit and to, uh, uh, to increase the things we've done within the, uh, within the accounting department and also for the finance department, the two quadrants on the right sort of go together to the upper right as it talks about expenses. The bottom right. Revenue. And of course, those go together as we have the challenge of meeting the goals we have for expenses. We you know, we have to have revenue to cover those. And, you know, and what we've talked about in recent months, you know, concerning the budget is, you know, the expenses and the and the revenue. And as I've said, with the budget, you know, we're counting on the new businesses coming into town to help on the, on the revenue side through sales taxes. So, does anybody have any questions or comments?

Hopkins:

I mean, how many businesses are you counting on coming to the city to get this revenue?

Smith:

I don't have a number. I think the Phoenix building is now on the tax rolls. The new hotel is on the tax rolls, too. And we've talked about inflation, you know, it's bad for us individually, but as the prices go up, it's increased our sales tax revenue. So that will help our budget too.

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Hopkins:

Any other big, big pieces of property that's come back on the tax roll besides those two?

Those are the ones I know about. And of course, they're smaller ones. And, you know, when people come to town and buy property, they don't get real estate tax exemption. So that helps us somewhat on.

Hopkins:

The residential houses of commercial. Uh.

Smith:

Both, but of course, you know this. The residential houses get the exemption. The homestead. in. Right. So, watch what I, you know, the big ones are what I said, you know, the commercial property. Yeah.

Hopkins:

And then the hotels are bringing in another hotel. So, besides the new one we're having the grand opening for. So those are those are big pieces of property, I'm sure. Right. Tax revenue.

Smith:

Right. And when and when the people come stay at the hotels. You know, a lot of them. They'll go out to eat and go shopping.

Hopkins:

To the tourism tax as well. Right. So, I was just thinking about big pieces that you were talking about business coming to town. What's in the future that we don't know about? Right. Anything. Or know. What? Anything. Big business is coming.

Smith:

Not that I know of.

Hopkins:

So now generates some revenue, but not. Not enough. Okay. Whether or not we have to. -, I mean, it's going to create revenue for us. But having that to do all what we need to do within the infrastructure and raises and things that nature. So, we've had a lot of problems with infrastructure in our city, and I didn't mean to interrupt you. Is that all you had?

Smith:

Yes.

Mayor:

I thought we were going to have some breaking news here all of a sudden. Oh, no, the question that was answered. Any other questions, Commissioner? Okay.

Smith

Thank you, thank you.

James Smart

Mr. Mayor and Commissioners, -, just to go over a few things That milestones that We've achieved in The Public Works Department. And it plays a big part with the city manager. What he's brought to the table as well is modifying our work schedule to help our employees deal with the heat on a day to day, especially during the hot summer months. We've changed some things around where that, you know, if an employee comes in early 6:00, he gets off earlier that day. Also, if he worked through lunch, he could get off earlier that way and spend that 30 minute as his lunch that afternoon. He still gets his

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total hours, but it helps him with different things that they have going on in their life, like doctor visits or, uh, as school started this morning. Uh, being able to get their kids and do what they need to do. And also, it helps with morale in our department as well since this has been going on. -, our guys, you hear the excitement in their voice whenever, you know, they got time off and stuff instead of actually having to use their vacation or sick leave so that they can retain that when they can spend time with their family during the summer months or whatever needs to be there. Uh, benchmark, last year, Coastal Pines came out and talked with our guys about different ways they can achieve their CDL license. Uh, first and foremost, if they're interested, then they have to do their part as far as going and getting their learner's permit from the State Patrol office. That's first and foremost. They have to have that before they can get enrolled in their class. I actually have one employee that took it upon himself on a Friday to go to a class that they were holding at Coastal Pines, and after that class was over, he went out, passed his test with no problem to get his learner's permit. And he's actually enrolled to start here very shortly in the next CDL class. Now, with that being said, when they get their CDL, it gives them an opportunity to increase pay to start with, which helps tremendously and also the next level of jobs that we have, you have to have a CDL in order for advancement. So, we encourage every one of our employees to get their CDL. So, if something does come open that, you know, those employees will be. We like to promote within. So, we give them the opportunity to do so. Uh, milestones that they're working on, uh, as of now again, training and certifications, G Dot offers a lot of free training and stuff. And when they're close enough, we're going to look at trying to send our guys, especially some of the tree crews and that kind of stuff, in order to get training to offer backhoe and different things as well, at no cost to the city. -, I've asked for a slight increase in the budget to send some of our other guys on some training because, you know, I think we had \$500 in, on some of the training. And the Lord knows that don't hardly cover a motel room now. So, uh, ask for slight increases or nothing outstanding, but sort of help with, uh, getting some more training in all the departments. -, Public Works does offer in-house training for some of our staff. Whenever we get rainy days or whatever, some of our guys, they'll get on the backhoes and different things, and we've got dirt piles out there. They can go and train on that and give them some more insight into exactly how the machine operates. We actually have a person that knows how the machine works to give them some guidance as well. Just don't throw them out there in the blind and let them go. We give them training out there, so when those job opportunities do come up, they've got the skill set to move into them. Uh, some of our concerns, just as all the other departments have talked about, is maintaining a quality workforce. -, as you well know, our employees, we think the world of them, they are very skilled employees. But if the job opportunity comes along that offers a little bit more money, they're going to grab it because they need the money to survive and to make sure that their families have what they need to live off of. With that being said as well, maintaining the equipment that we have, we have over 200 pieces of equipment. Police cars, fire trucks, light, heavy equipment stuff. These guys, that's over there. There are actually six employees that work in the vehicle maintenance shop. These gentlemen have to be skilled in every level of what it takes, from changing brakes right on up to pulling an engine out, or knowing what hydraulic hoses are going bad or the pumps going bad. Those type of people are hard to come by. Most people that have mechanical skills now are skilled in 1 or 2 areas. They're not going. They're not someone that comes in that knows everything. Again, that's part of the on-the-job training too. But those employees are very, very valuable to the city of Waycross. And we try to do whatever we can to retain them. But as you well know, money is going to be a part of it, too. Uh, some of our focus items are maintaining the city right of ways, maintaining all of our city parks, cleaning our storm stored grains and maintaining our three large cemetery plots. And with the fourth. More crew that we've got that concentrates just on the major thoroughfares. Those help tremendously. But again, when I started with the city 33 years ago, just in highways and streets, that was called street department. Back then there were over 30 employees. We have 19 employees now. And that that old saying does more with less. You can throw that out the window because nowadays, with the amount of work that those guys have to do, we've got to have the manpower there to maintain and do the amount of stuff that our citizens expect out of us. So that's something that we're looking at as well. So that being said, do you have any questions? Any questions?

Hopkins:

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Thank you, Sir. James, you need to fix that problem. Because I know that they can't get anything. And Rome wasn't built in a day, especially in the summer months, as quickly as grass grows. But we have some issues around our city that hasn't been cleaned thoroughly. And I know you can't get to all the cemeteries and parks and all that you have to do. So, have you asked for any more help too? Work in those departments?

Smart:

Well, and again, with the other more crew that was just added not too long ago, then that helped us tremendously. There's a process we have got to go through. There's other equipment that we're looking at trying to purchase, and along with that other equipment, we will have to have employees to be hired on that skilled in order to run those pieces of equipment to what we're looking at another boom mower for our canal systems, and right of ways to be able to go in and help cut the canals. There's 27 miles of canals. We can't get to all of it. But what we can get to, we have to have the manpower to cut it. I just went over today and looked at a canal that's been probably three weeks out, that the mower crew has come through the sidearm mower, and it's right back to where it was before he ever cut it. And that's just part of living in the south. Grass is going to grow, especially with the humidity and rain and heat that we get. It's going to grow, so if we add another piece of equipment to it, then that will help us. You know, we'll be able to maintain it a little bit faster.

Hopkins:

I know downtown you go down there by ties. And I'm not criticizing you because you've got your hands full, and you got your crew. Sounds good. But if you go down there by the ties and Jake and eds and some of those places, those are square beds, they got weeds all in there. I suggested planting some lantana, something that's annual that takes over and it'll cut out some of those weeds. But that's an expense for us because we've got to start and bud out on Castle Road. You have got two of those beds in the middle. They need attention. So, I was just thinking. About some kind of annual flower that comes back that will help prevent the weeds in that. Lantana is well known. We used to have lantana. They dug dad lives there, so I don't know why. Because they're high maintenance people on that. So. But I still think we need to talk about adding some more if you have thirty and whatever you have. How many years ago?

Smart:

Thirty, that was 3 years ago. Now we're down to 19.

Hopkins:

down to 19. Yes, ma'am. It sounds like to me, you know, we don't think we can afford it. We cannot afford it because our cities are main thoroughfares and all that to maintain and maintain. And then you get behind on them. Because of the rain, for one thing. We've had a tremendous amount of rain. You can't buy the grass. And so that probably puts you back a week right there at least. So, I suggest that we look at having a few crew members back home, like we had.

To go to get you, because you're going to have to have them. It doesn't matter because you don't know when the rain is coming and when you're going to get behind. So, I suggest maybe the city manager looking at you, looking at Adding crew Members that can help you out and keep the stuff clean.

Smart:

Yes, ma'am. And again, with our city growing as it is, you see new places coming up all the time. We have got to look to the future. We got to be able to be able to maintain this stuff and attract other, uh, people that come through. I remember when Chief Eddins first came to town, one of the first things he said that caught his eye when he rode through our city, going somewhere else was how clean the ride always and everything looked. That stuck in my heart because I'm responsible for that stuff. And when I see this stuff getting behind, it also bothers me as well. So, we need to look at whatever we need to do to get this stuff back under control. So, we'll be able to get our city back where it needs to be. Thank you.

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Hopkins

I especially think people come from Atlanta. Going to Saint Simons or Atlanta, coming going to Florida or whatever. That's the first. The impression they get when they come down to those Driveways. And if we don't maintain them and I don't want to only here looking at this series. So that's something we really need to do. Seriously focus on. Focus upon, in my opinion, is adding some more employees to get some more equipment to help you out because you can't do it with 19 people. You should do it with 33. There's no way. I mean, that's the way down. So, and I'd love to add I'd rather add some more. Employees and keep our city. And give you more help and keep our city clean, especially for the. And when you come downtown to eat whatever. Whether those beds are, they need to be cleaned. And one other thing I want to ask. What happened to the dumpster downtown that used to be down by Jackson on the left. And we're going to put it on the sidewalks now. What happened to that?

Smart

Well, what we're actually trying to do now, we're implementing another dumpster over beside the Mary Street mission. There's a parking lot there, and we had Robin come in and put us in the dumpster. It's just a transition period. Patrick is working on the businesses downtown in order to get all those, so that we can eliminate all those garbage bags going on the sidewalks. It's a little more. I'm sorry.

Hopkins:

I will go to a shop downtown I will try to take you downtown. And I went over there to the beauty shop the other day, Thursday after the storm. The bags were in the corner. Trash. They got into the trash. They had wet napkins, wet Kleenexes all up and down the sidewalk. Trash everywhere and all that stuff and getting all this stuff up. So, it's hindering us by not having a dumpster down. Maybe by the Social Security office for that whole block area there. They complained to me because they said, now we put on the sign, and it looks horrible. If you got downtown ties that secure somewhere and you got all this trash laying on the floor, they don't know it's going to be picked up tomorrow. They just think we throw trash on the street. So, I don't like that at all. So, I wish we'd put a dumpster at some center location down near those two blocks, because that's where you've got a lot of traffic. Now that is the beauty shop and not all.

Smart:

Yes, ma'am. You still just have to keep in mind, though, that we need those parking spots down there. When the people do go downtown to do business in the downtown area.

Hopkins:

That's about that there that they said they used to have one back there by the Social Security office or on the parking lot right there or something. They used to have one back there. Yes, ma'am. How can we not put one back there again? They ran the trash down the street, and they were sitting on sidewalks.

Smart:

Well, and again, we're trying to centralize the dumpsters to keep it from looking like all dumpsters, all downtown with everybody. Same issue we'd have if you issued everybody a garbage can downtown. There'd be a problem with trying to get in the truck, get in there to get all the garbage cans emptied in a day's time, because you have cars that still have parking spots.

Hopkins:

You got over here behind the theater. You have got 3 or 4 dumpsters sitting out there. And again, you Who knows? And then that doesn't look good. But they don't have anything over there in that area. So, and that's a that's a heavily trap. They have a lot of business at that beauty shop. And Jake has a lot. And the little barber shop there. So, Wiley's around the corner. So, I'm thinking that we need to go back to a dumpster somewhere over there, one of the parking lots of alleys, or get permission from

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somebody to leave that you put on the side of the building or something so they can have a location for that.

City Manager:

That's in the works. We're working with the merchant authority down there. That particular beauty salon does not come to the meetings. So, it's a few businesses that don't involve themselves and everybody else. So, we got a plan for that. It's going to take a little time to plan. We have a plan for that. So that's the plan. We're putting it in the trash cans, street locations. So, we got our areas identified already. As soon as we get everybody on board, we will no longer pick up the trash on the side of the road. They'll bring it to the dumpster. And that people can, they call it their plan already versus what they're doing now. that side of the road, they go again.

Hopkins

So, we will have a dumpster?

City Manager:

Not the location you're talking about, but we got the location we were selecting. Right now, we're working with all the merchants to figure that out. So, it's a plan being worked out.

Hopkins?

Trash cans again?

Smart:

Dumpsters.

City Manager:

Dumpsters

Dumpsters. The big dumpsters. Are those your plans for that area.

City Manager:

For the whole downtown.

Hopkins:

Whole downtown? Yes. Okay. Because I know that I would rather walk 2 or 3 blocks and put the trash out and put it on the streets. And then we got a mess, and it gets scattered.

City Manager:

We talked to all of them already. Except for those two businesses. They didn't come to the meetings. Everybody else on Plant Avenue all the way through. We spoke about this. They all voted on it. They all agreed with it. So, we're going to put the trash cans out and then take the trash to the trash cans. So, it's been working already. Okay.

Hopkins

So, dumpsters will be placed somewhere so they can utilize dumpsters. Yes. And said on the side. Yes. That's what I need to clarify. And the other thing is, who's in charge of handicapped parking? Parking. Handicapped spaces.

Smart:

Traffic paints. All the spots that's down there now. I think there may be a process in order to identify new spots. If they're asking for new spots.

Hopkins:

Well, there's one spot I park. In right down on that side, and it's almost always taken in front of the beauty shop. And all along right there where we shop, there's one handicapped this way around that

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corner. And when you start up that sidewalk going up towards Japanese, there's a really rough spot like that. You have to lift and get up to it. And so, they don't have any on that street going down there.

Smart:

I'll look into it.

Hopkins:

That's all I have, Mr. Mayor. Thank you.

Bennett:

Mr. mayor let's just keep in mind that we can't do anything but so much until we pass the budget with the machines that they need in order to carry out what James and everybody else is asking for, and maybe have to increase some fines and fees. But until we pass the budget, we can't do all this today.

Thank you. Mayor.

Felder:

Mr. smart, you mentioned training and certification. Yes, ma'am. For our public works employees and through gDot, do.

Smart:

That's just one program that gDot offers at no expense to anyone. They'll send out emails to me, and they give dates and stuff and where they're located. And we just try to make sure that the locations are within reason. -, they all from all over the state of Georgia. I just got an email today that they had offered them up in Bartow and around Atlanta area and that kind of stuff. So, for the class itself, we try to look at something that's local Jesup or somewhere like that. Savannah even. And then once we get those employees, we can select a few to go and take the classes.

Felder:

How long are those classes?

Smart:

It really depends on the class itself. I went to one year ago. It was like half a day. And then, you know, it's hands on stuff. That's what it is. It's not classroom stuff. It's all hands on. And that's exactly what we deal with. Every day is hands on stuff.

Felder:

So, if an employee were to take one of those classes, they would receive a certification. Does that certification potentially allow that employee to be promoted?

Smart

Well, those classes are not actually certification. More on the training side of what gDot offers. It just gives you basic knowledge and stuff and safety measures and stuff to take, especially like with dealing with storms and different things like that. That's what they do. There are no certifications involved of what gDot actually does. You'd have to attend some kind of class like, uh, the state of Georgia offers, uh, through the Public Works Association in order to get certifications in those. We do have some management positions that's been filled not too long ago. Those positions are eligible to start going to those classes, but they are an expense to the city for the employees to take those. And it takes roughly three years to get your certification in those.

Felder:

So, do we offer and maybe Marissa, you addressed this, but do we offer tuition and reimbursement to our employees that go to, you know, enroll in certain programs to become certified so that they can operate on board?

Smart:

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We have offered that for the Cdl's in the past, but with the restraints and stuff. That's why, you know, when you guys come out with Coastal Pines and gave the information that you did. We encouraged our employees to follow through with that. And like I said, I have one employee so far that's enrolled in the truck driving class for CDL.

Felder:

And we do have scholarships available as well. Thank you, Mrs. Martin. Yes, ma'am. Back to you, mayor. Okay. Thank you.

City Manager:

Thank you, Mr. Mayor. Okay. I'm going to summarize the briefing, like I said. So, this was a year in review. Like, you see, we had a lot of positives. -, a lot of concerns still. -, if you if you listen throughout the briefing, the main thing is, as we kept increasing the requirements of the city over the last decade or so. -, we did not increase the revenue or the workforce. So that's one thing. -, like I said, all great ideas. We talked often about this stuff, but until then we made some tough decisions about increasing revenue. -, we're going to be faced with these challenges with the workforce. -, right now, it's not even possible to increase the workforce at this time. I'm trying to increase benefits on the back side too. I would need to Probably at least 80 more people to get us to the same passage that we need, -, to cover the benchmark that we got. So, so with that being said, I'm still probably doing right now it isn't great. But like I said, y'all a slide. I'm more focused on the operations versus the esthetics of the community right now, because that's more important until we figure out a way to get these people in. So, when it comes down to canals and those things right now, the first the first priority is to ensure the canal is clean so that the water can get through, and then we'll cut it on our schedule as much as we can. But it can't be cut every week. That's physically impossible at this time right now. So that's why we're trying to focus on cleaning. So, -, hopefully, -, at a later date, we'll have time to really sit down and look at, -, either reducing some of the requirements, which is an option as well, -, or increasing the revenue drastically. So that's, that's down the road. Uh, I do want to hit a few things that were not in the briefing because we didn't have the Energy Department. Uh, we are close to solving that media problem. -, uh, trade team need to get together. Once that problem is resolved, we'll get a better read on the meetings versus all the rereads, and that will increase revenue itself. -, on that level, -, some of the things the team mentioned, -, we do require community support too, to excel at those things. Uh, I do want to point out the community partnership that we do have, -, some of the areas, -, definitely with the police. We have a lot of organizations and citizens who help us out right now, -, to help us bring down the crime rate. So, kudos to the police force. We have some citizens out here, too, -, helping us out by, you know, talking to those young people that, -, in the past have made those bad decisions. But as you see from the stats, we're doing a great job with that. -, to the cars, you know, as I mentioned before, those of us that went to the training, -, with the insurance premium is going to be pretty hard to buy cars for now, especially for these cars. -, I don't want to have that conversation again, but we can talk about it later today. -, that's why it's so important to look at our insurance premiums again. They did mention not covering police cars as much because of the miles and the accidents. So, I just wanted to highlight that again. -, and besides that, Mr. Mayor, -, like I said, -, a great discussion. -, I feel like we did a lot of positives last year benchmarking, -, scheduling and routing the communications. All that is great. -, the main factor that's holding us back now is we do have a lot of requirements, and we've got to figure out how to cut those requirements down or increase the funding and revenue to meet those demands and those requirements. And I'll pause there for any questions there on the Year in Review slide this time.

Mayor:

I think just crossing me would be to have. Maybe a retreat or a time together where we can do a deeper dive into some of the things that we had some conversation about just today. So, we're listening to great comments, but at the same time, funding is going to be behind it in order for us to increase some of the things that are being requested. Alongside that, I know that you mentioned, and I think it was public works that mentioned that back in the day there were about 30 people working

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there. We were down 19. That means 11 people are needed in order to get back to that status. But even in that, you said eight more people added overall, you're still going to need funding for.

City Manager:

80 more people. Mr. Mayor. Eight zero.

Mayor:

Yes. That's a big number. Yeah. So? Well, I'm hearing the question and I'm hearing the statement, but the statement sounds like we're needing more people to accomplish things. And I heard it from the fire. I heard it from the police. I heard it from public works. And we're hearing it. Overall, even HR is in the Amen corner nodding. So, what I'm thinking is we are really in need of these things. Our question is we're probably going to have to I would like to say it would be a good time for us to set a date for a retreat for all of us. And I'm thinking we need to have staff before the full commission.

City Manager:

That's one problem. But so. So, with the 80 people on, Mr. Mayor, like you go back to when, -, I think maybe 19 years ago when the city of Waycross was at, I think the 52,000 marks, and then we added these additional parks, and we kept adding stuff and adding stuff. And from that year on, we started depleting the staff, you know, for whatever reason. So that's where I come from. At one point we were, you know, I think at the most 300. And some people I'm not 300 people, 300 more people. So as the years went on, we just, you know, we cut, we cut, we cut. But we didn't cut the requirements. We kept adding stuff and stuff. So that's how I realize the hard decision to make because that goes back to the CPI, -, hotel fees, Avalon tax, all those things that need to be addressed to increase to keep up with the demand. -, so that's been made so far in the past, but I think we're in a space right now, -, with the community. Because of the communication. I think they truly understand, you know, where we could be right now. We're a little more distant from everybody. So, I don't think it's an us against them thing anymore. So, I think everybody truly understands, you know, what it takes to get Waycross back where it needs to be. So, one of those things is, -, bad word tax, bad word splosh bad word t-splosh, all those things that kind of help us do our jobs more efficiently. So, but to go into that, -, Mr. Mayor, if I can, I move into the financial update because that's part of it for the next, uh, discussion item. I got you. Okay. So, -, Commissioner, you received the comp plan, -, with your packets a few weeks ago. -, those of you that were here, I'm not sure. I don't think Commissioner Bennett. Commissioner Felder. Y'all were not here when the comp plan was established. The 2020, they were. No, they weren't. Okay. Yeah. So, -, you had in your packet that 2020 comp plan and that comp plan kind of outlines a lot of these, -, discussion points about, you know, adding stuff on and how to fund stuff and grants and revenue and new ideas coming out, all those things. So that's been in discussion for some time. If you look back in that comp plan, you'll see they went back as early as 2002 to kind of highlight that as well. So, a very thorough comp plan. -, I think, you know, I hope everybody got a chance to review it. What we have got to do now is we have to set a date to review the company. It's just an annual requirement of review. I did tell the Southern Region Commission that we had not implemented the majority of the stuff on there based off of changeover. So, is first time they recommended that we pick a day, uh, a regular, a regular scheduled meeting day, and then a lot, maybe 2 to 3 hours to do a summary of the comp plan.

Mayor:

So will they be coming to conduct that.

City Manager:

They will come here. Mr. Mayor.

Mayor:

I know they're usually the ones that actually pay for it together. Yes. Then we in turn give them our feedback. Yes. We give our consultation. And that's how they craft and draft what we need for that time. Yeah.

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City Manager:

And we have to that review which is required by - in October. So, we need to do it in September at some point in time. And I just want to put that on the commission. I will follow up with some dates from you on the commission yourself. -, once you look at your calendar schedules. So, -, preferably we would like to do it during a regular scheduled working, -, working session and do it before or we can't do that. It will be us doing a Saturday. The next scheduled retreat was scheduled for October 12th and 13th. That was already in the books., plan. At this time, we still have the same commission. So, if we did that, we would definitely do one again. right after that, after the voting. So, I will follow back up with the commission once it thinks about that. as far as dates and times. So, but still, I think with the set sometime in September, just looking at that comp plan and actually reviewing it and looking at some of the items in there that kind of date back and just see, can we put something in place to kind of move forward on some of those agenda items? I think that would be, you know, really value added for us because like I said, it was a great comp plan, put together by the team. back then, the one thing there too is the collaboration of the city, county school board and other support agencies. So, -, one of my one of the areas that I see we can improve on with that communication with the stakeholders, uh, that's what I meant there. -, have yet been able to, -, figure that out with the with the city and the school board, but that's something we got to, we got to do to that's outlined in that comp plan about morning action with those, those boards, -, to figure out where we can work together on some of these, some of these city issues. So, like I said, what I'll do, I'll just let that kind of let the commission think about it. And I'll follow up next week, because we have a follow up meeting again next week. I'll follow up then with some dates once everybody looks at their schedule. And then we can vote on those dates.

Hopkins:

The next dates for what? The comp plan or retreat.

City Manager:

The retreat is already scheduled for the 12th and 13th of October. The comp plans. We have to do that at some point in time in February. Commissioner so like I said, it can be before an already identified work session because it's like they want they need these three hours, they said. But if that's not enough, we want to go even farther. We probably need to find another day there that's free and do the comp plan alone. -, but this this comp plan will not be the overall creation. It will be a quick update on the current comp plan because, like I said, it was created in 2020. -, most of the stuff on there is kind of fresh, but we did not implement it. -, you know, now that I'm here, I'm trying to put some of that stuff in there because it's similar to some of the stuff in our ten-year plan that we already kind of voted on. No. -, but like I say, it's kind of intensive. There's a lot of stuff on there. So, -, we also to add my assessment to really get value out of, we have to kind of be there with the county and with the school board. I don't know how that could happen, but if you read the complaint, there's a lot of those three agencies doing stuff together. So, I did reach out to the county, hadn't gotten any feedback yet on that, so I'll keep reaching out to them again. I haven't reached out to the school board yet.

Hopkins:

Mr. Manager, did you contact the owner or the chairman to see if he could organize it?

City Manager:

No. I tried to talk to the county manager and to get some feedback from him. I reached out to them.

Hopkins:

I used to meet. They used to meet every three months. They come here at one time; they go there one time we had dinner. They had some dinner, and we would do it after five. And we had a joint meeting. When I first came on board, they were not having any joint meetings. Called the court, Mr. Chairman then. And we in the county and the city met quite often because we had some issues that we needed to discuss as a city county and, you know, citizens. And so, and it worked well. And then I don't know why the ball was dropped and they haven't met with us in a long time, and we were asking them to meet at least quarterly so we could communicate and see how we can improve the just because we're

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in the city during the county, this is still our community. So how we can get together on that. So, I would believe I would call the chairman to see his next meeting. If he can ask his board what when would be convenient for them to join the city over here or over there, wherever they want to meet? We'll be glad to meet with them to see what we can discuss about these situations that we have hanging out there.

City Manager:

A good idea.

Mayor:

Because the last time we met, we met at the City Auditorium and we had both councils together, both commissioners, we had a conversation on both sides and we came together on several things, and that's how that comp plan came together in 2020. Yes. You know, I recall having that meeting. At that time, I think we had it was Chairman Brown. Yeah. Chairman.

City Manager:

Well, Mr. Mayor, Commissioner, I reached out for the last year about that type of stuff, so I didn't get anywhere on that. But perhaps one of you could reach out to the to the chair and see if that could be worked out.

Hopkins:

Can I have one more question, where are we on the on the street paving list that we approved over a year ago?

City Manager

I'm going to cover that during infrastructure update, Commissioner.

Hopkins:

Okay. Let me see what else I was going to ask. The watershed thing. Has it been vetted out?

City Manager:

Uh, we did not vote on that at the time. There was no action on that vote.

Mayor:

So being that there was not second giving and there was no motion given for any specific direction, it left it up in the air and it died. So, unless there is going to be some form of motion that would give us a direction to go. Basically, we have nothing we can do about it. We consented on the floor for the work session. But then when we came to the actual meeting of the vote, I had. I asked motion. We had a motion, but we didn't get a second and it died.

Hopkins:

I thought we made a motion to put it out for bid, and it had to happen in the regular meeting.

Mayor:

That Was the only thing. On the agenda that day, I believe, to have been brought up and decided. And there was no amendment to the motion or any of that. So, we ended up with the dead motion.

Hopkins:

We can put it back on the agenda.

Mayor:

So, we're infrastructure? Yes Mr. Mayor.

City Manager:

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And Mr. Mayor, this is infrastructure update. And I'll start with uh, with the dashboard you can pull the dashboard. What we did, we moved the dashboard, uh, to the front page of the website. And we made significant improvements to the dashboard over the last two weeks. -, we ended up doing we put all of the projects on the dashboard, the leaks, the maintenance. Uh, we put the routes on there for everything now. -, so, it's very detailed on what's going on in the city. If you look down at the bottom right-hand side about the leaks, we're going to leave the leaks up there right now. -, but the one at the top being the, -, the oldest leak. It's been fixed already, but we're going to leave those on there. So, uh, if any of the citizens go on there to see that all the leaks that we've been working on, they can see that they mean the one that will be the newest leak. And if you recall, Mr. Mayor, Commissioner, you started tagging the leaks out in the field so you can see when the leaks are identified, we tag it on the spot. So that's one of the things that we kind of did to improve that. Anybody can do it. You can actually go on to the map now and find the exact location of the leak. We also added the like I said, the capital gains projects on there. -, some of the road projects. And the next step will be to add all the new businesses on there. Right now, I'm working on that. -, in action. And then we're going to tie in the work order process to this so that when stuff updates down to ESG, it'll populate on these dashboards. This will be out in between right now until we get the software update, the new software update, it'll have all the capabilities to do all that more seamlessly. So right now, this is accessible to all citizens in Waycross if they have any questions about scheduling. -, as far as grass cutting, mowing the rest of the coal department, the trash pickups, any leaks or identified leaks in the city, any maintenance, street maintenance in the city, and any other things come up. As far as the parks and all those things, -, if you go to the project, you can see one of the projects, -, go to district one parks They go to they want to know, like when the parks come into play, they can go here and kind of see everything that's going on. We'll keep this updated as time goes on for our citizens and the commissioners. So, I wanted to highlight this because I'm trying to use this as a more interactive tool, along with the app and a few other resources for our citizens just so they can know. Along with Facebook posts, we post, -, daily updates of everything that we do and videos so they can be rest assured that the tax dollars are going to work every day. -, I mean, every day, every single day to include weekends. So, kind of proud of this. It took a while to get here, but we're here now. And like I said, I'm very proud of it. So, it's accessible to the, -, on the webpage now for everybody. And it's also embedded in the city report at this time. Mr. mayor, Commissioner.

Mayor:

And as you're showing the parks there, this is one specific park. I saw the Mary Street Park where they are working on various things, not working for a period of time. I'm not sure what to do with that, but that was kind of yes, yes.

City Manager:

So, and to move to the park. So, the bids did go out. So, the park bid goes out. the 12th of September, the unpaved road was being dirt roads. that went out already from August 8th and then the streets. That went out there will go out on the 29th of August. So basically, what will happen once the bids come back and all that process, we bring back to the commission we're looking at to start work for the streets around probably like, uh, early October and the dirt roads, the dirt roads, and the parks around late September. So, and then if things go well to the bidding process and bring them back to the commission. So that's going to be a lot of activity out there in the city. going on. We're still trying to put a plan together to minimize the traffic delays because there could be other things going on as well. We'll be doing our, -, some of our drainage issues, too. So, I'm trying to plot all that out so we can have not have congestion on the streets, but that might be unavoidable at this time because once the, you know, we bid them out and they get to work, we want them to start as soon as possible, because we want to make sure we maximize the dollars that we have for those projects.

Mayor:

Commissioner Hopkins

Hopkins:

So, did you say parks being paved?

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City Manager:

No, So, we have dirt roads. Dirt roads. Streets we have. So, we have the parks, the ones, the big. The three parks. We have streets and parks.

Hopkins:

I mean, what we're doing in the parks.

City Manager:

The park upgrades that we got the grant for.

Hopkins:

Yeah. Okay. That I got that.

City Manager:

So those improvements and then we have the roads, and the roads end up being -, street, Garston High Street. And some of these runs between two districts Gilmore Street, Kentucky, Nicholas O'Donnell Parkway, Solomon, and Washington Avenue. Along with this, and not only here, right now, we'll be using some of our other funding sources to fix other roads too. L'm so l'm going on too. We have that money. So, like I said, it's going to be a lot of construction going on starting in September. Probably running through Christmas month, which is good for us because it'll cut down on the heat for the people working on the streets. It should get done faster.

Hopkins:

Those dirt roads get selected. I've had two in my district since I've been sworn in. They haven't got paid yet. One is Montgomery Street. That is really bad. James can tell you how many times he's had it graded by the Guilford Street Park, and it's a short street. And it's never been paved. And we've been promising for years we'd do something about it, and it's just as much as it can be. They can hardly travel down that road to those residents there. And it rains. The other one is over in Cherokee Heights on Chevron Drive. It's a short street that they've been begging. It was one street, but somehow got left out years ago, and it's a short dirt street. And they've been asking for years about Wall Street getting paid. That's the two that I know that stand out in my mind in district court.

City Manager:

So, we voted on these streets, like you said a while back. -, commission voted on the streets using the 730 robotics to do that. So, we brought on that already. So, I go back and look at the streets. As I said, we do have some additional capabilities. And with the dirt roads with the new asphalt machine and a few other things. -, once again, that'd be money outside the budget. -, to do that, so.

Mayor:

I think we had that we had full commission, and we were sitting on the floor as. Opposed to sitting in the weeds. And that was.

City Manager:

That was that was June of 2023. Yeah, we got some flexibility with the dirt streets. I mean, I mean, so we can look at that. Like I said, we still got a plan to get all those done this year. I mean, it might not be it might be milling in some situations, but some of those roads, you only have one house down there. So, and I did go talk to all the citizens about the, the scenario of milling versus pavement. -, they understand that, you know, the difference in it. So, I think I'm good at that.

Bennett:

If I may, -, I listed all the dirt roads, and at that time we said, wow, you listed dirt roads and Marsh Street in my district as well. So, there was a time that it was. Obviously Possible or something. But I missed all the dirt roads, so I don't know which meetings in particular is talking about the two minutes, but not six. But well, I mean, I can't help you with him, but I did mention all those because

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you did say you mentioned the dirt roads in. My district as well. I don't know if you can recall. Or do you know that? Oh, yeah. Okay. I went off the dirt. Okay. Okay. Please. One at a time.

Mayor:

. So, we'll have that discussion again about more about dirt roads. So where are we right now? You've already given us the roads that the ones that you just listed off a few minutes ago. And then you talked about parks. We have money that has been designated just for those opportunities. And then you also mentioned the roads that are dirty. So, there's three different things we'll come back to, I'm sure. Looking at the two roads that she's mentioned. So, any guidance. We've had that conversation with you can come back.

Hopkins:

So, the list of roads that we voted on every over a year is going to be paid. And that list changed in.

City Manager

It has not.

Hopkins

It has not, it has not changed.

Mayor

As a matter of fact, I recall we had a conversation about it, but we went into discussion on robotics. The role of robotics, to go in to see which ones were more in need of help. And we talked about doing it in a patch way. And then you came back and said you had to do it economically, or you could do it a little bit, you know, demonstration. So, we get that.

City Manager:

Yes. But the good thing Mr. James mentioned this during his briefing. He did send some, some of his, -, workforce down for some additional training. So, we discovered a new spraying technique to better seal the roads. So, we learned. We got some lessons, learned to better manage the streets we can. But as I said in the ten-year plan, -, it's going to take about at least ten years to get all these roads done. That's being aggressive. That's the way everything works out, the way it should work. But you know, blossom, blossom and other revenue increasing, you know, approaches. There's no way to get all the streets done like this year or next two years. It's going to take a while to get everything done. And we want to make sure that we do it the right way, so we don't end up coming back and doing things like we did in the past. So, -, and that's it for the infrastructure update, Mr. Mayor, and the finance update. Okay. We'll move into -, I put on here the South Carolina State University marching band. they don't come into town. And I put it on here just to make sure that all the commission is aware that we're putting resources towards that date. -, it's going to be a great event. Uh, I think I'll commission to be going a little bit. And this is one of the other things we've got to figure out, start working with the school board to better utilize, you know, the stadium and those things to increase revenue. -, this won't be like a revenue generating thing, but it will bring, -, you know, eyes on the city. So, which is good to get more people to kind of see what's going on in the city and maybe potentially bring other folks in that we could get some revenue out of. Not saying this is all about money, but we have got to highlight the good things we have here. And I did want to speak about that. Okay.

Felder:

Thank you, Mr. City Manager. So, we do have Doctor Eric Williams. He is a native of Waycross, graduated from Ware County High School and graduated, went on to college and became a band director for South Carolina State University. so, we reached out to me and has graciously decided to bring his band, along with their talent, to our beautiful city to showcase where he's come from, but also to allow his Band to perform for our community, but also just really to drum up some interest regarding college, and also what opportunities are out there for our students, our youth in this community that have an interest in. Maybe transitioning To South Carolina State University or any university of their choice. But I think it's always great that we can welcome back on one of our very own that really taking flight and does some great things to showcase where they come from, but also

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how this community, how our education system has contributed to who they are and what they bring to the table. Thank you, Mr. City Manager.

City Manager:

And Mr. Mayor. That's the fourth item. The last item on here is a contract service agreement. Updating us if you have one on your desk there. Yes, sir. I don't know if we need to speak about what is here. -, the tax commissioner's contract, actually, -, was overdue now, so we're asking right now to renew his contract despite here, despite June 30th. So, you need to get an actual. Get a concession, then take the ticket concession. Yeah, we do. Yeah. We put it on the agenda for tomorrow. Right now, we're just getting the concession to extend his contract.

Huey Spearman:

For four more years. Yeah.

Hopkins:

We need to have an executive session about this? Is that what you're saying.

City Manager:

Well, it's not just. He just didn't contract.

Mayor:

It's like a contract extension. I recall the last time we voted, I. I pretty much was. Personally, Michelle and we both signed on for a second. And then the chairman, which was happening. Chairman Brown. Yes. And I had just come home. He said yes. So, it's just a matter. It's a contract between our attorneys today. Yes.

Spearman:

Mr. mayor. I spoke with Mr. Collins about his contract. It expired June 30th of this year. As you know, the Ware County Tax Commissioner collects municipal taxes for the city of Waycross. And he's been doing that for a number of years. And with this contract having expired, -, we need to enter into a new contract for fiscal year 25, 26, 27, and 28. Uh, each contract is for that, uh, those four-year periods. And, you know, without a contract in place, -, he really is not in a position to collect taxes, municipal taxes for the city of Waycross. And the contract is actually with Ware County, Georgia, -, which provides the Ware County Tax Commissioner to collect municipal taxes. And so, with that, Roger realized that it had expired yet. And so, -, you know, that's a problem. We need to re-up it, so renew it, I should say, so that he can continue to collect municipal taxes for the city of Waycross. And let me also add it's the same terms. There's no change in the compensation. -, no change in the way he's going to go about collecting taxes. It's the same contract that has been in existence. We're just adding the new fiscal years for 25, 26, 27, 28. And basically, it's a one-year contract that renews itself every year for the next three years.

Mayor:

So, to gain Commissioner consensus one. "Yes." Commissioner four Yes, Commissioner. Yes. Okay. So, we can put this on our agenda for tomorrow so we can go ahead, and I can sign off, and that will take care of our commissioner.

City Manager:

Thank you, Mr. Mayor. Uh, it moves on to we have no privilege renewals. You have one privilege license for beer, wine, and package sales only. You have no proposed ordinances. We're going to have four proposed resolutions tomorrow. And I will turn it over to the city attorney for his report. Thank you.

Spearman:

Well, -, one of the resolutions has to do with rescheduling the city commission meeting for September the 2nd, which is Labor Day. And that proposed resolution indicates that the work session that will be

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held normally would have normally been held on September the 2nd will be moved to the next day, September 3rd, at 3 p.m., preceding the regular meeting at 5 p.m. Unless the commissioners want to come down on Labor Day and have your work session.

and one other resolution I just want to comment on. As you know, we had a declaration of emergency that was declared by the mayor due to Tropical Storm Debbie. And so, we were not able to meet on the fifth and 6th of August. And this is just basically housekeeping because the meeting meetings were canceled. They were rescheduled for today and tomorrow. And so, one resolution says that this is what happened, and its effect is to be retroactive, just to have a paper trail of what we did. So, it's basically housekeeping. And the minutes need to reflect that. The meeting was rescheduled for today and tomorrow.

City Manager:

Thank you, Mr. Attorney and Mr. Mayor for my report. I emailed out my reports to report and they were posted on social media. We did make some modifications. You can see the changes that we made. We took some stuff out and simplified a few things that might have been confusing to citizens from citizens. Feedback. -, also, you got your reports, -, on all the department reports and also gave you a timeline for projects moving forward. So, expectation management. So hopefully I didn't give any feedback on that. I did omit one question on the finance update. -, the commission did say they wanted to have a different, -, finance brief. I am requesting that they let me know some ideas of what they really want to see. Uh, we brainstorm with the finance department. -, and from our viewpoint, everything is there. But the commission did request to, to change, make some changes so they can let me know at the earliest convenience. That way we can get them some products, hopefully here at the, -, in September to make sure we're going in the right direction. I don't want to overwork the staff if we're going in the wrong direction. As far as the reports.

Mayor:

We just need something specific as to any alternatives or questions that may be added to be responded to. Yes.

Hopkins:

What does that concern you? Just finance.

City Manager:

The finance report that y'all mentioned that y'all wanted a different finance report.

Mayor:

I think they were request for every so many. I think every quarter it was.

City Manager:

They get it monthly right now. Mr. mayor, and we kind of add, -, I mean, it's a big book, but like I said, maybe we have to we got to revise the summary sheet a while back, but I'm assuming they may want to revisit that summary sheet to kind of do the stuff up front of any changes or anything like that. So, any recommendations would be a warning. I want to make sure we get it right so we can go ahead and make these changes because it takes the workforce a lot to make those books. -, you know, pretty much every month. So, we wanted to get ahead on that this time.

Uh, your financial reports, your monthly financial reports. Yes, yes, let's update those. Any feedback? You got to make those changes? I'll ask for a while back.

Hopkins

Okay. Can you just send the list of What Those were.

Mayor:

Right. He doesn't know what you want, but he's. He's presenting one. But the commissioner was asking for something else. Okay. And he needs to know specifically what else needs to be added so that when he does make that report, it will have that included. I think one of the problems he has had

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is having them to put a package together or a booklet together, and then later on we were missing something that we wanted that we've not told totally legal. I'm just saying.

City Manager:

Mr. mayor, at that time, completes the working session. Okay.

Mayor:

Commissioner, did you. Was there any. No. Executive session.

City Manager:

No. Executive session.

Mayor:

commission, did you have anything you want to share?

Felder:

Commissioner, I have some other questions too. Okay, so just for a point of clarification. Usually, we vote on accepting the agenda. Did we not do that at the beginning of the meeting? Did I miss that?

Mayor:

We only vote on the agenda for the actual formal meeting.

Felder:

This is a work session, a work session. Okay. Well, I'll save my questions for tomorrow for the commission meeting. Okay. Thank you.

Mayor:

Any other questions?

Hopkins:

We don't need to go into executive session.

City Manager:

I didn't receive a question for executive session.

Mayor:

No one has given any thought to the investigation or the personnel, legal or.

Felder:

I do have a question about the personnel.

Mayor:

So, and I'm going to say this just so that everybody knows one of the things that I'm doing, if you if you've been waiting on me to give an answer to a particular thing, I'm not giving it until I have a full board. And the reason why I'm, I'm asking for a full board is because I'm using a tiebreaker, and I generally do not make decisions without having everybody at the table, because later on, if this has happened to marriage before me, we found that they would make a vote. The mayor would have the opportunity to vote on that day, but then when the board was fully set, they make a decision, and they will overturn what the mayor just said. And one of those things happens to be a building name in the city. And that that took place like right after that meeting. So, one of the reasons I'm not voting on anything at this point, as far as any listing, I do have the right to vote on four different employees, but I generally do not make any decisions on anything unless they have the full board, and I had a reason for doing that. I think it would be a wise decision to have our new commissioner sitting on the board and be able to make that decision with the board that that exists now, and I think that will help us in the long run. But I think that might be an answer to the question that might be being asked.

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Felder:

No, because you did share that with us already. But that was not what I wanted to say.

Mayor:

So, if we need an executive session, do we? What is it going to be concerned?

Felder:

Personnel. Personnel.

Mayor:

Okay, so do we have the NDAs or the.

Spearman

We do have that.

Mayor:

So, with that being said, uh, we need a motion then.

Hopkins:

Motioned Mr. mayor.

Mayor

Okay. And is there a second? Second. Okay. All in favor? Aye. Aye.

All right. So, we're going into executive session. Thank you, everyone, for coming.